

Spiritual formation essay sample

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Abstract

In this research paper, I will try to illustrate my hypothesis of spiritual formation throughout the lifespan by using my interpretation of a collection of theories. The theories I will refer to include Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Theory, and Kohlberg's Development of Moral Reasoning Theory. In Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, he develops a theory of cognitive development that occurs in stages from persons under two years of age through age 14. Piaget's theory relates to the cognitive development of a human person. In Erik Erickson's Theory of Psychosocial Development, Erikson describes a theory consisting of eight stages of psychosocial development. This is in regard to personality development and the impact of external factors to that development. Lawrence Kohlberg sums up his theory with several distinct stages of development regarding moral reasoning. He presents moral dilemmas to persons, and observes how a person talks about those dilemmas. I will try to correlate my thoughts on spiritual formation throughout the life span to these theories as I use these authors' models of mature thought, moral and cognitive development.

Keywords: cognitive, psychosocial, centration

* According to Jean Piaget, there is a sequence of maturational thinking. Piaget proposes that a child will respond to external forces in order to formulate abstract thinking of that concept. This is the beginning of a life cycle of changes in a person's thinking and eventually a comprehensive cause and effect thinking begets more thinking leading to further maturation

within a person. Using his model of cognitive development, I will illustrate one's maturation through the lifecycle of spiritual formation. Using Piaget's theory and relating it to the spiritual formation of a person through the lifecycle I will illustrate my theory of this the spiritual formation thru the life cycle. The first stage in Piaget's cognitive development theory is the sensory-motor stage. In summary of Piaget's work on this stage, an infant orients himself or herself to objects in the world; by moving and reacting the infant learns what he is capable of as well as what the surrounding world is capable of. This sequence of actions, are learned responses and reflexes that will be repeated.

The infant will first direct actions toward him self and eventually direct the actions toward something other than himself. In the infancy stage of spirituality, the new " infant" or seeker, is at the beginning of a spiritual journey. Something stimulated the thought of a deeper meaning and in that thought was pleasure. The seeker will look within and become aware of a new perception in reality, one with meaning and reliant on a higher being. The second stage in Piaget's theory is the pre-operational stage. This is the ability for thought beyond a single dimension. Piaget calls this narrow focusing on a single object or salient dimension centration. A spiritual seeker will narrowly assume that their beliefs are universally accepted or the " right" way. According to Piaget, this thinking is egocentrism. The third stage of the theory is concrete operational stage. In this stage, Piaget describes a capacity for the thinking in a visual manner *

* About multiple concrete objects and " see" what can become of them a simple arithmetic, if you will. This understanding is fundamental to the <https://assignbuster.com/spiritual-formation-essay-sample/>

comprehension of simple arithmetical manipulations. It is also fundamental to a second operational skill: categorization. For a spiritual seeker, one can identify with or against different denominations, beliefs, and/or higher power. The fourth stage of Piaget's theory is formal operations stage. In this stage one will be able to think of things in a way that allows possibilities that are speculative in nature to become endless. This allows a reader of the Bible or Quran perhaps, that the ideas and stories are both figurative and literal, which requires and sparks a passion for much more thought to become. *

* Erik Erickson's theory uses distinct critical crises that occur in one's life that require an "ah hah" moment which leads to maturity. It is with this model I will now illustrate another perspective on spiritual formation through the life cycle. Erikson puts a clear emphasis on society's role in the development of an individual. Erikson advises that crises are never completely resolved and can re-emerge later in life, if left unresolved. I think that throughout one's spiritual journey we all have different things that we question, learn, discover and each of these changes in thinking all come from a moment that you decided that is your belief spiritually. Modeling Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, the first stage is basic trust vs. mistrust. A spiritual leader, a church family, a version of your bible; these things are all things that you rely on to get to know your higher power. These things should align in most basic beliefs but when they contradict one another, a seeker of truth must ask himself- "What do I believe?"

In the next stage of development, autonomy vs. shame are a crisis that occur when the thinking becomes strong and confident when the spiritual journey is welcoming, joyful and environmentally sound. In cases * If a <https://assignbuster.com/spiritual-formation-essay-sample/>

believer is surrounded with unstable fellowship, “lost in the crowd” churches and too many questions within, the seeker can be let down, disheartened and inability to learn the skills necessary to grow. In the initiative vs. guilt stage, a spiritual journey could lead someone through situations where one would want to become this “type” of believer, get inspired to playing out their role within their chosen belief structure. Industry vs. Inferiority is examples of a period in the spiritual journey leading someone through more fellowship. This social period is when a seeker is opening up to other believers and learning new concepts and translations of their spiritual learning source. Identity vs. role confusion is when a seeker realizes that they are a part of a bigger picture and their life and relationship with their higher power depends on their relationship with the world.

A sense of duty for others is felt within the confines of the belief system of choice. Solidarity vs. isolation could be an example of a path taken in the spiritual journey that “feels” right is comfortable and seems to line up well with one’s path. The next stage is generatively vs. self- absorption or stagnation where there are greater responsibilities taken on, and some struggle in finding purpose. This might be where a Christian is trying to find her role in the church, for example is she going to be a part of the outreach or youth ministry? The last stage is Integrity vs. despair. This stage is where one reflects a lot about their life and how it fits in spiritually and with the things that they did in their life were either meaningful or not. This will be struggle but for some people find liberty in their integrity. *

* In Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, Kohlberg provides six stages of moral development that hold moral reasoning as the basis for ethical

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behavior. In Kohlberg's theory, he allows the stages to overlap as the thinker reasons more responsibly, consistently, and post-conventionally. *

* The levels of Kohlberg's theory are:

* 1. Obedience and Punishment Orientation- Spiritually, one needs to know what the rules of the beliefs are based on. One focuses on the consequences of their actions on themselves. Most Christians, for example believe in God in Heaven and Satan in Hell, but they all have translations of numerous kinds. One seeks a true meaning of each part of their religious system. Examples of a middle-of-the-road Christian believer would, for example, ask himself, " Am I going to get in heaven? What must I do to not go to hell? " * 2. Self-Interest Oriented- This seems to be a period of questioning self in order to establish why you believe in your religious system and what the positive of that is. What are you obeying and why? What benefits does the spirituality bring to your soul? *

3. The next stage of Kohlberg's moral development theory is the time when self enters society by filling social roles. * 4. Driven by conformity and interpersonal harmony, a spiritual awareness is eager to guide self through discerned the boundaries and availability of filling a social role. The spiritual journey leads people to another stage, although stages can overlap, the next stage is the question of ultimate authority and corresponding social order. Self is obedience driven to maintain order so there is culpability to one's actions. * 5. Stage five is a social contrast driven thinking. This type of thought formation is the abstract reasoning on a universal ethics principle. Spiritually, one must obey their preferred religious system and walk with

integrity as the self finds inner peace in his role in life as one emulates their higher power.

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