

Chapter 10
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The Study of Age-Related Changes in Meaning Systems

- Changes in spirituality
- Changes in private beliefs and practices
- Religion and health

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Why study the quest for meaning?

- It is the meaning we attach to experience that matters rather than the experience itself.
- The quest for meaning is a basic human experience.
- Most cultures support the tradition that spirituality and wisdom increase with age.

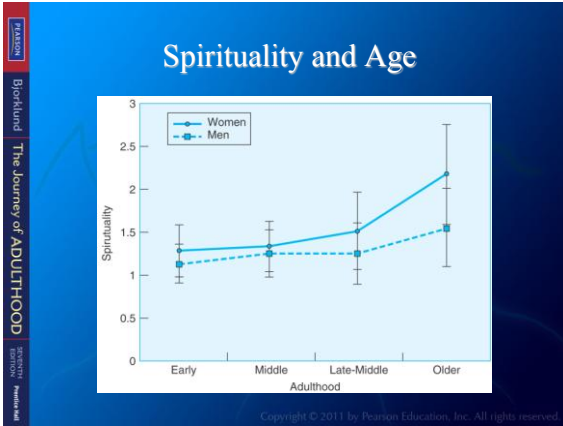
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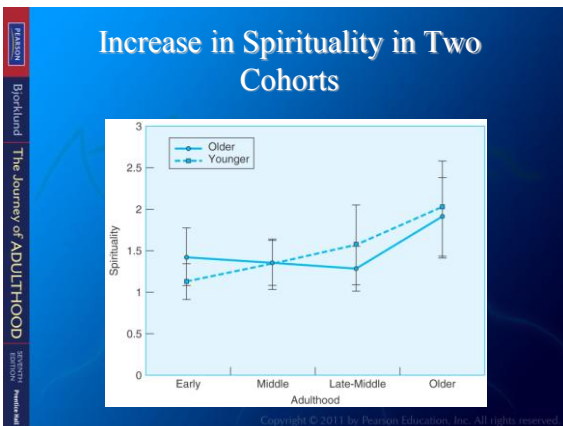
Changes in Spirituality

- Increase in religiosity over life course.
- Gender and racial/ethnic differences in religiosity.
- Religious participation in US is higher than in most European countries.

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- ### Changes in Private Beliefs and Practices
- Older adults participate more than younger people.
 - Increase over adulthood with a period of stability at end of life.
 - Timing of spirituality increase related to age, gender, and prevailing cultural conditions.
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Religion and Health

- People who attend religious services live longer.
- Religion may promote healthy behavior, provide social support, teach coping skills, and promote positive emotions.
- Religious practices and spiritual beliefs, especially forgiveness and prayer, may protect individuals from effects of stress.

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Themes of Spiritual Development

Kohlberg

- Distinguishes between **form** and **content** of thinking.
- People move through series of invariant stages in moral reasoning.
- Each stage reflects meaning system about right and wrong.

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Kohlberg Methodology

- Measurement procedure
- Stages
- Data
- Evaluation and comment

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Kohlberg: Measurement Procedure

- Assesses level of moral reasoning through moral judgment interview.
- Presented hypothetical dilemma and looks at moral reasoning.

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Kohlberg: Levels and Stages

Level 1: Preconventional	Level 3: Postconventional
Stage 1 – Punishment and obedience	Stage 5 – Social contract
Stage 2 – Naïve hedonism	Stage 6 – Individual principles of conscience
Level 2: Conventional	
Stage 3 – Good boy/girl	
Stage 4 – Social order maintaining	

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Kohlberg: The Data

Samples

- Chicago sample; Turkish city sample; Turkish village sample

Conclusion

- Average scores increased steadily with age in all three studies
- Cultural differences in speed of movement through stages
- Longitudinal research needed to address moral reasoning across full adult years

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Is there a stage 6...or even stage 7?

Stage 6: Universalistic – very uncommon
Organize moral judgment around clearly formulated moral principle of justice and respect.

Stage 7: Unity with being, with life, or with God.
Emerges toward end of life.

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Kohlberg: Evaluation and Comment

Support:

- People move through fairness and morality concept stages
- Up to stage 5 – fixed order, cumulative, form structure as whole
- Universal stage sequence.

Criticism:

- Narrowly focusing on concepts of justice and fairness.
- Omits concepts of care.
- Omits attention to gender differences.

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Development of Faith

Fowler’s theory of faith development:

Faith is a set of assumptions or understandings about the nature of our connections with others and with world in which we live.

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Fowler's Stages of Faith

Synthetic-conventional: authority found outside oneself.

Individuative-reflective: authority is found internally.

Conjunctive faith: consider welfare of others.

Universalizing faith: live principles of love and justice.

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Basic Points about Fowler's Stages

- Sequential stages are assumed.
- Each stage has "proper time" of ascendancy in person's life.
- Each stage is wider and more encompassing than preceding one.

Check your text. What do the research findings say about this theory?

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Integrating Meaning and Personality

Loevinger's Conformist Stage sounds like	Kohlberg's Conventional Morality	and Fowler's Conventional Faith
Loevinger's Conscientious and Individualistic Stages sound like	Maslow's layer of esteem needs and Kohlberg's Social Contract	and Fowler's Individuated Reflective Faith

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Integrating Meaning and Personality

Loevinger's Autonomous and Integrated Stages sound like Fowler's Conjunctive Faith and Maslow's Layers of Self-Esteem

Is there a higher stage?

Loevinger's Self-transcendence Kohlberg's Unity Orientation Fowler's Universalizing Faith and Maslow's Peak Experiences

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A Synthesizing Model

Kegan

- All humans have two equal desires/built-in models
 - Deep desire for connection
 - Equal desire for independence
- Evolutionary truce

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Stages of Mystical Experience

Mysticism: self-transcendent experiences found in religions across the ages.

Stage 1: Awakening
 Stage 2: Purification
 Stage 3: Illumination

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Transitions
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The Process of Transition

Transitions: transformations from one stage to the next.

- Conformist to individualistic
- Individualistic to integrated
- Integrated to self-transcendent

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Transitions
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At the conclusion of Chapter 9, Bjorklund suggests:

“All of what I have said and all of what these various theorists have said is based on a single metaphor...”

Can you identify and explain this metaphor?

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Chapter Review

1. The quest for meaning, or _____, is an integral part of the human experience, with signs of its existence found in archeological sites, in all cultures today, and even as a genetic trait in humans.
2. Psychology has long held that it is the meaning we attach to our experiences rather than the experiences themselves that defines _____ for us.

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Chapter Review

3. The idea of _____, or the growth of meaning systems as we go through adulthood, is well known in literature, mythology, and psychological theories, although there is no agreement on what experiences in life cause the changes in meaning systems.

4. Empirical study of _____ has increased dramatically in the last 15 years, and most of the studies address the question of whether this trait changes as we age.

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Chapter Review

5. It is suggested that people in _____ adulthood retain their spiritual beliefs and private practices even though they are no longer able to attend services.

6. Two groups that were followed longitudinally show an _____ in spirituality during the adult years.

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Chapter Review

7. People, especially women, who attend _____ services live longer than those who do not.

8. One theory of the development of meaning systems is Kohlberg's theory of the development of _____.

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Chapter Review

9. A second theory of spiritual development is Fowler's theory of _____ development. Like Kohlberg, Fowler was interested in the individual search for meaning, not the specific beliefs.

10. _____'s Synthesizing Model of the development of spirituality proposes that we move between the need to be part of the group and the need to be individuals.

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