Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence: Toward a Field of Inquiry

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Sustained attention to spiritual development during childhood and adolescence in the social and developmental sciences has the potential to significantly enrich and strengthen the understanding of the core processes and dimensions of human development. This article seeks to set the stage for such an inquiry by exploring 6 themes for building a multifaceted agenda. It argues that spiritual development is (a) understudied; (b) a complex, multifaceted concept; (c) grounded in a human propensity; (d) overlaps with and includes many aspects of religious development; (e) a developmental process that is shaped by both individual capacities and ecological influences; and (f) a potentially powerful resource for positive human development.

Long after Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles had established himself as a preeminent scholar in child development, Anna Freud remarked to him, "It would be of interest if you went over your earlier work and looked for what you might have missed back then" (as cited in Coles, 1990, p. xiii). In reflecting on that comment, Coles remembered "certain long-ago moments with children: a remark, a picture drawn, a daytime reverie shared, a dream or nightmare report—all of them in some fashion having a religious or spiritual theme" (p. xiii). That realization led Coles to undertake a series of studies that, in his words, "helped me see children as seekers, as young pilgrims well aware that life is a finite journey" (p. xvi).

Coles's (1990) reassessment of his own research and the inquiries that followed illustrated important questions for the social sciences: Is spiritual development an integral, unique element of the human experience that has been overlooked or ignored, particularly in childhood and adolescence? If so, have the developmental sciences been handicapped by not having a well-conceived, -defined, and -documented domain of spiritual development within which to more fully interpret and understand an important domain of human development?

This article does not seek to answer these questions definitively. Rather, it proposes that sustained, rigorous attention to spiritual development during childhood and adolescence in the social and developmental sciences has the potential to significantly enrich and strengthen the understanding of the core processes and

dimensions of human development. For this to occur, significant effort is needed to define and measure this often-illusive domain and to investigate its substance and function from many perspectives and disciplines. This article seeks to set the stage for such an inquiry by offering a preliminary, working definition of spiritual development, then exploring key themes and issues in spiritual development that have potential for building toward a multifaceted agenda of theory and research.

The Definitional Challenge

A fundamental challenge in making the case for spiritual development as a core human development process is definitional. What is it? How is it experienced? Is it really a unique domain of human development, or is it subsumed in others?

Given the formative state of the field, it would be premature to propose that a single, succinct definition could adequately capture the richness, complexity, and multidimensional nature of this concept—just as it would be overly simplistic to propose a single simple definition of other complex areas of development, such as cognitive development, social development, or moral development. However, to promote further dialogue and investigation, we propose the following working definition, which points toward important themes for further investigation:

Spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental "engine" that propels the search for connectedness, meaning, pur-

pose, and contribution. It is shaped both within and outside of religious traditions, beliefs, and practices.

Emerging from this working definition are six themes that merit additional exploration, which provide the framework for the remainder of this article.

A Poorly Understood Human Capacity

Part of the tentativeness in proposing this definition is that this area of inquiry is still in a formative stage of development. How spiritual development unfolds may be as important to personal and social well-being as are the physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of development. Yet spiritual development may well be the least understood of human capacities. Fortunately, there appears to be an emerging interest in the topic across multiple disciplines.

Through the years, many scholars have documented the relative lack of attention to issues of religion and spirituality in the social sciences in general (Gorsuch, 1988; Paloutzian, 1996; Weaver et al., 1998) and, more specifically, in the study of adolescence (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1989; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Donelson, 1999; Kerestes & Youniss, 2003; Markstrom, 1999; Wallace & Forman, 1998) and childhood (Hay, Nye, & Murphy, 1996; Nye, 1999). Although pioneers in psychology such as William James, G. Stanley Hall, J. H. Leuba, and Edwin Starbuck considered religiousness and spirituality to be integral to the field of psychology, the study was marginalized through much of the 20th century. The scientific study of religion began reemerging in the 1960s and, by the new millennium, Hill et al. (2000) concluded that "the state of the discipline today can be characterized as sufficiently developed but still overlooked, if not bypassed, by the whole of psychology" (p. 51).

Researchers in adolescent development may have made more progress recently in addressing religious (not spiritual) variables than other areas of psychological inquiry. A review of quantitative studies published between 1992 and 1996 in five major adolescent research journals found that 11.8% of the articles included a measure of religion—a percentage 3 to 10 times higher than found in broader journal searches (Weaver et al., 2000).

Although religion may be addressed more often in adolescent research, the same cannot be said for spirituality. In July 2002, we searched two broad social science databases, Social Science Abstracts and PsycINFO, to determine the extent to which religion and spirituality were being addressed in published studies between 1990 and July 2002. In addition, a more refined search of six premier journals on child and adolescent development was conducted.

Even with broad criteria (and no effort to screen for quality or depth of analysis), less than 1% of the

Table 1. *Spiritual Development Citations in Social Science Databases, 1990–2002*

	Social Science Abstracts	PsycINFO	Six Selected Journals[a]
Articles with key words[b] related to…			
children or adolescents	38,894	139,294	3,123
children or adolescents *and* spiritual or religion or church	415	1,745	27
spirituality *and* children or adolescents	143	852	1
children or adolescents that address religion and/or spirituality	1.1%	1.3%	0.9%
Percentage of articles on children and adolescents that address spirituality (without reference to religion or church)	0.4	0.6	< 0.1

[a]*Child Development, Developmental Psychology, International Journal of Behavioral Development, Journal of Adolescent Research, Journal of Early Adolescence,* and *Journal of Research on Adolescence.* [b]Searches included derivative terms based on the criteria used in each database.

articles cataloged in the two databases addressed issues of spirituality or spiritual development among children and adolescents (see Table 1). Even a broader search that included more traditional terms related to religiosity increases only marginally the attention given to these topics. Furthermore, when the search was limited to six leading developmental journals, the attention to spiritual development drops still further; only one article was identified that addressed spirituality in childhood or adolescence.

For comparison purposes, we also analyzed how many articles addressed other domains of human development (cognitive, psychosocial, moral, emotional, and behavioral) during the same time frame (see Table 2). Without limiting the search to articles with children or adolescence as a key word, this search confirms that spiritual development is examined much less often than other forms of development. Further, only one in five of the articles on spiritual development specifically addressed children or adolescents. It is noteworthy, too, that no articles on spiritual development appeared in the six leading journals across these 12 years.

Other scholars have analyzed the various reasons for the paucity of attention to religion and spirituality in the social sciences. They have pointed to a lack of religious belief among academicians and scientists (E. J. Larson & Witham, 1998); the absence of training in and exposure to the area among psychologists (Weaver et al., 1998); the difficulty of adequately defining and measuring the domain (Zinnbauer et al., 1997); the historical belief among some influential psychologists that religious commitment is pathological (Ellis, 1980); and the fact that the area is "politically sensitive and philosophically difficult" (McCrae, 1999, p. 1211).

When religion and spirituality are viewed in terms of Durkheim's (1912/1995) classic definition of religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things … which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (p. 62), then its study can easily be left to those with more parochial interests. It is something of an interesting phenomenon itself that mainstream psychology has encouraged generations of social scientists to see organized religion as a thing apart rather than as an integral expression of human capacity and need. However, doing so is like equating cognitive development with schooling.

Although spiritual development does not yet show up as a consistent topic in the social sciences, there is growing interest in the area among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Nowhere is the scientific and clinical interest in spirituality more evident than in the field of health and health care. Mills (2002) documented a dramatic increase in medical journal articles that address religion or spirituality and health. Although the word *spirituality* did not even appear in the MedLine database until the 1980s, "in recent years, every major medical, psychiatric, and behavioral medicine journal has published on the topic" (p. 1).

Within the social sciences, a number of efforts are under way to increase the attention to spiritual development. For example, the Society for Research on Adolescence's Study Group on Adolescence in the Twenty-First Century concluded that one of the areas of needed research "across all nations" is religious values and experiences (R. Larson, Brown, & Mortimer, 2002). Further, the emerging interest in "positive psychology" recognizes the potential of religion and spirituality as a resource for optimal development (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These, and other efforts, suggest that the field may be ready for sustained, rigorous attention to understanding the spiritual domain of child and adolescent development.

A Multidimensional Construct

Admittedly, the proposed working definition does not fully capture the richness and diversity of the concept of spiritual development. One of the major challenges faced in tapping this renewed interest is definitional. Is spiritual development so broad and idiosyncratic that it becomes impossible to

Table 2. *Comparison of References to Spiritual Development to Other Areas of Development in Social Science Databases, 1990–2002*

Key Words	Social Science Abstracts	PsycINFO	Six Selected Journals[a]
Cognitive development	1,043	13,445	535
Psychosocial development	611	9,627	294
Moral development	281	1,331	69
Emotional development	170	1,634	66
Behavioral development	44	436	8
Spiritual development	15	172	0
Number of articles on spiritual development that specifically address children or adolescents	4	37	0

[a]*Child Development, Developmental Psychology, International Journal of Behavioral Development, Journal of Adolescent Research, Journal of Early Adolescence,* and *Journal of Research on Adolescence*.

operationalize? Or, will it be viewed so narrowly that it offers little of substance to the understanding of human development?

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; and existential questions. In another study, MacDonald (2000) analyzed 20 measures of spirituality, identifying five "robust dimensions of spirituality" (p. 185): cognitive orientation; 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 noted that "few phenomena may be as integral across life span development as religious or spiritual concerns" (p. 53). Further, Piedmont (1999) presented evidence that spirituality may be an independent dimension of personality. Thus, a multidisciplinary approach is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of the domain.

Spirituality as Human Capacity

The proposed working definition of spiritual development asserts that there is an intrinsic human capacity—an "internal press"—for spirituality, or transcendence of self toward "something greater." This impulse gives rise to such phenomena as seeking meaning and purpose, the pursuit of the sacred, and embedding one's identity within a tradition, community, or stream of thought. This propensity can be enriched or thwarted within an ecological context of family, peers, community, and, in many cases, a religious tradition and community.

The evidence for such an "intrinsic human capacity" toward spirituality emerges from several sources. First, is the growing (but still limited) body of evidence that suggests that spirituality or religiosity have biological or physiological roots. In an examination of variations in religious affiliation, attitudes, and practices, D'Onofrio, Eaves, Murrelle, Maes, and Spilka (1999) found that religious attitudes and practices are moderately influenced by genetic factors (whereas affiliation is primarily culturally transmitted).

Further evidence of the human propensity toward spirituality is that, through history and in all societies, forms of spirituality have emerged and become part of human experience, and, despite some predictions to the contrary, it remains a salient dimension of life across time and across cultures. Although focused on adults, a survey in 20 nations found that an average of 71% of respondents sometimes or often think about the meaning of life (Campbell & Curtis, 1996), which is a core element of our understanding of spirituality. From a more traditional religious perspective, a Gallup International Association (1999) poll of 50,000 adults in 60 countries found that, on average, 63% of respondents indicated that God is highly important in their lives, 75% believed in either a personal God or "some sort of spirit or life force."

Similar levels of salience are evident among adolescents in the United States. (More global data are not available.) For example, Search Institute's survey of 218,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth in public schools during the 1999–2000 school year showed high levels of interest in religion and spirituality. For example, 69% of 6th- to 12th-grade youth (more with some subgroups of youth) reported that "being religious or spiritual" is at least somewhat important, and 54% say it is quite or extremely important (unpublished data). Understanding why this dimension of life is important to many young people and how it shapes their sense of identity are vital issues in understanding its role in human development. Further, significant questions remain about the salience of spirituality in the lives of young people in different cultures and traditions as well as the antecedents of these commitments in the first decade of life.

Relationship With Religious Development

A persistent, and important definitional, measurement, and philosophical challenge is distinguishing spirituality from religiosity and spiritual development from religious development. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) wrote:

> The ways in which the words [religiousness and spirituality] are conceptualized and used are often inconsistent in the research literature. Despite the great volume of work that has been done, little consensus has been reached about what the terms actually mean. (p. 549)

Is spirituality little more than a more "politically correct" term for religiousness? Are spirituality and reli-

giousness 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 relation between religion and spirituality, Reich (1996) identified four possibilities for describing the relation between religiousness and spirituality: 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. Full exploration of the pros and cons of these approaches is not possible in this context. This article adopts the final perspective, suggesting significant overlap between religion and spirituality but also recognizing that there are dimensions of both religious development and spiritual development that fall beyond the domain of the other.

The proposed approach seeks to avoid the polarizations between spirituality and religion that have begun to emerge in some scientific circles (and the popular culture) that undermine the richness of both concepts. Zinnbauer et al. (1999), for example, had identified three such polarizations: (a) organized religion versus personal spirituality; (b) substantive religion versus functional spirituality; and (c) negative religiousness versus positive spirituality. Zinnbauer et al. wrote that "the polarization of religion and spirituality into substantive and functional leaves us with a static, frozen religion and a spirituality without a core" (p. 904). They called for an approach to distinguishing between the domains that "integrates rather than polarizes these constructs, and one that sets boundaries to the discipline, while acknowledging the diverse ways people express their religiousness and spirituality" (p. 911).

From an experiential perspective, 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 examine 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)

Given this significant overlap between these two domains, a question remains about why focus on spiritual development instead of the more historical focus on religious development. Several factors shape this choice:

1.   Spiritual development and spirituality connote for most people a term that embraces a wider diversity of beliefs and experiences across multiple religious traditions, cultures, and worldviews. This reality reflects the growing interest in spirituality (see Zinnbauer et al., 1999).

2.   Reich (2001) argued that this final view has potential to generate less divisiveness and more active engagement in spiritual development, particularly in countries where young people are socialized spiritually but not religiously.

3.   It is likely that scientists are more open to investigations of spirituality than religiosity.

For example, MacDonald (2000) reviewed a variety of studies of psychologists and concluded:

> While psychologists appear to adopt an ambivalent stance regarding the importance of religion (e.g., 50–60% of psychologists surveyed refer to themselves as agnostics or atheists), research suggests that spirituality may be seen as personally relevant by a higher proportion of them; 33–68% of psychologists report that spirituality is important. (p. 155)

4.   There has historically been much more attention to issues of religious development than spiritual development. An important challenge is to invest focused energy on also defining, measuring, and articulating the domain of spiritual development to determine whether, indeed, it is a salient and coherent area of study.

A remaining challenge in seeking to define spiritual development and its relation to religion is philosophical or theological. Some social scientists and theologians

insist that one cannot define or investigate spiritual development without an explicit theistic understanding of God or at least a transcendent power. From their perspective, any definition of spiritual development is inadequate without explicit reference to such a transcendent other. However, such an approach tends to be theologically based and grows out of Western, Judeo-Christian perspectives (see Stifoss-Hanssen, 1999). The approach suggested in this article seeks to include, but not be limited to, such theistic worldviews, whereas also including other traditions and cultures.

Spiritual Development as Developmental Process

The notion of spiritual *development* adds an important dimension to an exploration of spirituality. Spiritual development introduces a focus on spiritual change, transformation, growth, or maturation. Through most of the 20th century, spiritual (or, more often, religious) development or change was viewed through stage theory (e.g., Fowler, 1981) or was dominated by nondevelopmental approaches (see Oser & Scarlett, 1991; Paloutzian, 1996; Reich, Oser, & Scarlett, 1999). In the same way that developmental psychology has moved beyond stage theory (e.g., Overton, 1998), spiritual development must also move beyond an overreliance on stage theory, which "implies a certain amount of discontinuity in religious [and spiritual] development, whereas it may actually be a reasonably continuous process" (Hood et al., 1996, p. 55).

Consistent with a developmental systems perspective (Lerner, 2002), we also posit that individuals are active agents in shaping their own spiritual growth. As evidence, one need only note that, even within strong, centralized religious traditions, there are wide individual differences among adherents in how they select, integrate, and attend to a tradition's messages (Benson & Spilka, 1973). This dynamic interaction between ecological influences and personal agency suggests that the individual and the culture in which he or she is embedded are coauthors in creating one's life story (Reker & Chamberlain, 2000).

Although some scholars have argued that spirituality only emerges in adolescence or early adulthood (e.g., Helminiak, 1987; Irwin, 2002), examination of spiritual development may be particularly germane to child and adolescent development. Issues of meaning, purpose, vocation, relationships, and identity are particularly salient during adolescence, and many observers note that major identity transformations occur during these years (see, e.g., Gorsuch, 1988; Paloutzian, 1996). Furthermore, formative work by Coles (1990), Nye (1999), and others raised important possibilities about the emergence of spirituality during early childhood.

Much more exploration is needed to ascertain how the process of spiritual development emerges in childhood and is shaped throughout the first two decades of life—and beyond. What factors in a young person's environment stimulate robust and healthy foundation for spiritual development? What factors may thwart or impede such growth? How do diverse rituals, beliefs, and socialization practices differentially shape development in various cultures and traditions with different populations of children and adolescents? How do spiritual transformations (e.g., conversions) affect children and adolescents? What personal, family, communal, or cultural practices, experiences, rituals, relationships, beliefs, or commitments contribute to—or distract from—spiritual thriving across the first two decades of life? These kinds of questions offer rich possibilities for future inquiry.

A Resource for Human Development and Well-Being

Spiritual development appears to be a potentially powerful resource for positive human development in the first two decades of life. However, that assertion must be qualified with significant limitations of the research to date. Not only do various studies grow out of different operational definitions and measures of spirituality and religiosity, but they have tended to employ unidimensional measures of religiosity (not measures of spirituality, per se). Furthermore, the preponderance of quantitative studies to date has been cross-sectional, limiting the ability to show causal relations or even a clear understanding of the nature of the relation (Benson et al., 1989; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Thoresen & Harris, 2002). In their review of the literature, Bridges and Moore concluded that "there is considerable disconnect between theories of religious development and research on child and adolescent religiosity and other aspects of well-being" (p. 12). In addition, the available research in English focuses heavily on the dynamics of religiosity in the lives of Christian or Jewish youth in the United States or other Western industrial countries, with little attention to the impact of spirituality for young people within other or no religious traditions, or in other parts of the world.

If the research on spirituality in adolescence is limited, the social science research on childhood spirituality is even less common. In their exploratory study of children's spirituality, Reimer and Furrow (2001) sought possible connections between spirituality and prosocial outcomes, but they "are especially at pains to avoid any suggestion that relational consciousness is somehow 'responsible' for prosocial behavior outcomes" (p. 17).

With these important limitations in mind, the emerging evidence suggests that spirituality (as ex-

pressed through religiosity, given the overlapping domains and the limitations of currently available research) informs a wide variety of important psychological and social phenomena among adolescents, including the following:

Religiosity (most often religious involvement or importance) has been positively associated with positive behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes among adolescents, including:

1. Overall well-being (Donahue & Benson, 1995; Markstrom, 1999).
2. Positive life attitudes, satisfaction, and hope for the future (Smith & Faris, 2002).
3. Altruism and service (Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1997; Smith & Faris, 2002; Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1999).
4. Access to internal and external developmental resources that contribute to risk reduction and well-being and thriving (Wagener, Furrow, King, Leffert, & Benson, in press).
5. Resiliency and coping (Benson, Masters, & Larson, 1997).
6. School success (Regnerus, 2000).
7. Physical health (Jessor, Turbin, & Costa, 1998; Wallace & Forman, 1998).
8. Positive identity formation (Donelson, 1999; Youniss et al., 1999).

Religiosity and (in a few cases) spirituality have been negatively associated with a wide range of health-compromising behaviors, such as:

1. Alcohol and other drug use (Gorsuch, 1995; National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2001).
2. Crime, violence, and delinquency (Johnson, Jan, Larson, & Li, 2001; Smith & Faris, 2002).
3. Depression (Wright, Frost, & Wisecarver, 1993).
4. Danger-seeking and risk-taking (Smith & Faris, 2002).
5. Early sexual activity (Holder et al., 2000; Whitehead, Wilcox, & Rostosky, 2001).

This brief review of extant research linking religion and spirituality to young people's health and development highlights promising connections, but also significant questions. Much more needs to be known about how developmental processes of spiritual development contribute to optimal growth and well-being. Further, much more needs to be learned about the aspects of spiritual development (e.g., beliefs, practices, socialization) that are most salient in predicting various outcomes, particularly beyond the Judeo-Christian traditions in the United States. A wide range of approaches and perspectives are needed to more fully understand these connections.

Implications for Building a Field of Inquiry

This article has argued for the recognition of a sphere of human action that is transhistorical and transcultural at both the individual and the societal level and whose study belongs at the center of academic inquiry. This call for strengthening the science of spiritual development in childhood and adolescence has several important implications:

First, spiritual development needs to become mainstream within developmental psychology and within a lifespan approach. There are exciting and relatively unexplored questions: What are the forms of spirituality that emerge in childhood? How might postformal and developmental systems perspectives add richness and variability to models of spiritual development among children and adolescents? How do ecological contexts, particularly family, shape development? How does the person inform her or his own spiritual development?

Second, ongoing dialogue and examination are needed to build on the important insights and legacy from the rich field of psychology of religion, while also distinguishing these emerging efforts. For this to occur, there is a critical need to advance definitional and measurement work that is broad-band in construct and rigorous in its operationalization. Such efforts should move beyond polarized understandings toward more integrative approaches.

For this kind of multifaceted inquiry to occur, multiple fields within psychology as well as the social sciences more broadly will need to be linked into a more robust and center-stage collaboration regarding the role of spiritual development in individual behavior as well the intersection of spiritual development with social and cultural processes.

When the field of human development marginalizes spiritual development, it does a great disservice, for it builds theories and, by extension, practices of development on an incomplete understanding of our humanness. Without examining these complex issues, the developmental sciences add too little to vital questions of our time. Spiritual development is likely a wellspring for the best of human life (e.g., generosity, unity, sacrifice, altruism, social justice) as well as for our darkest side (e.g., genocide, terrorism, slavery). Using social science to examine this potent force in society and individual lives of young people has been neglected for too long.

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