

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** The Construct Validity of the MMPI-2-RF's Demoralization (RCd) Scale

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Demoralization, a psychological state characterized by pervasive dysphoric, unhappy mood, helplessness, inability to cope, and general dissatisfaction with life, has been implicated as a significant construct in psychopathology and its treatment. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2-Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF; Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008/2011) is unique amongst other measures of personality and psychopathology as it includes a distinct, separate scale intended to assess demoralization. Although the validity of RCd scores as measures of general affective discomfort has been well-established by criterion validity studies (e.g., Sellbom, Ben-Porath, & Graham, 2006; Arbisi, Sellbom, & Ben-Porath, 2008; Forbey & Ben-Porath, 2008), no previous study has established their construct validity in relation to broader research on demoralization. Accordingly, the current study reviewed the theoretical basis for RCd including Frank's (1961) demoralization concept, Schmale and Engel's (1967) giving-up—given-up complex, Gruenberg's (1967) social breakdown syndrome, Cassell's (1991) suffering, Clarke and Kissane's (2002) demoralization syndrome, and Watson and Tellegen's (1985) structure of mood, and empirically placed RCd scores within this nomological network (Cronbach & Meehl, 1957) by examining their association with demoralization-related characteristics. Additionally, it investigated the ability of RCd scores to predict these

demoralization-related characteristics beyond measures of two similar constructs, depression and negative affect. A series of correlational and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted using data from undergraduate students ( $N = 188$ ) from a Midwestern university. Results of correlational analyses suggested that RCd scores were negatively associated with scores on measures of core self-evaluation, general self-efficacy, and ego resiliency. Scores on RCd were positively correlated with scores on measures of external locus of control, pessimistic attributions, reassurance seeking, and subjective incompetence. Hierarchical regression analyses indicated that RCd scores predicted a majority of these outcomes better than depression or negative affect. Taken together, results suggest RCd scores reflect the broader demoralization construct and do so better than measures of either depression or negative affect. Additional implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.