3 Adolescent Spirituality

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Interest in adolescent religious and spiritual development has risen sharply in recent years. Several major and recent reviews of positive youth development have moved this domain to center stage, positioning the spiritual religious domain as a developmental resource that lessens risk behavior and enhances positive outcomes (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Donahue & Benson, 1995; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 1999). Moreover, there is substantial interest at the local and national level in "faith-based initiatives."

Although this dimension of adolescent development holds promise for inclusion in a pantheon of positive indicators, the selection or development of appropriate measures requires responses to several critical issues. One, of course, has to do with the definitional distinctions between the concepts of religion and spirituality. The research tradition strongly emphasizes the former. In that regard, the dominant measures used in quantitative studies are the degree of importance respondents attach to religion and the frequency of participation in religious communities (i.e., worship attendance at a mosque, synagogue, church, or other type of congregation).

These two measures are, one could argue, fairly superficial approaches to a domain that has a potentially rich array of belief, value, behavior, and communal dimensions. Any attempt to propose indicators worthy of serious attention must both begin with a thorough examination of the utility of these cursory measures and also look for potential measures that get more deeply inside the spiritual/religious domain. In addition, there is the issue of inclusivity. Much of the extant research has utilized samples of Christians in fairly conventional (i.e., institutional) settings. Accordingly, many of the efforts to measure deeper themes and dimensions utilize items and scales tailored to these samples. If there is any trend that describes the American spiritual/religious landscape, it is the

growth and spread of new religious beliefs, practices, forms, and movements (Eck, 2001). Hence, a critical measurement issue has to do with how to capture this rich diversity of spiritual and religious energy.

The American Context

Although it varies in form and level of intensity, a high level of religious/spiritual engagement has been documented across cultures and in different societies. A Gallup International Association (1999) poll of 50,000 adults in 60 countries found that, on average, 87% of respondents consider themselves part of a religion, 63% indicate that God is highly important in their lives (between 7 and 10 on a 10-point scale), and 75% believe in either a personal God or "some sort of spirit or life force." There is wide variability across cultures in specific beliefs about religious or spiritual matters and in whether people participate in religious activities with significantly lower levels of religious involvement on some continents than religious affiliation or spiritual beliefs. Yet the overall patterns reinforce the idea that spirituality remains an important part of life around the globe, with some of the strongest commitments being evident in developing nations.

Also, self-reported religious/spiritual engagement by North Americans is far above the international average. A 2003 Gallup Poll in the United States showed that 61% of adults said religion was "very important" in their lives, with another 24% reporting it as "fairly important" (Gallup Poll News Service, 2004). Many have written about the high and persistent engagement percentages in the United States, particularly in comparison to Western Europe (Eck, 2001; Kerestes & Youniss, 2003; Wuthnow, 1994). This American pattern of engagement has remained fairly constant across the past several decades, in spite of sociological predictions that processes of modernization and secularization would lead to a significant withering of religious interest (Berger, 1999).

What has shifted, of course, is the diversity of religious forms. Harvard professor Diana Eck captures this theme in the title of her recent book, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (Eck, 2001). This is the story of the rapid rise of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities. A second transformation of religious engagement is the rapid rise of Pentecostalism in the United States (and throughout Latin America and Africa). Finally, there is the growing number of American adults (and, one presumes, young people) who consider themselves "spiritual, but not religious" (Fuller, 2001; Smith, Faris, Denton, & Regnerus, 2003). Each of these changes provides additional challenge for developing indicators that capture the breadth and depth of religious/spiritual sentiment.

In a nation where religious/spiritual engagement is so normative, it is confounding that the field of psychology has by and large marginalized the inquiry of the development and consequences of the religious/spiritual impulse. Many scholars have documented the relative lack of research attention in mainstream psychology (Gorsuch, 1988; Paloutzian, 1996), within the study of adolescence

(Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1989; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Smith et al., 2003), and in child development (Nye, 1999). In addition, it should be noted that the highly touted volume, *A Psychology of Human Strengths: Fundamental Questions and Future Directions for a Positive Psychology,* recently published by the American Psychological Association (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003), pays no noticeable attention to religion or spirituality as human strength or predictor of strength. There is a persistent pattern here: When it comes to religion and spirituality, mainstream psychology keeps its distance.

The Religious Landscape of Adolescence

There are, nevertheless, a number of studies published in a variety of fields (social psychology, social work, sociology, the psychology of religion, sociology of religion, medicine, religious studies, education, public health) that constitute a body of knowledge from which we can learn. In building toward recommendations for measurement of spirituality/religion, we look first at literature on adolescence, relying heavily on two sources of data: One consists of ongoing national studies that include religiosity measures. These include Monitoring the Future and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The other is an aggregated sample of 217,277 students in grades 6–12 in public and alternative schools who completed the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey in the 1999–2000 school year. This self-selected sample—including urban, suburban, and rural schools—has been weighted to reflect the 1990 census data for community size and race/ethnicity. New analyses of this data set are used in this paper to probe into greater detail on the predictive utility of religiosity among adolescents, with a particular eye to testing how well patterns of relationships hold across demographic subgroups.[1]

Spiritual/Religious Engagement during Adolescence

The ongoing Monitoring the Future study (Bachman, Johnston, & O'Malley, 2000) shows that the religious engagement of American adolescents is both stable and changing. In the senior high school class of 2000, 83.7% reported affiliation with a religious denomination or tradition. Though affiliation is still dominated by Christian denominations, trends across 20 years (1976–1996) of Monitoring the Future studies show increases in the percentages of youth affiliating with non-Christian traditions (Smith,Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2002).

Several reexaminations of Monitoring the Future annual surveys of high school students show fairly high stability in both affiliation and self-reported religious service attendance across time (Donahue & Benson, 1995; Smith et al.,

[1] Greater details about this survey instrument and the concepts of developmental assets, thriving behavior, and risk behavior can be found in a series of publications (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999; Leffert et al., 1998; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000).

2002). From 1976 to 1996, only small declines were observed in both indicators (Smith et al., 2002). However, the major point is that, on general measures of engagement, the vast majority of American adolescents report affiliation and at least occasional service attendance.

Using the two most commonly used indicators of religious/spiritual engagement (importance or salience, and attendance), a comparison of two large sample studies conducted in 1999–2000 suggests that more than half of high school seniors are engaged at a meaningfully high level. Comparing seniors in 2000 via Monitoring the Future and seniors in 1999–2000 via the Search Institute (SI) composite data set across several hundred communities shows that both studies place frequent participation in a religious institution at about 50%, and both find the self-report of religion/spirituality as quite or very important to be above 50%.

The SI composite data set from 1999–2000 allows us to extend this descriptive portrait to grades 6 through 12, gender, race/ethnicity, city size, and maternal education. In this data set, religious attendance is measured with the question: "During an average week, how many hours do you spend going to groups, programs, or services at a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religions or spiritual place?" Response options are 0, 1, 2, 3–5, 6–10, and 11 or more. Religious importance (salience) is measured with the question: "How important is each of the following to you in your life: Being religious or spiritual?" There are five response options: *not important, somewhat important, not sure, quite important, very important*. Six findings by demographic groupings are reported here:

Grade Trends. Both religious participation and importance decline with grade: 70% of 6th-grade students reported 1 hour or more per week of participation, falling to 54% among 12th graders, with a fairly linear downward trend. However, the percentage reporting that religion or spirituality is "quite" or "very" important remained more stable across grades: grade 6, 55%; grade 7, 57%; grade 8, 55%; grade 9, 54%; grade 10, 53%; grade 11, 56%; and grade 12, 53%. There was, though, a slight increase in the percentage reporting that being religious or spiritual is "not important," from 10% in grade 6 to 16% in grade 12.

Gender Differences. As shown in many studies (Benson, 1992; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Donahue & Benson, 1995), females report higher levels of religious/spiritual engagement than males. In the SI composite data set, 65% of girls reported 1 hour or more per week of religious attendance, whereas 59% of boys reported that level of attendance. A small difference was also found for importance, with 58% of girls saying religion/spirituality is "quite" or "very" important compared with 52% of boys.

Race/Ethnicity. The major finding here is that the highest rates for participation and importance are reported by African American youth. This

has been documented in a number of other studies (Benson et al., 1989; Benson & Donahue, 1989; Swanson, Spencer, Dell'Angelo, Harpalani, & Spencer, 2002).

City Size. The SI composite data set showed little variation in participation and importance rates across five categories of population size.

Maternal Education. This demographic item provides a glimpse of the relationship of religious engagement to socioeconomic status (SES), given the assumption that maternal education is a proxy for family income. Among studies of adults, religious engagement and SES tend to be inversely related. In this composite data set, however, we see some evidence for religious participation increasing with maternal education. For example, religious attendance of 1 hour or more per week was reported by 57.1% of youth whose mothers have a grade school education or less and by 68.7% of youth whose mothers have a graduate or professional education.

Salience and Attendance Combined. Although attendance and importance (or salience) are commonly used indicators, we have not seen any previous attempt to look at how responses to these two items combine. At a descriptive level, and in anticipation of questions about what items to recommend for a "spirituality index," it is useful to discover how these items interrelate, beyond the fact that the correlation between them is .47 ($N = 216{,}383$) in the SI composite data set. Since one of the two items (attendance) has an institutional face, and the other (importance) more directly taps salience or commitment, it seems likely that there will be cases both where adolescents are institutionally active but report low importance (a combination that could emerge where teenagers are compelled by parents to attend) and where the reverse is true (that is, high importance, low attendance). This category represents what some presume to be in the United States a growing form of spiritual expression (i.e., importance)—and perhaps even an active life of practice—outside religious institutions or communal expressions of spirituality.

To describe these categories of religious/spiritual engagement, we created two binary variables: low/high importance and low/high attendance. For the religious/spiritual importance item, *not important, somewhat important*, and *not sure* are coded as low, whereas *quite important* and *very important* are coded as high. For the attendance item, 0 hours per week is coded as low; 1 hour or more per week is coded as high.

Results are shown in Table 1. For the total sample ($N = 216{,}383$), 44.6% are high/high and 27.7% are low/low. As expected, particularly during adolescence, there is a sizable percentage (18%) that combine high attendance with low importance. There are multiple explanations for this phenomenon. As noted earlier, this could be the result of parental pressure. Equally probable, however, is that the social/friendship aspect of participation is the primary motivator for some young people's attendance in programs, activities, and services, not

Table 1. Percentage Reporting Importance and/or Participation, by Gender, Grade, and Race/Ethnicity[a]

Religious/spiritual importance:			Low	Low	High	High	High on importance
Participation in religious community:			Low	High	Low	High	and/or participation
		N	%	%	%	%	%
Total		216,383	27.7	18.0	9.7	44.6	72.3
Gender	Male	102,377	30.7	18.1	10.0	41.2	69.3
	Female	112,406	24.9	17.9	9.6	47.6	75.1
Grade	6	25,822	21.6	24.1	8.5	45.8	79.4
	7	27,395	22.7	21.2	8.6	47.5	77.3
	8	47,314	25.3	19.9	8.8	45.9	74.7
	9	30,108	28.8	17.6	10.2	43.4	71.2
	10	37,497	31.7	15.8	10.4	42.1	68.3
	11	29,000	30.5	13.1	11.0	45.3	69.5
	12	18,903	34.6	12.9	11.5	41.1	65.4
Race/ ethnicity	Native American	2,085	34.2	22.0	12.3	31.4	65.8
	Asian/Pacific Islander	6,485	30.4	17.5	16.3	35.9	69.6
	African American	29,395	17.1	18.9	12.8	51.1	82.9
	Hispanic	22,716	26.3	19.8	14.7	39.1	73.7
	White	147,073	29.6	17.5	8.0	44.9	70.4
	Biracial	8,628	29.8	17.8	11.3	41.2	70.2

Source: Search Institute (2003). Unpublished tabulations.

[a] For the religious/spiritual importance item, not important, somewhat important, and not sure are coded as low; quite important and very important are coded as high. For the attendance items, 0 hours of attendance at programs or services per week is coded as low; 1 hour or more is coded as high.

necessarily religious or spiritual importance. Finally, some youth spend time in religious institutions participating in youth programs that may or may not have an explicitly religious or spiritual theme. An after-school tutoring program, for example, may be based in a congregation's facility but be largely secular in orientation. In addition, about 1 in 10 of the young people in this sample (9.7%) attach high importance to religion/spirituality, yet report no attendance, with percentages ranging from 8.5% in grade 6 to 11.5% in grade 12.

We also combined percentages for youth high on one or both items to yield a global indicator of religious/spiritual engagement. Overall, 72.3% of the total sample met this condition (high on one or both). This combination puts into perspective the normative nature of religious/spiritual engagement in the United States. That is, nearly three of four adolescents in this 6th- to 12th-grade sample evidence either importance or attendance (or both). Although the national representativeness of the SI composite sample cannot be directly ascertained, as noted above, the SI sample and the Monitoring the Future sample (which is drawn to be representative of American high schools) are quite equivalent on these two indicators of engagement.

In further describing American adolescents, these two findings are important: Two-thirds or more of youth in each race/ethnicity category are "high" on one or both indicators. The percentages move from a low of 65.8% for Native Americans to 82.9% for African Americans. Also, the type composed of high

importance/low institutional attendance is more common for each category of minority youth (e.g., Hispanic, Black, Native American, Asian, biracial) than it is for Whites.

Developmental Patterns

Few longitudinal studies exist to describe how religious/spiritual engagement changes during adolescence (Bridges & Moore, 2002). Although all theorists expect adolescence to be a time of tradition testing, there are few data other than cross-sectional studies (e.g., Monitoring the Future and the SI composite data set) that can speak to developmental trajectories. However, an ongoing longitudinal study employing the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* instrument provides an initial and tentative look at these patterns. The sample consists of 370 students who completed the survey in fall 1997 (grades 6, 7, or 8), fall 1998, and fall 2001. All students attend school in a fairly heterogeneous suburb of a midwestern metropolitan area. For the total sample, 35.5% remained low on religious importance from 1997 to 2001, and 31.1% stayed high during that time. Another 20% changed from high to low across the 4 years, and 13% changed from low to high. By this fairly global measure, the data suggest that overall, about two-thirds of youth stay constant in religious importance across 4 years, while one-third experience a shift (either low to high or high to low). Patterns for boys and girls are similar.

Predicting Developmental Outcomes

Numerous studies have shown that religion/spirituality functions as a protective factor, inoculating youth against health-compromising behavior. These relationships have been summarized in a number of reviews (Benson et al., 1989; Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Donahue & Benson, 1995; Kerestes & Youniss, 2003). What we tend to see across dozens of studies are low but significant zero-order correlations between measures of salience and attendance and multiple indicators of risk behavior (e.g., substance use, violence, and onset of sexual activity). As an overall generalization, these studies—which also use multivariate procedures to control for key demographics (such as age, gender, and race)—tend to find significant but very modest effects for religion, as measured by salience and attendance.

The large SI data set permits analyses that can extend this line of inquiry on the predictive and explanatory power of salience and attendance. We are particularly interested in how well these relationships generalize across race/ethnicity and gender and to the concept of thriving. Table 2 describes 10 types of risk behavior and 8 types of thriving that are measured in this composite data set. Table 3 reveals several important patterns as we examine zero-order correlations of salience and attendance with these 18 indicators. All of the relationships are in the hypothesized direction (that is, salience and attendance are

Table 2. Definitions of Risk Behavior Patterns and Thriving Indicators

Risk Behavior	
Alcohol	Has had alcohol three or more times in the past month or got drunk once or more in the past two weeks.
Tobacco	Smokes one or more cigarettes every day or uses chewing tobacco frequently.
Illicit drugs	Used illicit drugs three or more times in the past year.
Sexual activity	Has had sexual intercourse three or more times in a lifetime.
Depression/suicide	Is frequently depressed and/or has attempted suicide.
Antisocial behavior	Has been involved in three or more incidents of shoplifting, trouble with police, or vandalism in the past year.
Violence	Has engaged in three or more acts of fighting, hitting, injuring a person, carrying or using a weapon, or threatening physical harm in the past year.
School problems	Has skipped two or more days in the past month and/or has below a C average.
Driving and drinking	Has driven after drinking or ridden with a drinking driver three or more times in the past year.
Gambling	Has gambled three or more times in the past year.
Thriving Indicator	
Succeeds in school	Self-reported grades are A's or mostly A's.
Helps others	Helps friends or neighbors one or more hours per week.
Values diversity	Places high importance on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups.
Maintains good health	Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise.
Exhibits leadership	Has been a leader of a group or organization in the last 12 months.
Resists danger	Avoids doing things that are dangerous.
Controls impulses	Self-reports tendency to "save money for something special..."
Overcomes adversity	Self-reports ability to navigate through hardship.

related *negatively* to risk and *positively* to thriving). Nearly all the correlations are extremely modest. These patterns generalize to gender and race/ethnicity subgroups. Finally, predictions appear to be stronger for thriving than for risk behaviors.

We ran three-step regression models (grade and gender, salience and attendance, interaction of salience and attendance) on the overall longitudinal study sample ($N = 370$) described earlier, generally finding that salience and attendance account for roughly 3% to 5% of the variance on many of the risk and thriving measures. Although these are modest effects, they both replicate the kinds of effect sizes for religion measures in the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Resnick et al., 1997) and roughly equal the effects shown for other protective factors such as self-esteem and parental presence.

We are also interested in exploring the degree to which the salience and attendance measures interact. Preliminarily, we note that the two dimensions have an additive effect as shown in Table 4.

What accounts for the constant and generalizable relationship between the two religion/spirituality measures and both risk behavior and thriving? A fairly recent line of inquiry supports the hypothesis that developmental assets mediate

Table 3. *Correlations of Religious/Spiritual Importance and Participation with Risk Behaviors and Thriving Indicators, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity*

	Total Sample		Gender				Race/Ethnicity									
			Male		Female		Native American		Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Risk Behaviors																
Alcohol	−17	−15	−16	−13	−18	−16	−11	−11	−08	−06	−10	−09	−14	−10	−18	−16
Antisocial behavior	−17	−10	−16	−08	−16	−09	−14	−07	−07	−04	−15	−08	−15	−04	−19	−12
Driving and drinking	−12	−12	−12	−11	−13	−12	−07	−07	−04	−06	−07	−08	−12	−09	−14	−13
Depression/suicide	−08	−04	−07	−04	−11	−07	−04	02	−01	−01	−02	01	−05	−02	−10	−06
Illicit drugs	−17	−14	−16	−13	−17	−15	−10	−12	−07	−05	−12	−12	−15	−10	−18	−15
Gambling	−09	−08	−08	−07	−07	−05	−04	−07	−06	−05	−07	−07	−07	−05	−11	−09
School problems	−17	−13	−16	−14	−16	−12	−13	−13	−04	−07	−15	−12	−16	−10	−20	−17
Sexual activity	−13	−12	−11	−09	−14	14	−11	−11	−04	−06	−07	−11	−09	−07	−17	−16
Tobacco	−14	−13	−12	−11	−17	−15	−12	−09	−05	−03	−08	−08	−11	−07	−15	−14
Violence	−12	−06	−11	−05	−11	−04	−07	−05	−03	−01	−12	−05	−12	−04	−15	−09
Thriving Indicators																
Resists danger	14	11	11	08	13	11	07	10	09	02	10	08	08	05	13	09
Values diversity	23	12	24	14	19	09	26	13	21	07	20	11	23	10	22	12
Maintains good health	16	15	19	16	14	14	16	13	10	10	06	10	13	14	19	15
Controls impulses	10	09	11	09	10	8	13	11	09	05	07	08	11	09	11	09
Helps others	06	19	07	20	04	17	07	25	07	24	06	27	06	20	06	17
Exhibits leadership	14	20	13	20	15	20	11	15	10	19	12	18	08	17	15	21
Overcomes adversity	05	04	04	02	07	06	−02	−05	00	02	05	02	03	01	06	05
Succeeds in school	15	12	14	13	15	10	12	12	03	07	15	12	15	10	19	16

Note: I = degree of importance on religion/spirituality; P = hours per week participating in programs and services in a religious community.
Source: Search Institute (2003). Unpublished tabulations.

Table 4. Relationship of Importance and Participation to Risk Behaviors and Thriving Indicators

Religious/Spiritual Importance:	Low	Low	High	High
Participation in Religious Community:	Low	High	Low	High
	%	%	%	%
Risk Behaviors				
Alcohol	31.7	23.9	24.3	15.9
Antisocial behavior	26.4	22.0	20.6	13.4
Driving and drinking	21.9	16.3	20.0	12.0
Depression/suicide	27.7	24.3	25.9	19.0
Illicit drugs	24.4	14.7	19.0	9.2
Gambling	20.2	16.4	19.4	13.5
School problems	28.4	22.7	25.7	14.6
Sexual activity	24.3	16.2	23.2	12.5
Tobacco	19.2	10.9	14.0	6.7
Violence	38.3	34.9	34.8	26.5
Thriving Indicators				
Values diversity	53.0	57.8	70.0	69.6
Resists danger	18.7	22.4	25.8	27.3
Maintains good health	44.8	54.3	53.1	63.0
Controls impulses	41.0	44.2	45.3	50.3
Helps others	75.0	85.5	73.4	86.6
Exhibits leadership	58.2	69.5	58.3	77.0
Overcomes adversity	68.2	68.4	67.9	74.7
Succeeds in school	17.3	18.0	16.3	28.2

Note: $N = 217{,}277$.
Source: Search Institute (2003). Unpublished tabulations.

the influence of religion.[2] That is, religious contexts afford the kind of asset-building resources—such as intergenerational relationships, caring neighborhood, adult role models—known to facilitate positive development (Benson et al., 2003; Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, 2003). For example, in Search Institute's large data set, the correlation among attendance at religious services or programs and the developmental assets is a moderate .38 for external assets and .26 for the internal assets, and both external and internal assets are moderately negatively related to risk behaviors and positively related to thriving behaviors (correlations between .47 and .60).

A recent analysis using ordinary least squares regression provides strong evidence that religious engagement does enhance the developmental asset landscape (Wagener et al., 2003). A related study, using a national sample of 614 adolescents (ages 12 to 17 years), provides strong evidence that frequency of attendance is related to positive engagement with adults outside of one's family

[2] For a review of the categories of developmental assets—support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity—see Benson, 1997; Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998; and, linked to the religious context, Roehlkepartain, 1998.

(Scales, Benson, & Mannes, 2003). Such networks of adult relationships can be powerful influences on both risk behaviors and thriving (Scales & Leffert, 1999).[3]

Beyond Salience and Attendance

Based on analyses of two indicators (importance or salience, and participation) of the religious/spirituality domain, several conclusions seem warranted. The two are connected to gender and grade in ways that theory predicts. The two individually (and perhaps additively) predict many important measures of developmental success, serving simultaneously as protective factors (risk indicators) and enhancement factors (thriving indicators). These effects generalize across gender and race/ethnicity. Further, religious/spiritual importance, attendance, or both are clearly quite normative for American adolescents. Hence, it is suggested that this religious/spiritual dimension belongs in any comprehensive attempt to measure developmental resources and/or developmental success.

Nevertheless, the predictive and explanatory power of these two religion/spirituality indices is very modest. It is not difficult to posit some of the factors that might suppress the relationships. Particularly salient is that the items are so global they mask what could be great variation in depth, belief, ideology, and experience. Single items on attendance, for example, tell nothing about quality, relationships, climate, or developmental attentiveness within places and programs. Similarly, global importance/salience items mask considerable variability in worldview, belief, value, and behavioral intent.

By analogy, imagine an item that asks, "Do you identify with a political party?" It is reasonable to expect that citizens who do identify with a party demonstrate small increases in civic engagement and related forms of connectedness compared with those who do not identify. If we also know which political worldview (e.g., Democrat, Republican, Green) a person holds, the predictive power would be greatly enhanced. In contrast, however, one's specific religious affiliation (Catholic, Jewish, Baptist, etc.)—another common measure of religiousness—is typically not a strong predictor of one's specific beliefs, practices, or behaviors (Matthews et al., 1999; McCullough, Larson, Koenig, & Lerner, 1999).

The critical question is how to deepen measurement within the spiritual/religious domain so that we can better capture the dynamics that enhance developmental success. Several criteria should guide this effort. One is about inclusivity. That is, indices of spiritual/religious life cannot assume, in a religiously diverse culture, a particular religious ideology. They cannot assume monotheism (that is, a creator God as found in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions). And

[3] Several recent publications build on this research to suggest strategies for enhancing the developmental impact of religious communities of multiple faiths (e.g., Roehlkepartain, 1998; Roehlkepartain, 2003a; Roehlkepartain, 2003b; Roehlkepartain & Scales, 1995).

they cannot assume any particular ideology about diversity, eschatology, human nature, spiritual transformation (e.g., conversion), or particular practices.

A second criterion is that any new measure of this domain ought to enhance prediction of developmental outcomes beyond what is predicted by importance and attendance items. Although there is a long tradition, particularly within psychology of religion research, to develop multidimensional measures of personal theology and worldview, we are best served by searching for or developing a unidimensional scale composed of multiple items that provide high variability along a single continuum.

There is a body of research that demonstrates that various dimensions of religious belief can have a sizable influence on behavior—beyond the impact of attendance and salience (Benson & Williams, 1986). However, such dimensions apply only to those who are already connected to a specific religious tradition. Hence, although this approach is promising for developing a "deeper" measure capable of meeting criterion 2, it violates criterion 1.

Third, new measures must be concise enough to be practical for use in multiple instruments and studies. Finally, there are land mines that need to be understood and navigated around before a new spiritual/religious index receives full public support (e.g., active parental consent, as well as concerns about separation of church and state and the establishment of religion).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to propose a multi-item scale that meets all of these criteria. If we were to propose such a scale, it would not only include items such as the importance and attendance indicators analyzed in this study, but also capture greater depth.

Significant conceptual, definitional, and measurement work needs to be done to move measurement to a next stage. Moving to greater depth in measurement requires a sustained effort to define and disentangle the constructs of spirituality and religion. Although many have tried, consensus on these definitions proves elusive.

The vast majority of researchers agree that spirituality has multiple domains. For example, Scott (as cited in Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999) analyzed the content of scientific definitions of religiousness and spirituality published in the last half of the 20th century. Although she found no consensus or even dominant approaches, Scott identified nine content categories in definitions of spirituality: experiences of connectedness or relationship; processes leading to greater connectedness; behavioral responses to something (either sacred or secular); systems of thought or beliefs; traditional institutional structures; pleasurable states of being; beliefs in the sacred, transcendent, and so forth; attempts at or capacities for transcendence; and existential questions. In another study, MacDonald (2000) analyzed 20 measures of spirituality, identifying five "robust dimensions of spirituality" (p. 185): cognitive orientation, an experiential/phenomenological dimension, existential well-being, paranormal beliefs, and religiousness.

Because of its multidimensionality, spirituality does not fit neatly inside any particular domain of social science. Hill et al. (2000) noted that religion and spirituality inherently involve developmental, social-psychological phenomena,

cognitive phenomena, affective and emotional phenomena, and personality. They note that "few phenomena may be as integral across life span development as religious or spiritual concerns" (p. 53). Further, Piedmont (1999) presents evidence that spirituality may be an independent dimension of personality. Thus a multidisciplinary approach is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of the domain.

A persistent and important definitional, measurement, and philosophical challenge is distinguishing spirituality from religiosity and distinguishing spiritual development from religious development. Is spirituality little more than a "politically correct" term for religiousness? Are spirituality and religiousness unique, polarized domains? Is one embedded within the other? How are they related and distinct? The answers to those questions depend, of course, on how one defines both religion and spirituality.

Furthermore, in the same way that spirituality is itself complex and multidimensional, so is religion (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996). Pargament (1997) defined religion broadly as "a search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (p. 34). Koenig, McCullough, and Larson (2001) defined religion more specifically as "an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols designed (a) to facilitate closeness to the sacred or transcendent (God, higher power, or ultimate truth/reality) and (b) to foster an understanding of one's relationship and responsibility to others in living together in community" (p. 18). In examining the relationship between religion and spirituality, Reich (1996) identified four possibilities: religion and spirituality as synonymous or fused; one as a subdomain of the other; religion and spirituality as separate domains; and religion and spirituality as distinct but overlapping domains.

There is considerable evidence (largely from studies of adults) that people experience religion and spirituality as overlapping but not synonymous domains. For example, a nationally representative sample of 1,422 U.S. adults who responded to a special ballot on religion and spirituality as part of the 1998 General Social Survey found high correlation (.63) between self-perceptions of religiosity and spirituality (Shahabi et al., 2002). Similarly, Marler and Hadaway (2002) examined data from several national U.S. studies (again, of adults) that examined this question and concluded that

> the relationship between "being religious" and "being spiritual" is not a zero-sum. In fact, these data demonstrate that "being religious" and "being spiritual" are most often seen as distinct but interdependent concepts. . . . Indeed, the most significant finding about the relationship between "being religious" and "being spiritual" is that most Americans see themselves as both. (p. 297)

The explosion of interest in spirituality as a legitimate arena of scientific inquiry is promising. It is also complex, and no clear consensus about definitions is on the horizon. Furthermore, a scan of published studies using "spirituality" measures located no data that show strong predictive or explanatory relationships with risk behavior or thriving.

One other line of inquiry needs to be included to ascertain possibilities for items and indicators that meet the criteria, described earlier. There is a body of

literature that explores how and to what degree religious sentiment (in whatever form) compels (or implores) one to be engaged in the world. In general terms, this is the distinction between "vertical" and "horizontal" themes. Vertical refers to the degree to which one honors/listens to/affirms/accepts the sacred dimension of experience (whether this is understood as God, Allah, life force, or spirit). The horizontal dimension refers to the degree to which spiritual/religious belief pushes one toward a compassionate engagement in the world. Several studies of American adolescents show that these two dimensions—individually and in combination—are stronger predictors of risk and thriving than are measures of importance or attendance (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993; Benson, Williams, & Johnson, 1987; Benson, Yeager, Wood, Guerra, & Manno, 1986). The salient dimension that cuts across these vertical and horizontal dimensions is the degree to which one's spiritual-religious engagement is about "me" or "we": that is, does spirituality/religion function to promote individualism or community?

This and other research traditions on religious themes and dynamics are fertile territories for locating possible indicators that discriminate and predict. It is too early, however, to definitively name and advocate for a particular set of indicators that simultaneously honor diversity in orientation and add explanatory power for developmental success. However, emerging initiatives (e.g., Roehlkepartain, King, Wagener, & Benson, in preparation) hold promise for developing the kinds of conceptual clarity, advances in measurement, and predictive studies that will and should inform this search for inclusive and impactful indicators.

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