

Religious Development Through the Lifespan

Religious Development

- Religious experience and commitments change over time.
 - Often in predictable, consistent ways
- How and why changes occur (or don't occur) are the essential questions to those studying religious development

Lifespan Development

- Erikson:
 - Stages of Psychosocial Development
 - Handout
- Overview of developmental “thinking” in psychology
- Relation to the development of personal religious commitment and spirituality

Necessary Elements for Religious Development

- Adequate (“healthy”) balance of autonomy and dependence
- Capacity for complex thought
- Capacity for discernment and judgment

Adequate Balance of Autonomy and Dependence

- Application of Erikson's stages
- Social Learning Theory
 - Reinforcement, punishment, and modeling
- Attachment Theory
 - Safe haven and secure base

Capacity for Complex Thought

- Piaget's Stages of Cognitive Development
 - Preoperational (ages 2-7)
 - Perception equals reality
 - Concrete Operational (ages 7-11)
 - Logic and reason is applied to the concrete
 - Formal Operational (ages 11-beyond)
 - Ability to think abstractly and conceptually

Capacity for Complex Thought

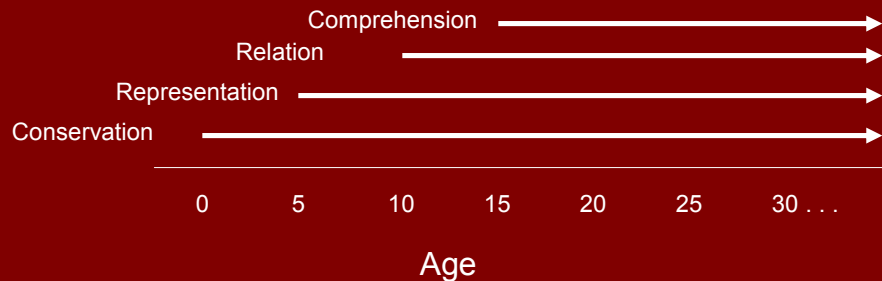
- Applications to religious development
 - Necessary but not sufficient
 - Illustration of individuals with mental limitations (study by Bassett et al., 1994)

Capacity for Complex Thought

- Elkind's Theory of Religious Development
 - Changing cognitive ability corresponds with changing "mental needs."
 - Stages identified by the "Search for . . ."

Capacity for Complex Thought

Search for . . .



Capacity for Discernment and Judgment

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

1. Preconventional
Emphasis on external control
2. Conventional
Emphasis on pleasing others
3. Postconventional
Acknowledgement of conflict and internal choice

Gilligan's alteration to correct for sex bias.

Theories of Religious Development

- Fowler's Stages of Faith
- What is "faith"?
 - Faith: "is the relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent about which concepts and propositions—beliefs—are fashioned." (p.11)
- Fowler was interested in how the form and function of this type of "faith" evolved or developed over time.

Fowler's Stages

- Primal, Undifferentiated Faith
 - (trust through separation)
- 1. Intuitive-Projective:
 - imaginative fears without logic
- 2. Mythic-Literal:
 - logic applied concretely and literally
- 3. Synthetic-Conventional:
 - demand for allegiance grows, is governed by a mutually held system of values

Fowler's Stages

4. Inductive-Reflective

individual values develop as a result of a willingness to explore self and worldview, often "demythologizing" symbols are understood rationally

5. Conjunctive

paradox, developed "second naivete", symbols are reunited with conceptual meaning, conscious openness to the strange truths of others.

6. Universalizing

oneness with the ultimate or with all of life, power to transform the injustices of the world

Summary of Religious Development

- Necessary elements of religious development.
- An example of theory/research related to each element.
- Fowler's Stages of Faith
 - What is "faith"?
 - What do the stages describe?