

## Dialectics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany and counteracting pathways of prayer coping to the short-term postoperative adjustment in cardiac surgery patients

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*Objectives:* To address the inconsistent findings linking faith factors with cardiac outcomes, this study tested two parallel mediation models underlying the role of using prayer for coping in postoperative adjustment of middle-aged and older patients. Based on Hegel's dialectic contradictory principle, we assume that in the uncertainty of a life-altering medical event, the role of faith could be tied to outcomes through both positive and negative psychological pathways. Model I estimated the parallel pathways, optimism and acute stress from prayer coping to adjustment. Model II further investigated how different types of prayer were related to these outcomes through these pathways.

*Methods:* Two weeks before surgery, 481 patients were recruited for three sequential psychosocial interviews using standardized instruments. Of them, 426 completed the second interview two days before surgery, and 335 completed the post-operative follow-up. Of those participants, we used the data of 310 cases to analyze the structural equation models after a listwise deletion of cases. *Results:* As anticipated, *Model I* indicated the absence of a direct effect of prayer coping on postoperative adjustment. However, the three specified indirect paths were all significant but in opposite directions due to parallel positive and negative pathways. Unexpectedly, *Model II* indicated that only petitionary prayer was positively related to optimism. Only conversational prayer was positively associated with acute stress symptoms. The two types of prayer were not related to other pathways. *Conclusion:* As social scientists have increasingly recognized the importance of adaptation to trauma and adversity, Hegel's dialectic principle may offer insights in the multiplicity and complexity of using faith-based coping in late life medical crises.