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The Interplay of Self-Transcendence and Psychological Maturity Among Israeli College Students

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INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is considered a core, universal facet of human development (for a review, see Oser, Scarlett, & Bucher, 2006; Wulff, 1997). Yet, for several decades it has been relegated to a peripheral place within the developmental science literature (Roehlkepartain, Benson, King, & Wagener, 2005). Pertinent to such neglect is a conceptual and empirical lacuna in investigating the place of spiritual development vis-à-vis other domains of development, such as emotional development (but see discussions of these issues in Lerner, Roeser, & Phelps, 2008).

This chapter presents the results of a study conducted with Israeli youth that examined the interplay of spiritual development and the development of psychological and emotional maturity. The transition from adolescence to adulthood has been recognized as an important and crucial developmental phase, in which youth develop their identity to become emotionally mature adults in their society (Arnett, 2000; Donnellan, Conger, & Burzette, 2007). Consequently, it is an especially significant period to examine the interplay between these two realms.

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We first discuss several conceptualizations that suggest how these two domains may be related and then present the study, which examined concurrent associations between these two realms of development and psychosocial characteristics in four areas: self-perceptions, orientation to others, values, and the relational context. We conclude with a discussion of the findings, which accord with some of the conceptualizations and highlight the urgent need to undertake longitudinal research to examine how these two lines of development are interrelated.

SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Despite the existence of a large number of current approaches to and definitions of spiritual development, most incorporate several common themes. These themes include an aspect of transcendence that reflects a realization that "there exists a broader paradigm for understanding existence that transcends the immediacy of our own individual consciousness and that binds all things into a more unitive harmony" (Piedmont, 1999, p. 988). In line with this viewpoint, the development of spirituality is thought to involve the development of the capacity of individuals to consider and experience this transcendence and this unity and to act accordingly (Lerner et al., 2008). A related theme focuses on meaning and suggests that spirituality involves addressing ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, thus constructing a relationship to the sacred (e.g., Kiesling, Sorell, Montgomery, & Colwell, 2006). In line with Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (2003, pp. 205–206), we refer to both themes and define *spiritual development* as 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, purpose, and contribution."

Following Lerner et al. (2008), we assessed spiritual development in this study by reference mostly to its transcendent aspect. In line with many other scholars and extant research findings (e.g., Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Lerner et al., 2008), we contend that spiritual development and self-transcendence are cultivated both within and outside religious traditions. Hence, belonging to a religious community does not have to be a necessary precursor of such development. This is especially pertinent to the Israeli context, which unlike the United States, includes a majority of individuals who perceive themselves as secular and even have negative views regarding traditional religiosity (Ezrachi, 2004). In terms of antecedents of spiritual development and based on studies assessing religious involvement of youth (Furrow, King, & White, 2004; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 2001; Markstrom, 1999), it seems plausible that a warm and accepting relational context will be fertile ground for the promotion of such development. Yet, difficult relational background and interpersonal challenges may also promote seeking of spiritual meaning and the development of spirituality and transcendence (Kirkpatrick, 1999). Thus, the developmental path from relational context to spiritual development may be complex.

In terms of psychosocial outcomes of spiritual development, self-transcendence, which involves the capacity to extend beyond the self, is expected to be associated with corresponding values, such as having a strong social conscience and low endorsement of material and self-aggrandizement values. Furthermore, self-transcendence should also be revealed in positive orientation toward others, such as in empathy, benevolence, and generosity (Lerner et al., 2008).

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Psychological maturity relates to the attainment of certain qualities and capacities that are expected of a mature person in a given society (Arnett, 2000; Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006; Donnellan, Conger, & Burzette, 2007). Interestingly, there is a high level of agreement regarding the expectations of a mature adult among members within cultures and also across cultures, at least in the Western world (Arnett & Galambos, 2003).

In a series of studies, Arnett (1998, 2000) identified several major domains of markers of adulthood. These included biological or age-related attributes such as reaching a certain age and the biological capacity to bear children, and role transitions and family capacities such as marriage, independent residence, being employed full time, and parenting. However, when appraising maturity, psychological aspects were perceived as most central. These psychological aspects included issues of *separation and individuation*, such as the negotiation of a mature and equal stance vis-à-vis parents and the capacity to make independent decisions and to care for oneself, and *emotional maturity*, namely the capacity to control impulses, the adoption of a broad unselfish perspective, and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's action. In a study conducted with Israeli youth, emotional maturity and, in particular, accepting responsibility for your own actions emerged as the most central and important marker of mature adulthood as perceived by adolescents, college students, and parents of adolescents (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003).

Emotional and psychological maturity involves a sense of resilience and meaning, and connectedness with others and with the community (Donnellan, Conger, & Burzette, 2007; Greenberger & Bond, 1984). Hence, in terms of psychosocial characteristics, it should be associated with a strong and coherent self-image and high resiliency. In addition, it is expected to be associated with general positive orientation toward close others as well as toward the community and society at large. These latter characteristics are expected to be observed in empathy toward others, tendency to contribute to others, and values that go along with such tendencies. With regard to antecedents of emotional and psychological maturity, it has been shown to be cultivated mostly in a warm, accepting, and autonomy-promoting relational context (Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson Bar-On, 2004).

HOW MIGHT SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT BE RELATED TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY?

As becomes apparent from this analysis, the two domains of spiritual development and the development of emotional and psychological maturity may be highly related and similar. It seems that both could emerge from the same antecedents (e.g., warm and thriving relational context) and that both have similar outcomes or psychosocial characteristics, such as consideration of others, empathy, and social conscience. If this is indeed the case—namely that a high correlation exist between emotional maturity and self-transcendence—it could be argued that the two domains actually reflect the same analogous developmental processes but that for various reasons they have been titled differently by scholars from different disciplines. For example, it might be argued that what some scholars from the traditional developmental psychology described as positive emotional development or emotional maturity is in fact what other scholars (e.g., within the psychology of religion) would term spiritual development.

Several conceptualizations regarding the possible interplay between these two domains of development have been discussed. One of the most illuminating conceptualizations emerged within transpersonal psychology, a distinct school of psychology that is interested in studying human experiences that transcend the traditional boundaries of the ego (Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007).

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Abraham Maslow, the founder of transpersonal psychology in the late 1960s (Maslow, 1971), asserted an interesting and challenging view in relation to the place of spirituality in human development. Maslow is most known for his theory of a hierarchy of needs. At the bottom of this hierarchy are *Deficiency-needs*, such as physiological needs, the need for safety, the need for love and belongingness, and the need for esteem, and at the top are *Being-needs*, or growth needs, in particular self-actualization. Maslow postulated a hierarchical organization in which all needs are seen as central and primary, yet those lower in the hierarchy (e.g., physiological needs) have to be at least partly satisfied before needs at the higher level in the hierarchy (e.g., need for self-actualization) become dominant.

Satisfaction of these needs promotes the development of a healthy actualized self and reflects a *personal* developmental sphere. However, in exploring the farthest reaches of human nature, Maslow (1971) suggested that there were possibilities beyond self-actualization. Maslow postulated another developmental level—*transpersonal*—in which the actualized person transcends his or her own self to find spiritual fulfillment and self-transcendence. Maslow's self-transcendence level recognizes the human needs for creativity, compassion, and spirituality. It involves states of consciousness in which the sense of self is expanded beyond the ordinary definitions and self-images of the individual personality. Self-transcendence refers to the direct experience of a fundamental

connection, harmony, or unity with others and the world through "peak experiences" and "plateau experiences." In such situations the sense of self dissolves into awareness of a greater unity, and individuals have a deep sense of peacefulness or tranquility; feel in tune, in harmony, or at one with the universe; and experience a deep or profound understanding along with strong or deep positive emotions (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993).

The self which is transcended is the personality or ego-self, the collection of self-concepts, self-images, and roles that develops through one's interactions with others and with the environment. Transpersonal approaches hold that this ego-self is not the same as one's true nature or essence and that self-transcendence opens one to the experience of this deeper nature. Maslow described those who had achieved self-actualization as having "strong identities, people who know who they are, where they are going, what they want, what they are good for, in a word, as, strong Selves, using themselves well and authentically and in accordance with their own true nature" (Maslow, 1971, p. 280). Yet he viewed the next level in the hierarchy—the transpersonal level—as going beyond this strong and positive self-identity to involve relation to the sacred and the transcendence of the self. In line with his hierarchical view, individuals were expected to first reach a certain level of fulfillment of needs for safety, self-esteem, love, and belongingness, as well as reach a certain level of self-identity and self-actualization (i.e., emotional maturity) before they transcend this self and develop their spirituality to its fullest potential.

Yet Maslow acknowledged that individuals could experience what he termed "peak experiences" and have a sense of self-transcendence even when they have not yet satisfied deficiency needs. He stated (Maslow, 1971, p. 281):

> I have recently found it more and more useful to differentiate between two kinds (or better, degrees) of self-actualizing people, those who were clearly healthy, but with little or no experiences of transcendence, and those in whom transcendent experiencing was important and even central.

And then he continues:

> It is unfortunate that I can no longer be theoretically neat at this level. I find not only self-actualizing persons who transcend, but also non-healthy people, non-self-actualizers who have important transcendent experiences. It seems to me that I have found some degree of transcendence in many people other than self-actualizing ones as I have defined this term. Perhaps it will be found even more widely as we develop better techniques and better conceptualizations. After all, I am reporting here my impressions from the most preliminary of explorations.

This statement may be viewed as a forerunner of one of the most important issues regarding spiritual development, namely the ways in which spiritual

development is related to psychological and emotional development and maturity. Is a certain level of psychological and emotional maturity required before spiritual development and self-transcendence come to the forefront? How is spirituality and self-transcendence experienced by an individual who is not psychologically and emotionally mature or healthy? Are spiritual development and psychological and emotional maturity two separate domains of development? Are they totally independent domains, or does each contribute to and advance the other?

Interestingly, Maslow's expectation that true or positive transcendence necessitates a certain level of self-actualization and a certain level of emotional maturity accords with similar conceptions within Judaism, wherein individuals are expected to turn to the mystical realm (i.e., the study of Kabbalah) only after a certain age and after a certain maturity has been achieved. Similar notions are discussed also within Hinduism thought.

Other scholars, such as Ken Wilber, who started his intellectual journey within transpersonal psychology, discussed somewhat different possibilities. Wilber (1996, 2000) distinguished between *Pre-personal* stages of development, prior to the development of a stable sense of self; *Personal* stages, wherein the development of a coherent self-identity is achieved; and *Transpersonal* stages, in which a stable holistic awareness of a whole that is larger than the individual ego is developed. Wilber viewed higher stages of development as incorporating the lower stages, rather than dissolving them. He postulated the existence of several somewhat independent lines of development, such as emotional, cognitive, moral, and spiritual, which influence each other but only partly. Hence, he argued that a person can be developed in one line (e.g., cognitive) but less developed in another (e.g., emotional or spiritual).

Furthermore, like Maslow, he argued that experiences of transcendence could occur at any stage of development, but he added that how these experiences are interpreted depends on the stage of development of the individual (i.e., pre-personal, personal, or transpersonal). He further suggested that transcendental experiences at lower stages can propel the developmental process toward higher levels of consciousness. Though a certain level of emotional maturity and self-identity must be reached before a person moves to the transpersonal stage, according to Wilber, spiritual development has its own independent line of development, which starts before a transpersonal stage is reached. Further, according to Wilber, there might be certain cross-influences between the different developmental lines. However, he did not specify how these lines of development are expected to be associated and to what extent.

MODELS OF INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO DOMAINS

Assuming that the two domains or lines of development (spiritual and psychological/emotional) are somewhat independent, what might be their interrelations? In

general, there might be several ways by which these two domains of development could be related: The two domains may share similar antecedents, and they may be associated with similar outcomes and each may or may not affect development in the other domain. Four models reflecting these possibilities are suggested:

1. *Independent—shared outcomes.* According to this model, the two domains may be mostly unrelated and develop quite independent of each other. In such case, the antecedents that contribute to or impede development in each of these domains may be distinct. Yet, development in each domain (spiritual and emotional) may independently contribute to or be associated with similar psychosocial outcomes. For example, development in each domain may be independently associated with the capacity for empathy and for consideration of others' points of views.

2. *Independent—shared antecedents.* Alternatively, the two domains may be independent (i.e., they do not affect each other) yet may be related, namely similar antecedents (e.g., a supportive and cohesive relational context) may promote development in each domain. In such case, development in one domain is expected to be related to development in the other domain through a common causal factor.

3. *Unidirectional dependence—emotional maturity as prerequisite to spiritual development.* As suggested by Maslow, one possibility of dependence is that a certain level of emotional maturity and psychological development is required before spiritual development and, in particular, true self transcendence can be cultivated; namely, a certain level of emotional maturity is a prerequisite for true transcendence. In such case, spiritual experiences without the emotional maturity will be colored by this immaturity and may lead to problematic outcomes, such as self-aggrandizement or low resilience.

4. *Bidirectional contribution.* A fourth model involves a situation in which each domain contributes to the other. In such case, spiritual experiences can trigger processes that lead to better emotional integration and foster higher levels of psychological maturity. Such developmental processes are expected when spiritual experiences are perceived as positive and benign but may also occur when spiritual or transcendental experiences trigger anxiety, distress, and sometimes acute crisis. In such case, the crisis may trigger new psychological organization and personal growth. Similarly, emotional and psychological maturity may contribute to the emergence of a quest for ultimate meaning and transcendence and promote the spiritual development of the individual.

The study presented in this chapter provided a first step in examining these four models in a sample of Israeli college students. In the study we examined concurrently self-transcendence and psychological/emotional maturity. We assessed the correlation between these two lines of development and looked at their

association with possible antecedents, in particular with indicators of a positive and supportive relational context. In addition, we investigated their association with various outcomes, in particular, with orientation to others, values, and the self system. The patterns of associations that would emerge could throw light on the various models and suggest future avenues for longitudinal research.

ISRAELI CULTURE

The study was conducted in a unique cultural milieu—the Israeli cultural context. In line with a developmental systems approach, it is clear the development of the individuals examined in the study is highly interconnected, influenced by, and influencing the cultural context. Hence a brief portrayal of some of the relevant characteristics of Israeli culture is undertaken. Israel is a young country, founded in May 1948. It is also quite small geographically and in terms of population (about 7 million citizens). Throughout the years, Israel has engaged in several wars with its Arab neighboring countries, including frequent armed clashes with the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These constant hostilities have led most Israelis to experience anxiety, loss, and trauma (Milgram, 1993), and may have propelled many Israelis to seek spiritual meaning.

Like many other countries, Israel is composed of various subcultures with distinct ethnic origins and socioeconomic levels. Most Israeli citizens are Jewish (80%), with about half regarding themselves as secular. For this secular population, the Jewish origin reflects a national identity rather than a religious one. Along with an ambivalent stance toward institutionalized religion, during the past decade Israel has seen a large surge of interest in spirituality broadly defined. This includes interest in Eastern spiritual traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism (Valley, 2006), New Religious Movements, New Age groups (Ezrachi, 2004), as well as a return to Judaism with a stronger accent on its spiritual or mystical facets such as Kabbalah (Huss, 2007). Hence, notions of spirituality and self-transcendence are moderately common among college students.

Israel also has a large minority (20%) of Arabs who are further divided into various religions, mostly Muslim, Christian, and Druze. In general, Israel is a developed, industrialized, Western culture, and the Israeli Jewish secular middle class is very similar to the North American one in its focus on individualistic values (Schwartz, 1994). In contrast, many individuals from the Arab minority and orthodox Jews are more communal and traditional in their values.

Two unique features of Israeli society are relevant with respect to the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In Israel, the great majority of the 18-year-old cohort of Jewish youngsters (92% men and 65% women) leave their parents' home for a period of two to three years' mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces (Mayseless, 1993). The timing of the military service is determined by one's age and is not affected by maturity. Furthermore, many Israeli youth, who plan to go to college, take a year or two after their military service to travel abroad, work, or study to improve their grades before they enter college. Hence, many Israeli

college students are in their mid-twenties and have had more life experience and perhaps are more emotionally mature than the typical college student in North America or Europe (Salomon & Mayseless, 2003). This moratorium and, in particular, the journeys of youth in Israel to the Far East or to South America have been discussed as both reflecting and enhancing the spiritual quests of these youth (Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2004).

Another important characteristic of Israeli society has to do with its emphasis on communal values and practices (Elon, 1971). Israeli society is conspicuous in placing high value on the family and on belonging to a social group (Peres & Katz, 1981). Hence, though Israel is a Western industrialized society with mostly individualistic values, it is more communal and more collectivist than the United States (Salomon & Mayseless, 2003). Many college students live at home and, if they don't, their contact with their family of origin is quite frequent (e.g., visiting the family almost every week, having phone calls every other day). These characteristics should be considered when examining the findings regarding spiritual development and emotional and psychological maturity.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants of this study were 215 college students (154 female and 61 male) from a medium-sized university in Israel. Ages ranged from 19 to 30 years ($M = 24.5$; $SD = 2.89$). The sample included 111 (51.6%) freshman, 51 (23.7%) sophomore, and 40 (18.6%) senior undergraduate students (13 did not identify their year of study). Of the participants, 72% reported an average of B and above in their grades. The majority of the students (187; 87%) were single, whereas 22 (10%) indicated they were married and 6 (2%) were divorced or separated.

The sample included 152 (70.5%) Jews, 27 (12.5%) Muslims, 19 (9%) Druze, and 17 (8%) Christians. Seventy students (32.5%) indicated they were raised as religious. Students' parents were mostly middle-class, with 52% having an academic degree. Number of siblings ranged from 0 (only child) to 6 ($M = 1.92$; $SD = 1.13$).

Students completed the questionnaires after they were informed of the purpose of the study and signed an informed consent form.

Measures

The packet of questionnaires included various measures, translated from English into Hebrew and back-translated into English. For the purpose of this study, we report on part of the measures included in this packet: a demographic questionnaire, measures assessing the two domains of development (emotional maturity and spiritual development), and measures pertaining to four areas: self-perceptions, orientation to others, values, and relational context.

Demographic Questionnaire

A short demographic questionnaire was administered to participants requesting information such as their age, religion, gender, grades, and year of study.

Domains of Development

Emotional maturity was assessed by means of five items reflecting the indicators identified by Arnett and Galambos (2003) and others (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003) as representing emotional maturity (e.g., "taking responsibility for my actions," "controlling my temper"; participants used a Likert scale ranging from $1 =$ not true at all to $5 =$ very true; $\alpha = .70$). High scores denote high levels of emotional and psychological maturity.

Spiritual development was assessed using items from the *Piedmont Transcendence Scale* (Piedmont, 1999; e.g., "I feel that on a higher level all of us share a common bond"). The measure contained seven items, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale ($1 =$ strongly disagree to $5 =$ strongly agree; Cronbach $\alpha = .88$)

Self-Perceptions

Scholastic Competence (Harter, 1988) was assessed by four items from the Harter scale (1988) using the response scale devised by Harter (1988) with higher scores denoting higher self-esteem (Cronbach $\alpha = .64$).

Resilience was assessed using items adapted from the Symptom Checklist-90-R inventory (Derogatis, 1994). The measure contained five items, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale ($1 =$ strongly disagree to $5 =$ strongly agree; e.g., "I am good at resolving conflicts I have with other people," "I am good at bouncing back when bad things happen to me"; Cronbach $\alpha = .65$).

Orientation to Others

Empathy was assessed by a measure created and developed by Lerner et al. (2005), based on the Eisenberg Sympathy Scale (ESS; Eisenberg et al., 1996) and the Empathic Concern Subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983). The measure contained nine items and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale ($1 =$ strongly disagree to $5 =$ strongly agree; e.g., "It bothers me when bad things happen to good people"; Cronbach $\alpha = .79$).

Contribution Behavior was assessed using items adapted from the 4-H Study of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005). The measure contained four items, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale ($1 =$ never to $5 =$ every day; e.g., "tutoring others"; Cronbach $\alpha = .62$).

Efficacy Regarding Contribution to Community was assessed using three items (e.g., "I believe that I can make a change in my community;" Likert scale ranging from $1 =$ strongly disagree to $5 =$ strongly agree; Cronbach $\alpha = .78$).

Generosity (Kasser, 2002) was assessed using a six-item scale, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; e.g., "I am a pretty generous person when it comes to my money and sharing my things"; Cronbach α = .72).

Values

Religious Pluralism (Roeser, 2005) was assessed using a three-item scale, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; e.g., "I believe all students should have to take a world religions class"; Cronbach α = .74).

Social Conscience was assessed using items adapted from various sources (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998; Leffert et al., 1998; Greenberger & Bond, 1984; Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The measure contained five items, and participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not important to me at all to 5 = very important to me; e.g., "It is important for me to reduce hunger and poverty in the world"; Cronbach α = .83).

Relational Context

Social Support was assessed using a measure containing 16 items (Roeser et al., 2008). Participants were requested to report if they could rely on support from various persons (e.g., parents, friends) using a yes, no, or unsure response scale; Cronbach α = .78).

Positive Ethnic Identity scale contained 13 items (e.g., "I feel good about my cultural/ethnic background"; Phinney, 1992). Participants were asked to respond using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; Cronbach α = .90).

Positive Peer Characteristics (Roeser & Peck, 2003) comprised five items, and participants were asked to respond using a three-point Likert scale (1 = none of them to 3 = most of them; e.g., "My friends get good grades in school"; Cronbach α = .60).

Frequency of Religious Practices was assessed by five items (Smith, 2005), and participants were asked to respond using an 11-point Likert scale (1 = never to 11 = several times a day; e.g., "How often do you go to religious services?" "How often do you study religious scriptures?"; Cronbach α = .84).

Frequency of Spiritual Practices, which are not directly associated with an established religion, was assessed by four items (Smith, 2005), and participants were asked to respond using an 11-point Likert scale (1 = never to 11 = several times a day; e.g., "How often do you meditate by yourself?" "How often do you participate in retreats whose purpose is spiritual?"; Cronbach α = .74). Frequency of religious practices was moderately correlated with frequency of spiritual practices attesting to their associated yet distinct nature (r = .42, p < .01)

Table 13.1 The Associations Between Spiritual Development and Emotional Maturity and Psychosocial Characteristics

Psychosocial Characteristics	Domains of Development	
	Emotional Maturity	Spiritual Development
Self-Perceptions		
Scholastic competence	0.21**	0.05
Resilience	0.39**	0.38**
Orientation to Others		
Empathy	0.34**	0.27**
Contribution behavior	0.28**	0.26**
Efficacy: contribution to community	0.29**	0.34**
Generosity	0.34**	0.44**
Values		
Religious pluralism	0.23**	0.33**
Social conscience	0.53**	0.37**
Relational Context		
Social support	0.23**	0.44**
Ethnic identity	0.14*	0.26**
Positive peer characteristics	0.30**	0.35**
Frequency of religious practices	0.29**	0.55**
Frequency of spiritual practices	0.15*	0.41**

Note: N = 209-215; * $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

RESULTS

Emotional maturity and spiritual development were moderately correlated ($r = .35, p < .01$), indicating that the two domains of development are associated but are also quite distinct. We further examined the zero-order Pearson correlations between the indicators of development in the two domains and the psychosocial characteristics assessed in this study: self-perceptions, orientation to others, values, and relational context. As can be seen in Table 13.1, both emotional maturity and spiritual development were significantly correlated with most psychosocial characteristics: scholastic competence (only emotional development), resilience, empathy, contribution behavior, efficacy to contribute to community, generosity, religious pluralism, social conscience, social support, positive ethnic identity, positive peer characteristics, and frequency of religious and spiritual practices.

This pattern of correlations may indicate a positive common core for both domains, which is the one driving the positive and significant correlations with better self-perceptions, more positive orientation to others, moral values, and helpful and reliable social context. To examine the joint and unique effects of each of these two domains and, in particular, to examine the possibility of an interaction whereby high levels of spiritual development coupled with low levels of emotional

maturity would be associated with problematic psychosocial characteristics, we conducted the following analysis. For each domain of development, we created two groups, (1) low—below the median, and (2) high—above the median (i.e., one group low in emotional maturity and another high in emotional maturity). We performed a two-by-two MANOVA, with both groups of emotional maturity (low and high) and both groups of spiritual development (low and high) serving as independent variables and the psychosocial characteristics serving as dependent variables. The general effect of emotional maturity was significant (Wilks $= .615$; $F(13, 174) = 8.40$, $p < .001$; partial Eta Squared $= .385$), as was the general effect of spiritual development (Wilks $= .77$; $F(13, 174) = 4.01$, $p < .001$; partial Eta Squared $= .23$). The interaction was not significant.

As can be seen in Table 13.2 with the spiritual development groups, there was a significant effect for all of the variables except scholastic competence. Inspection of the means showed that in all of them the high spirituality group demonstrated superior functioning, which was evident in resiliency, positive orientation to others (empathy, contribution behavior, efficacy to contribute, generosity), moral values (religious pluralism, social conscience), and positive relational context (social support, strong ethnic identity, positive peer characteristics, high frequency of religious and spiritual practices). The emotional maturity groups showed a similar pattern, yet effects were not significant for some of the variables: efficacy to contribute, generosity, religious pluralism, social support, ethnic identity, and frequency of spiritual practices.

To further examine the joint contribution of the two developmental domains, while controlling for demographic variables and taking advantage of the whole variance of the indicators of development, we conducted 11 hierarchical regressions with each of the dependent variables. In the first step we entered age and gender (dummy-coded), and in the second step we entered emotional maturity and spiritual development. For all variables, except four, both emotional maturity and spiritual development were significant predictors. For scholastic competence, only emotional maturity was a significant predictor, and for social support, ethnic identity, and frequency of spiritual practices, only spiritual development was a significant predictor.

DISCUSSION

Our data provided cross-national and cross-cultural validity to the assessment of spirituality and positive youth development, as well as suggested important variability in the developmental trajectories of spirituality and positive youth development among youth. The results of this study presented a clear and coherent picture. The two domains of development were found to be associated to a moderate degree. Hence, they cannot be described as totally independent of each other, nor as mostly parallel or similar to each other. Such a moderate correlation can ensue from a common antecedent, which similarly contributed to the development of each domain. For example, we postulated that warm

Table 13.2 Results of MANOVA with Emotional Maturity and Spiritual Development

Domains of Development	Emotional Maturity		Spiritual Development		Emotional F Value (1, 186)	Spiritual F Value (1, 186)
Psychosocial Characteristics	Low (n=99)	High (n=91)	Low (n=99)	High (n=91)		
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Self-Perceptions						
Scholastic	3.43	3.63	3.52	3.53	6.10**	0.39
competence	(.61)	(.55)	(.63)	(.55)		
Resilience	−0.19	0.26	−0.17	0.23	17.42***	11.78***
	(.60)	(.59)	(.58)	(.62)		
Orientation to Others						
Empathy	3.84	4.17	3.86	4.15	7.96**	5.14*
	(.62)	(.61)	(.66)	(.57)		
Contribution behavior	−0.17	0.20	−0.14	0.17	9.04**	4.78*
	(.59)	(.77)	(.65)	(.73)		
Efficacy: contribution	3.32	3.57	3.17	3.72	0.52	18.25***
to community	(.88)	(.78)	(.86)	(.72)		
Generosity	3.37	3.68	3.27	3.78	3.04	21.76***
	(.63)	(.72)	(.68)	(.61)		
Values						
Religious pluralism	2.73	3.06	2.60	3.22	0.86	12.18***
	(1.1)	(1.13)	(1.13)	(1.03)		
Social conscience	3.10	3.74	3.14	3.70	18.29***	11.35***
	(.86)	(.75)	(.82)	(.82)		
Relational Context						
Social support	1.91	2.06	1.81	2.16	0.82	36.70***
	(.41)	(.39)	(.36)	(.37)		
Ethnic identity	2.72	2.89	2.64	2.98	0.95	12.98***
	(.55)	(.62)	(.50)	(.64)		
Positive peer	2.08	2.28	2.05	2.32	6.55*	20.63***
characteristics	(.35)	(.36)	(.32)	(.36)		
Frequency of	3.56	5.37	3.16	5.80	13.07***	56.55***
religious practices	(2.03)	(2.54)	(1.79)	(2.34)		
Frequency of	3.56	5.37	3.16	5.80	13.07***	56.55***
religious practices	(1.45)	(1.99)	(1.17)	(1.91)		

Note: * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$; *** $p<.001$

and nurturing relational environments may similarly promote development in each of these domains. The results of this study do not tend to support such an interpretation. The indicators of positive relational context were associated with both domains, when examining the zero-order correlations. However, in the MANOVA and in the hierarchical regressions, general social support and strong ethnic identity were associated more consistently with spiritual development than with emotional maturity.

This profile of results may reflect the importance of the community, perhaps a religious community, in supporting and promoting spiritual development. The findings in the MANOVA, where sense of efficacy in contributing to the community was only significant with spiritual development, accord with this interpretation. Further, in line with this interpretation, spiritual development was moderate to highly associated with frequency of religious practice. This interesting finding attests to the possible importance of the religious community in promoting spiritual development in youth even in a country, such as Israel, which is highly secular. Still, spiritual development was similarly associated with frequency of spiritual practices not directly related to an established religion, which was only moderately associated with the religious practice items. It seems that there may be several routes to the development of spiritual transcendence, both inside and outside traditional religious groups. Yet in both cases a supportive relational context seems to be highly important.

Why was such a context not as important for emotional maturity? One possibility is that emotional maturity is more strongly related to intimate and trustworthy close relationships with a few significant others and not to a sense of general support and embeddedness in a community. The measures that we employed in this study did not allow the assessment of this quality in the relationship and instead assessed a sense of support in the general network. If these interpretations are correct, future research may need to disentangle the different kinds of relational closeness and support and examine the possibility that they are distinctly associated with development in each domain.

One of the most illuminating findings of this study is that both domains were significantly and independently associated with the same positive outcomes, such as with moral values (i.e., social conscience), and with an empathic and benevolent stance toward others. In other words, the two domains of development seem to act independently in contributing to the individual's prosocial and benevolent perspective and behavior. Together these findings suggest that spiritual development as assessed in this study and emotional maturity are not associated with each other, because they are affected by the same common antecedent and are not redundant in predicting various positive outcomes. In short, the results of this study do not support the first two models that were described in the introduction: the one assuming that the two domains are *Independent with shared outcomes* and the other assuming that they are *Independent with shared antecedents*. In fact, the two domains seem to be interrelated, but is there *unidirectional dependence* as Maslow (1971) suggested or a *bidirectional contribution?*

The results of the study are also quite clear with regard to the issue addressed by Maslow regarding his hierarchy of needs. The analyses of our data do not support the notion that a certain level of maturity is required before spiritual development can be achieved. Further, our analyses do not support the contention that transcendental experiences in less-mature individuals lead to negative phenomena. At least in our sample of highly functioning emerging adults, this was not the case. The cross-sectional nature of our study did not allow us to directly examine the possibility of bidirectional contributions. The current profile of results neither supports nor contradicts this possibility, and so this model remains highly plausible.

Several considerations should be noted. Our study relied on self-report measures and assessed some of the constructs (e.g., emotional maturity) using a rather short questionnaire. Future research needs to examine the questions addressed in this study with a multimethod, multisource design to enrich and strengthen its findings. Furthermore, our results reflect the specific cultural milieu and age group that we studied. The participants of our study were well-functioning, highly articulate young Israeli men and women. Other samples of non-college-bound youth or youth who are younger and less experienced and youth in other cultures may reveal yet other profiles of results. Similarly, our sample was moderately secular, reflecting the normative population of college students in Israel. Future research may also examine populations that are more religious in their orientation. Finally, the research questions addressed in this study were examined in a cross-sectional research design. Though these questions lend themselves to such inquiry, to fully understand the developmental processes of spiritual development and emotional maturity and in particular to assess the possibility that each developmental domain contributes to the other necessitates a longitudinal design.

During the period of the transition from adolescence to adulthood, youth develop in different domains, including two highly related ones: emotional development and spiritual development. For the past several decades, large research efforts have been invested to conceptualize and understand processes that lead to maturity and to positive emotional development. Consequently, we now have a sound body of knowledge regarding the core characteristics of positive emotional development and the processes that enable such development in adolescence (e.g., Steinberg, 2001). However, the study of spiritual development has only more recently become a focus of research attention. Hence, we know much less about spiritual development (but see Benson et al., 1998; Lerner et al., 2008) and, in particular, we know even less about how these two lines of development are related. To fully address these important questions and to assess the complex interrelations between these two developmental domains, a longitudinal research design is required in which the voices of the youth themselves will also be heard.

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