CHAPTER 9

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

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Within the social work profession, there is a growing movement affirming that spirituality and religious beliefs are integral to the nature of the person and have a vital influence on human behavior (Hugen, 1998). Canda (1988) identifies spirituality as a basic aspect of human experience, both within and outside the context of religious institutions. If a social worker is going to approach a person in a holistic manner, he or she must be willing to consider each person as a wondrous compilation of bio-psycho-social-spiritual elements. In this way, workers will have an extremely broad base from which to approach the strength and resiliency in the people with whom they interact. Spiritual development, a component of this broad understanding of a person, seems to occur both in a measurable, outward, predictable manner, as well as in a less tangible, personal journey. These complex and intertwined spiritual growth markers will be explored within this chapter, primarily from a Christian point of view.

Smith (1997-1998) claims that Christians are 'meaning makers,' taking "the raw material of lived experience—the gladness and the sorrows—and trying to seek the deeper meaning, see the larger picture, understand the levels and layers of life in all its fullness and intensity. We live, and then in faith we try to discover meaning" (p. 2). Spiritual deepening, or development then, is about becoming more consciously aware—being attentive, staying alert, and paying attention to life as we seek meaning.

The Council on Social Work Education (2000) has recently added the concept of spirituality to the required list to be addressed within the curriculum of accredited schools of social work. There are many important ways in which to incorporate this information in the overall social work curriculum. For instance, the role of religious institutions in society can be investigated, while considering the impact of their presence, and the potential natural support networks such entities might lend for some persons. In addition, techniques utilized by social workers that value a variety of possible religious experiences or spiritual beliefs might be explored in a practice course. One aspect of the growing self-awareness of social work students might be focused on their personal faith or spiritual experiences, including awareness of their own beliefs, and the

impact of these on the people and their environments with which students will interact. Finally, one might argue that spiritual development content must be included in a course in which community is considered, as many religious traditions feature a strong cultural and communal identity and experience.

Incorporating spirituality within the Human Behavior and Social Environment life span content is a foundational attempt to honor holistic personal development. One can consider the development of an individual's spirituality from gestation through the years of life to death, while considering the socioeconomic, political, racial, ethnic, and greater societal influences impacting a person's faith journey. This approach is based on a clear assumption that an individual's spiritual capacity is not stagnant, but indeed develops, changes, and potentially increases. This type of thinking immediately causes us to consider whether spiritual information is best presented utilizing a traditional stage-based theoretical approach, or if the concepts lend themselves to a more fluid consideration in which particular themes are revisited throughout life. James Fowler (1981) has drawn from a deep psychological understanding of human development and crafted a model of spiritual development containing a pre-stage, and six subsequent stages of faith, which holds true to many of the assumptions of the traditional stage-models. Joan Borysenko (1996) and others have proposed more fluid approaches to spiritual development and have recognized that spiritual themes may be re-occurring throughout the life span. This concept is consistent with the spiral approach to growth and development. These ideas, often building upon the familiar concepts of the stage-based developmental patterns, will be presented in a later portion of this chapter.

Social workers commonly work within community-serving agencies, while seeking to help people who often have few choices about the conditions under which essential human needs are met. In this role, we must ensure that every protection is given the client and that his or her helplessness is not exploited (Spencer, 1961). "Certainly, in the light of the high value the social work profession has always placed upon the client's right to solve his [or her] own problems in the way that seems right to him [or her], it is assumed that any considerations of the social worker's role in the area of religion would be set in this context" (pp. 519-520).

Definitions

The roots of social work contain many religious and spiritually based components, lending motivation, direction, foundation, and location for social service provision. When approaching the issue of spiritual

development and the impact of this on an individual, family, group, community or organization, it is crucial to define the terms that create the backbone for this important discussion. Sue Spencer (1961) was one of the first to attempt to define religion and spirituality from the perspective of a social worker. She identified three major hurdles experienced by those desiring to discuss spirituality and social work. "The first of these is the wide variety of religious beliefs held by individuals and by organized church bodies" (p. 519). The second hurdle is the difficulty of looking at the issue of religion and spirituality in an objective, yet comfortable and sympathetic way, as any discussion of religion is likely to be colored by considerable feeling and emotion that often stem from one's early experiences with organized religion. The third difficulty is found in our cultural bias, which celebrates the freedom to express religious impulses and to meet religious needs as persons see fit. This hurdle thereby cautions persons against infringing upon the right of religious freedom of others.

"From the rain dances of Native Americans to the celebratory dances of Hasidic Jews, from the whirling dervishes of Islam to the meditating monks of Zen Buddhism, from the ecstatic worship services of charismatic churches to the solemn, silent meetings of the Quakers, spirituality takes on many expressions" (Elkins, 1999, p. 45). Given the hurdles identified by Spencer, and the rich descriptions of spiritual expression listed by Elkins, it is crucial that when discussing spirituality and social work practice, we define terms consistently and clarify what is meant by spirituality. Edward Canda (1988), a social work educator who has made significant contributions to conversations about spirituality and practice has provided a definition that will serve as the cornerstone for this chapter and be continually integrated with our discussion of spiritual development. Canda suggests an understanding of spirituality that encompasses human activities of moral decision making, searching for a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and striving for mutually fulfilling relationships among individuals, society, and ultimate reality (however that is conceptualized by the client). "In that these aspects of human activity are common to all people, they are necessarily relevant to all areas of social work practice" (p. 238). Canda further delineates this spiritual component, by stating that the "professional helping relationship must be a genuine expression of the social worker's spiritual commitment to compassion and social justice—an 'I' who empathically relates with a 'Thou'" (p. 245). Though Canda does not limit his approach to a particular religious tradition, such as Christianity, the focus of this chapter is that of Christian faith and a Christian understanding of God.

Approaches to Thinking about Spiritual Development

Schriver (2001) utilizes a very helpful delineation of traditional and alternative paradigms as a way to structure thinking about people and their environments. The traditional paradigm, characterized in this chapter as those theories based on stage-based, predictable, ladder-oriented development, has sometimes led to a belief in only one route to only one answer rather than many routes to many answers. These theories have offered very important concepts that are often utilized and expanded within broader or alternative ways of thinking about development. "Alternative ways of viewing the world such as interpretive, consensual, non-Eurocentric, and feminist perspectives can add much to what we know and what we need to know to *do* social work" (p. xiv). Building on these assumptions, the remainder of the chapter will be organized in such a way as to demarcate particular spiritual development approaches. These approaches will be divided between those which seem to follow traditional paradigms, and those which lend themselves to alternative processes of understanding the spiritual journey of people, all the while acknowledging the crucial and unique role of their environments.

Traditional Ways of Thinking about Spiritual Development

Many researchers have found that a stage-based model of development, whether psychosocial, cognitive, spiritual, or moral, is descriptive and informative when considering the normal development of human beings. The work of two such researchers, Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg, will be considered in this chapter in relation to James Fowler's proposed stages of spiritual development. Erik Erikson (1950) proposed a theory of psychosocial development comprising eight stages. The key component in Erikson's work is the development of the sense of self by going through a series of crises. He proposes that the society within which one lives makes certain psychic demands at each stage of development, and that the individual must adjust to the stresses and conflicts involved in these crises in order to move to the next stage of development. Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) proposed a series of six stages through which people progress as they develop their moral framework. A summary of the stages presented by Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler can be seen in Table 1., on pages 146-147. A summary of James Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development across the lifespan will be utilized as a point of reference for a discussion of spirituality as it relates to Erikson's and Kohlberg's research.

James Fowler: Stages of Faith

Perhaps the most recognized contributor to the stage-theory approach to considering spiritual development is James Fowler (1981). A theologian and religious psychologist, Fowler set off a new wave of thinking about faith based on the work of such renowned developmental psychologists as Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. "He claimed that faith, like life itself, goes through distinct stages as a person matures" (Kropf, 1991, p. 12). Fowler's term 'faith' is closely linked to the concepts Canda (1988) presents in his definition of spirituality. Canda's definition is broad enough to allow us to subsume Fowler's concept of 'faith' as a part of a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as the belief in an ultimate reality. Fowler considers the interface of the religious/spiritual dimension with other psychosocial aspects of the person (Joseph, 1988). Marra (2000) describes this phenomenon as developing sequentially. As in other stage-based developmental theories, it is possible to accelerate growth, or impede it, but steps cannot be skipped. Fowler (1981) discerns six stages in faith development. A pre-stage called Undifferentiated Faith is reflective of the infant up to about one and a half years of age, and is unavailable to empirical research (see Table 1). The faith of early infancy is characterized by the mutuality between infant and nurturers (Helminiak, 1987). "The emergent strength of faith in this stage is the bond of basic trust and the relational experience of mutuality with the one(s) providing primary love and care" (Fowler, p. 121). Looking at Table 1, we can see obvious similarities in the descriptions of Erikson's Stage-1 of psychosocial development, Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust, and Fowler's pre-stage. Both researchers identify the most important task during the first 18 months of life as the development of trust due to the infants' needs being met by nurturers. Erikson discusses religion and notes that children may not need a religious upbringing. But, says Erikson (1950), they do need a sense of basic trust, a feeling not only that their fundamental bodily needs will be met and that their parents love them and will take care of them, but also that they have not been abandoned to the empty haphazardness of existence. The trust of the infant in the parents finds its parallel - and takes its mature form - in the parents' trust in God (Brandt, 1991).

Fowler (1986) states that "faith begins in relationship. Faith implies trust in—reliance upon another; a counting upon or dependence upon another" (p. 16). If one is to accept the basis for Erikson's stage progression, crisis completion, it raises a basic question related to spiritual development. At this early point in one's life, what impact would a child's inability to successfully reach basic trust or mutuality have on

Table 1: Stages of Psychosocial, Moral, and Spiritual Development Erikson, Kohlberg, and Fowler

Erik Erikson's Eight Stages of Man (Psychosocial Development)		Lawrence Kohlberg's Six Stages of Moral Development		James Fowler's Six stages of Faith Development	
Stage/Age	Description	Stage/Age	Description	Stage/Age	Description
Stage 1: Basic trust vs. basic mistrust Birth-12/18 months	Infant develops trust, as he or she understands that some people or things can be depended on.			**Pre-Stage: Undifferentiated Faith** Birth-1 ½ years	Faith characterized by mutuality between infant and nurturers. First pre-images of God are formed prior to language & are feeling-oriented, not reason-oriented.
Stage 2: Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt 18 months – 3 yr.	Accomplishing various tasks/activities provides children with feelings of self-worth and self-confidence.				
Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt 3-6 years	Preschoolers encouraged to take initiative to explore & learn are likely to feel confident in initiating relationships, & pursue career objectives later in life. Preschoolers consistently restricted, or punished, are more likely to experience emotional guilt, & most often follow the lead of others.	Level 1-Preconventional 4-10 years **Stage 1: Punishment & Obedience Orientation** Controls are external. Behavior governed by receiving rewards/punishments. Decisions concerning what is good/bad are made in order to avoid receiving punishment. **Stage 2: Naïve Instrumental Hedonism** Rules are obeyed in order to receive rewards. Often favors are exchanged.		**Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith** 3-7 years	Child constructs ever-shifting world of imitation, fantasy, & imagination. Child thinks only literally. Sees God as person yet realizes imagery falls short.
Stage 4: Industry vs. Inferiority 6-12 years	These children need to be productive & succeed in play and school activities.	Level 2 – Conventional 10-13 years **Stage 3: "Good Boy/Girl Morality"** Behavior governed by conforming to social expectations. Good behavior is considered to be what pleases others. **Stage 4: Authority-Maintaining Morality** Belief in law & order is strong. Behavior conforms to law & higher authority. Social order is important.		**Stage 2: Mythic-Literal Faith** 6-12 years	Emergence of concrete operational thinking precipitates the transition to this stage, as a child is able to see the world from more than 1 perspective. Child's world is simple, orderly, temporally linear, and dependable.

Stage 5: **Identity vs. Role Confusion** Adolescence This transition period from childhood to adulthood is when a person examines the various roles they play, & integrate these roles into a perception of self, or identity.	Level 3 – Post Conventional (many persons never move to Level 3) Late adolescence Stage 5: **Morality of Contract, of Individual Rights, & of Democratically Accepted Law** Moral decisions internally controlled. Morality involves higher level principles beyond law & self-interest. Laws considered necessary, subject to rational thought & interpretation.	Stage 3: **Synthetic-Conventional Faith** 12-beyond Emergence of formal operational thinking allows critical reflection on myths central to Stage 2. See God as personal & relational, holding great value to religious symbols.
Stage 6: **Intimacy vs. Isolation** Young adult Young adulthood is characterized by a quest of intimacy. Persons not attaining intimacy are likely to suffer isolation, & were likely to resolve some of the crises of earlier psychosocial development.	Adulthood	Stage 4: **Individuate-Reflective Faith** Young adulthood or beyond (many persons stay between Stage 3 & 4) Physical separation from home & encounter with new environment; authority moves from outside to inside person. Perception of God similar to Stage 3.
Stage 7: **Generativity vs. Stagnation** Maturity People are concerned with helping, producing for, or guiding the following generation. People lacking generativity become self-absorbed and inward.	Stage 6: **Morality of Individual Principles & Conscience** Behavior based on internal ethical principles. Decisions made according to what is right vs. what is written into law.	Stage 5: **Conjunctive Faith** mid-life or beyond Person must have known life experiences of grief/confusion; deepest truths are inconsistent; sweeter spirit than Stages 3 & 4; lives with ambiguity; views faith from perspective of others; open to change.
Stage 8: **Ego Integrity vs. Despair** Old Age People look back over life & reflect, taking stock in their decisions. For some this leads to a sense of peace (ego integrity) & for others to a sense of sadness and despair.		Stage 6: **Universalizing Faith** Adulthood (exceptionally rare) Characterized by brotherhood of all; focus on love, peace & justice; religion is relational, not conceptual; a radical absorption with unity of all people.

Table 1.

his or her spiritual development? Canda (1988), too, defines spiritual development partially as striving for mutually fulfilling relationships among individuals, society, and ultimate reality.

For Fowler, transition to Stage-1 begins with the convergence of thought and language, opening up the use of symbols in speech and ritual play. Stage-1 Faith, called Intuitive-Projective Faith, typical of the child of three to seven, involves a child thinking of God only in literal terms. For example, if an adult says "God is always with us," then the child sitting at the table may want to move over and give God half of his or her seat. Kohlberg (1969) describes the moral development of children at this age as motivated by avoidance of punishment. In many Protestant religious traditions, children are taught that God is love and lives in heaven with those who love God, while persons not loving God will go to hell. Due to a child's literal understanding at this age, he or she is often concerned with avoiding hell, or ultimate punishment.

Stage-2 Faith, Mythic-Literal Faith, is normative for children from the age of six to twelve, but as with all the subsequent stages of faith, they may remain in that stage throughout life. Children accept the stories and symbols of their community's beliefs in a one-dimensional, literal way, because at this stage they are cognitively unable to step back from the flow of the stories and critically formulate their meaning. Robert Coles (1990) asked a class of fifth graders to respond to the following question: "Tell me, as best you can, who you are" (p. 308). One boy wrote that "I was put here by God, and I hope to stay until He says OK, enough, come back" (p. 312). A Puerto Rican girl who usually didn't say much responded with:

> Well, how *does* He decide? How can He possibly keep track of everyone? I asked our priest, and he said all kids want to know, and you just have to have faith, and if you don't, then you're in trouble, and besides, you'll never know, because that's God's secret. He can do things and we think they are impossible, but He does them, anyway. But I still can't see how God can keep His eyes on everyone, and my uncle says it's all a lot of nonsense (p. 312).

These children were focused on the very concrete issue of God keeping track of so many persons, and could not get beyond that incomprehensible idea without the stories and words of their families, faith communities, and spiritual leaders.

Stage-3 Faith, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, can begin to evolve at adolescence (age twelve and beyond). Persons in this stage tend to see God as personal and relational, and in a more spiritual sense than be-

fore, assigning great value to religious symbols. A teen in this stage of faith may find great attachment to a cross necklace, as a symbol of his or her beliefs. A teen might find value in the Lord's Supper or communion, even if he or she is unable to specify the deep connection through words.

Fowler's Stage-3 corresponds with Erikson's Stage-5, identity versus role confusion, at least in terms of possible age identified as adolescence, or twelve and beyond. Erikson (1950) describes adolescence as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, when people examine the various roles they play, and integrate these roles into a perception of self, or identity. Fowler assumes that the teen has an ability to think abstractly which allows for a new level of thinking critically in relation to the stories and myths that one has been told in relation to one's belief. In Kohlberg's (1969) Stage-5, Morality of Contract, of Individual Rights, and of Democratically Accepted Law, the adolescent is moving to an internally controlled morality which parallels Fowler's and Erikson's stages. A person at this stage in life is making the significant shift from looking to others to define him or herself, to identify what is right or wrong, and to lead out in appropriate expressions of faith, to a more internally driven, and personally informed way of living. The tension is great in the adolescent years, as teens are struggling to establish their own identity and to be accepted by society at the same time. As a teen engages in critical thinking over time, he or she is able to move into a space that allows his or her own motivation and understanding to direct decisions, actions, and faith activities.

Consequently, developmental factors that lead to Stage-4 Faith include beginning to clash with external authority (most often parents in this case); encounters with life experiences and perspectives that force persons to examine belief structures; leaving home physically and/or emotionally, causing the examination of self and theology; and the influence of adult models at Stage-4. The optimum time to enter Stage-4 is during the traditional college years, age 18-22. Typically, life situations encountered during these years cause a person to think about his or her religious and spiritual identity and beliefs. Cognitively, the power of reason and critical analysis comes to the forefront, and this often is the case in a person's quest for understanding related to his or her spiritual self as well. Reason is held sacred above all else, often due to one's unwillingness to live with mystery. Persons in this stage are often open to seriously consider the views of others through study (reason), but not be open to being changed by them.

In Stage-4 Faith, Individuate-Reflective Faith, both the interruption of reliance on an external authority and the relocation of authority within the self, the "executive self" are required (Fowler, 1981, p. 79). Concurrently, Kohlberg (1969) identifies the center for moral decision making during

adulthood, Stage-6, Morality of Individual Principles and Conscience, as internal ethical principles. Decisions made from this perspective are made according to what is right versus what is written into law, honoring this newly relocated authority within the self, as Fowler described.

Reaching Stage-5 Faith, Conjunctive Faith—formerly called Paradoxical-Consolidative Faith—is rare before middle age. This is largely due to an emerging awareness that reality is more complex than what one's Stage-4, highly rationalized view can contain (Helminiak, 1987). Externally, Conjunctive Faith realizes the validity of systems other than one's own and so moves away from seeing a situation as a dichotomy, as seen in Stage 4's either-or thinking. Persons using Conjunctive Faith realize that the deepest truths are inconsistent, resulting in what is often described by others as a sweeter spirit than previous stages. Erikson (1950) describes Stage-7, Generativity versus Stagnation, which is concurrent in the lifespan with Fowler's Stage-5, as a time when a person is concerned with helping, producing for, or guiding the following generation. Both theorists emphasize the external focus of this stage of life. Canda (1988) suggests an understanding of spirituality that encompasses searching for meaning and purpose in life. During this stage of life, this type of meaning and purpose often culminates in the extension of oneself for the support and development of others. Still, a person in Stage-5 "remains divided" (Helminiak, p. 198). People in Stage-5 faith are living in an untransformed world while experiencing visions of transformation. In some few cases this division leads to radical actualization called Stage 6 faith.

During later adulthood, changes associated with psychological and cognitive development impel a person to focus on the inner or spiritual self (Mulqueen, & Elisa, 2000). Exceedingly rare, according to Fowler, Stage-6, Universalizing Faith, incarnates and actualizes the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community, drawn to the familihood of all people (Marra, 2000). This stage constructs an ultimate environment that includes and cherishes all beings (Fowler, 1981). For persons reaching this rare stage of faith development, Fowler suggests that they would be beyond mid-life. Erikson (1950) describes persons of old age as being in a crisis of Ego Integrity versus Despair. Persons in this stage, Stage-8, are looking back over their lives, reflecting, and taking stock of their decisions. For some persons this review leads to a sense of peace, but for others, to a sense of sadness and despair. Persons working out this crisis and reaching a point of peace or ego integrity might find that they are more open to the inclusion of all beings, as Fowler suggests.

Therefore, traditional ways of considering spiritual development draw on the assumptions of general human development. According to stage-based theorists, this growth in authentic self-transcendence that

results from the individual's taking responsibility for himself or herself, "moves from infant, impulse-dominated self-centeredness to a conformist identity with one's social group and finally to post-conventional self-determination and integration of internal and external reality" (Helminiak, 1987, p. 77). Helminiak proposes Fowler's extensive work around stages of spiritual development as *the* stages of spiritual development, "at least within middle-class American and equivalent cultures" (p. 84). As has been demonstrated above, it can be useful to consider Fowler's stages of faith in light of other types of development across the lifespan, in order to gain a greater understanding of the common crises, cognitive abilities, conceptual frameworks, and worldviews.

One of the "criticisms leveled at general stage theories is that such theories are merely descriptions of how specific people change, and that such models are only valid for the one culture out of which they have emerged. The patterns are chiefly due to cultural factors, expectations, roles, and conditioning, or else economics, and do not reflect universal tendencies of human nature outside of the society portrayed" (Irwin, 2002, p. 30). Other specific critique of Kohlberg's and sometimes Erikson's work includes potential cultural biases inherent in the categorization, limitations imposed by children's limited vocabulary and expression of their ideas, the lack of clear-cut divisions between one category and another, and the idea that the stages must occur in an absolute order.

Dykstra (1981) questions the very foundation of Kohlberg's work. Though he finds Kohlberg to be quite clear about what he thinks morality is and what it takes to be a moral person, Dykstra questions the judgement-based or juridical ethics upon which this image of a moral person is derived. Dykstra contrasts Kohlberg's form of ethics which provides a clear guide for action through its rules and principles for decision making with 'visional ethics'. Dykstra's visional ethics focus on questioning what we see and what it is that enables human beings to see more realistically. For visional ethics, action follows vision, and vision depends upon character—"a person thinking, reasoning, believing, feeling, willing, and acting as a whole" (p. 59). Fowler (1986) himself contends that the contributions of Kohlberg and others are useful only to a point when addressing conceptually the last relational step of faith. This is primarily because Kohlberg favors an objectifying, technical reasoning, which has no room for freedom, risk, passion, and subjectivity, all central in Fowler's final stage of faith development.

Alternative Ways of Thinking about Spiritual Development

As social workers, concerning ourselves with "what and how we actually live in this world" can lead to a variety of approaches for defining and

understanding spiritual development within ourselves and for those with whom we work (Marra, 2000, p. 72). While recognizing the worth and unique contribution of the stage-based approaches, a number of researchers have proposed expanded or additional ways of considering spiritual development. Carol Gilligan, Joan Borysenko, Matthew Fox and others have approached development from a largely feminist perspective and offer some additional useful ideas for thinking about spiritual development. In addition, Wendy Haight incorporates some broader cultural implications for considering the importance of the role of spirituality within the lives of children and all individuals. And, finally, Craig Dykstra's unique process critique, which focuses on the practices and behaviors that he identifies as inherent in spiritual development, will be discussed.

Gilligan, Borysenko, & Fox: Feminist Approaches to Development

An alternative way of thinking invites the participation of voices of those persons often unheard, including persons other than the young, white, heterosexual, Judeo-Christian, able-bodied, male, with sufficient resources and power (Schriver, 2001). Carol Gilligan and others (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1985) have examined the research and findings of many traditional theorists, and concluded that generally the experience of girls and women at best are treated with curiosity, and a brief description inferring 'otherness' in comparison to the 'norm,' defined as or assumed to be boys and men. Gilligan proposes a look at girls as "'different,' mainly to hold it apart from its common mistranslation, 'deficient'" (p. 2). She suggests that to listen to the voices of women is to learn a great deal about what is necessary for more completely understanding the meaning of individual development for both women and men (Gilligan, 1982). Additionally, persons in many minority groups hold a worldview emphasizing the inter-relatedness of the self or the individual with other systems in the person's environment such as families, households, communities, and the ethnic group as a whole. "In addition to and in conjunction with the family, religious and spiritual institutions hold and pass along the philosophical standpoints or worldview of the people" (p. 355). It is useful to review approaches that embrace a communal spiritual developmental process.

The bio-psycho-*spiritual* model that Joan Borysenko (1996) proposes expands the more traditionally accepted bio-psycho-social understanding of individual development. An assumption present within Borysenko's work is that a person's spiritual development is integrally connected to his/her cognitive, physical, and psychosocial learning and transformation. Borysenko, utilizing the bio-psycho-spiritual feedback

Table 2: The Feminine Life Cycle – in Seven Year Cycles Joan Borysenko		
Quadrant One: Childhood and Adolescence	Early Childhood 1st Period: Ages 0-7 From Empathy to Interdependence	
	Middle Childhood 2nd Period: Ages 7-14 The Logic of the Heart	
	Adolescence 3rd Period: Ages 14-21 Snow While Falls Asleep, But Awakens to Herself	
Quadrant Two: Young Adulthood	A Home of One's Own 4th Period: Ages 21-28 The Psychobiology of Mating and Motherhood	
	The Age 30 Transition 5th Period: Ages 28-35 New Realities, New Plans	
	Healing and Balance 6th Period: Ages 35-42 Spinning Straw into Gold	
Quadrant Three: Midlife	The Midlife Metamorphosis 7th Period: Ages 42-49 Authenticity, Power, and the Emergence of the Guardian	
	From Herbs to HRT 8th Period: Ages 49-56 A Mindful Approach to Menopause	
	The Heart of a Woman 9th Period: Ages 56-63 Feminine Power and Social Action	
Quadrant Four: Elder Years	Wisdom's Daughters 10th Period: Ages 63-70 Creating a New Integral Culture	
	The Gifts of Change 11th Period: Ages 70-77 Resiliency, Loss, and Growth	
	Recapitulating Our Lives 12th Period: Ages 77-84 and Beyond Generativity, Retrospection, and Transcendence	
Death	The Ultimate Act of Renewal & Growth	

Table 2.

loop, describes this spiral-formation of development through 12 seven-year cycles of renewal and metamorphosis, each one preparing for the next (See Table 2). There are three such cycles in each 'quadrant.' The four quadrants are broadly defined as childhood and adolescence, young adulthood, midlife, and late adulthood. The thirteenth part of the life cycle, death, is perhaps the ultimate act of renewal and growth.

Borysenko explains the evolving capacities of each period, traces the waxing and waning of feminine consciousness, and assures women that midlife is a stage, not a crisis. Thomas (2001) cites similar findings, as she describes a "renewal of spirituality" for many women, as their lives changed the moment they gave birth (p. 93). Though Borysenko's work is grouped within linear age-related stages, her approach is largely focused on the recurring themes of the inter-connectedness between people, nature, and things. A person living in such a way as to embrace the ideals set out by Borysenko would recognize that true intimacy based on respect and love is the measure of a life well lived. This often plays out in the choices made by a person related to work, leisure, living arrangements, and social commitments, as well as forming the underlying motivation for all relationships. As the person grows older, Borysenko (1996) suggests that "this innate female spirituality underlies an often unspoken commitment to protect our world from the ravages of greed and violence" (p. 3). This presentation gives a wonderful example of the spiral-model of spiritual development (see Table 2).

A spiritual metaphor for traditional and alternative paradigms may be found in the familiar themes of 'Climbing Jacob's Ladder' and 'Dancing Sarah's Circle.' Climbing Jacob's ladder is a "male-dominated mystical teaching in Western Christianity," a metaphor based on Jacob's dream recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis (Fox, 1990, p. 37). This text has been utilized to describe the faith journey as one symbolic of fleeing the earth in an upward climb to God. In this model or metaphor, Fox suggests that "we climb to God by contemplation and descend to neighbor by compassion. Thus compassion is descent; it is also an after-thought, a luxury that one can afford only after a very long life-time of contemplative ascending" (p. 40). According to Fox, a spiritual developmental understanding based on this traditional, hierarchical, competitive, independent, and linear approach to growth will necessarily embrace distinct, clearly defined, and restrictive patterns. Openness to the visual and theoretical understanding of dancing Sarah's circle allows for a wide variety of spiritual experiences, explanations, and attachments of meaning for persons on this journey.

Borysenko (1999) replaces the heroic model of step-by-step progress up Jacob's ladder with the image of women walking and dancing Sarah's circle. She suggests that, like all women, the mother of Isaac came to know herself in the deep, intuitive way through the medium of her relationships rather than strictly in terms of a relationship with a transcendent God. Dancing Sarah's Circle is based on the biblical text found in Genesis 18-21, culminating in Sarah, at the age of ninety, giving birth to a surprise son she named Isaac, meaning "God has smiled, God has

been kind" (Fox, 1990, p.44). Thus, a spirituality of Dancing Sarah's circle is one of laughter and joy. Sarah could be surprised, filled with unexpected wonder, and able to laugh. Sarah, then, is a symbol of laughter, creativity, and shalom.

An understanding of spiritual development based on this alternative notion including a shared experience/ecstasy, interdependence, nurture, circle-like welcome of others, culminating in a love of neighbor that *is* love of God, will necessarily embrace a broader, fluid, circular, dynamic, shared pattern of spiritual growth. Jesus' supper times with his disciples can be seen as a Sarah circle kind of intimacy and his Last Supper experience rings especially true to this dynamic. The sacrament of washing the feet that meant so much to Jesus the night before he died is a patent example of a Sarah circle dynamic. Jesus both washed his disciples' feet *and* had his feet washed with ointment by a woman willing to dry them with her long hair. "Sarah's entire circle dynamic is as much receiving as giving" (Fox, 1990, p. 56).

Within alternative approaches to understanding spirituality and spiritual development, certain concepts are central, such as mutuality, cooperation, harmony between persons, the earth, and God, and participating in significant life events. These are the main tenets of Sarah's Circle. One example of persons working together within this understanding of spirituality is a liberation group. Persons in these groups come together to share their pain of oppression and discrimination thus building a bond, and striving for mutual empowerment. Person's embracing the Sarah-Circle dynamic might take part in cooperatives such as food or clothing or housing, expanding the options, resources and flexibility of all involved. Living in harmony with the environment through interest in solar, wind and water energy systems is another example of people living Sarah's Circle within society. Finally, parents who insist on natural childbirth wherein their child will be welcomed eye to eye by a circle of fully conscious and celebrating, wonder-struck family, offer another way in which persons may choose to live out the tenets held within Sarah's circle, in full participation of important life events.

Borysenko (1996) acknowledges in the introduction to her book that although it is written primarily for women, she hopes that it will be equally enlightening to men. For whether we are biologically male or female, each of us contains aspects of the other. Her focus is the critical factor that unites women in a deeply spiritual perspective, transcending differences in religious beliefs. "From a spiritual vantage point our major life task is much larger than making money, finding a mate, having a career, raising children, looking beautiful, achieving psychological health, or defying aging, illness, and death. It is recognition of the sacred in

daily life—a deep gratitude for the wonders of the world and the deli-
cate web of inter-connectedness between people, nature and things" (p.
3). Borysenko's description of the spiritual realm of a person's life paral-
lels nicely with Canda's (1988) emphasis on seeking a sense of meaning
and purpose in life, and striving for mutual fulfilling relationships among
individuals, society, and ultimate reality. Both authors are largely focus-
ing on the relational aspects of persons, including connections with
other persons, nature, things, and ultimate reality.

A significant difference between the growth of persons in Borysenko's
understanding and Fowler's is that each previous type of interaction,
personal experience, and belief process is cherished and viewed as criti-
cal, remaining a part of a person's whole, rather than an emphasis on
leaving a particular stage behind for another, higher one. Bohannan
(1992) comes to a similar conclusion. She states that women experi-
ence the sacred as immanent rather than as transcendent, living their
lives in the awareness of the sacred around them, and practicing grace
and love in the here and now. This rhythmic approach to the under-
standing of a woman's body, mind, and spirit, is interdependent, cre-
ative, and dynamic.

Wendy Haight: Cultural Implications for Spiritual Development

Spiritual socialization can be central to children's healthy develop-
ment. Haight (1998) found that for some African American children,
this foundation is directly tied to resiliency. Despite profound, ongoing
stressors, her research found significant strength within African Ameri-
can children, their families and communities, often tied to the role of
the church in their lives, and of a generally shared spiritual connection.
Neumark (1998) suggests that spiritual development cannot be taught
or managed, but "children can be encouraged to develop spiritually
through being given the opportunity to consider, reflect, dream, and
challenge" (p. 22).

Ancestral worldviews are reflected throughout the social institutions
responsible for imparting the beliefs and values of the group such as the
family, and religious and spiritual institutions. In addition to and in con-
junction with the family, religious and spiritual institutions hold and pass
along the philosophical standpoints or worldviews of the people (Schriver,
2001). The African-American community, like others, has a rich traditions
and history that uplifts the hurt, comforts the struggling, and celebrates the
soul. Church leaders rise to significance in the daily moral life of families
and communities. "Individuals, families, and neighborhoods seek their coun-
sel and support, guidance and inspiration. The church is also a fulcrum of

much of the social life in the community and exists as a staging area for political and social activism" (Saleebey, 2001, p. 315).

A Rabbi working as a community organizer found that the lives of many low- to moderate-income people of color and working-class ethnic whites revolve around their religious and spiritual beliefs (ben Asher, 2001). Many African Americans hold a worldview with roots in an African philosophical position that stresses collectivism rather than individualism. The worldviews of many Native Americans perceive all aspects of life as interrelated and of religious significance although there is no single dominant religion among the many Native American cultures. Asian/Pacific American families stress a belief system in which harmony is a core value. Latino religious beliefs reinforce a belief system in which the role of the family is a central tenet (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Such worldviews as these suggest much more in common with the core concerns of social work. The principles of social systems and ecological thinking found in these worldviews compliment the growing emphasis on spirituality and religion within social work practice.

The church often plays an important and supportive role for families of color. Church provides a sense of community and inter-relatedness for many individuals and families. Family and church are so intertwined for some African Americans, for example, that church members may refer to other members as their 'church family.' One's church family may provide such important supports as role models for young family members and assistance with child rearing. Even for African American families that do not belong to a formal church, spirituality may play a significant role. This spirituality is often a strength and a survival mechanism for African American families that can be tapped, particularly in times of death and dying, illness, loss, and bereavement (Boyd-Franklin, 1993). It is important to acknowledge the cultural implications of spiritual development, and the unique roles, meaning, and expectations found within each faith community.

Craig Dykstra: A Process Critique of Spiritual Development

Craig Dykstra (1999) embraces a certain 'strangeness,' a 'peculiarity' of Christian practice, as an asset, not a handicap. He accents the role of families, however defined, and youth, however attracted, in such settings which is a similar focus to Haight's findings related to some African American communities. This openness to 'strangeness' or other ways of thinking about and understanding certain life events, and ascribing meaning to them, fits well within an alternative approach to thinking about spiritual development. Dykstra's approach leaves more room for

less traditional ways of expressing one's spiritual journey, which can include meditation, the acknowledgement of a particular geographic space which serves as a spiritual oasis, and the honoring of the God-given life and worth in all living beings.

Dykstra (1999) believes that the development of Christian nurture, rather than following formal 'stages,' relates to themes integral to the Christian story itself, focusing on ways of being and thinking and doing. If one considers spiritual development as a spiral-shaped experience, drawing from the recurring realities of a circle, but honoring the assumed growth and movement that a ladder suggests, it is possible to begin to understand a more thematic approach to this process. Dykstra identifies hunger, life, practices, places, and signs as broad themes recurring in our lives, embracing the mystery or depth of Christian faith, and a variety of methods for practicing this faith.

William Hull (1991) describes Christian salvation as a dynamic process—we were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. This somewhat subtle shift from the ladder image to a re-visiting process in cyclical form is quite profound, as the spiral-formation of growth allows one to re-engage with themes throughout life. This approach mirrors our own yearly reliving of the significant events on the liturgical calendar including communion, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The process of re-experiencing these pivotal celebrations allows us to find the extraordinary in the 'ordinary.' As we continue to grow, change, understand ourselves, others, and God in different ways, our experiencing of these events is repetitive, yet new.

These alternative approaches to understanding spiritual development allow for the impact of greater societal, political, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, physical, and emotional factors throughout this life process. Helminiak (1996) argues that if the needs of organisms are not met, the higher levels of psyche and spirit are adversely affected. Inversely, a sick spirit impacts psyche and organism negatively. Young, Cashwell, and Shcherbakova (2000) conclude that spirituality seems to provide a buffer from stressful life events that are perceived as negative, further supporting the value of the spiral-formed developmental impact.

Conclusion

The spiritual development approaches discussed in this chapter support the central tenet that "important religious beliefs, rituals, and social structures can play key roles as individuals and families move through the life cycle" (Hugen, 2001, p. 13). Some of the elements identified as significant dimensions of spiritual development are creativity,

contemplation, commitment and quest or search for meaning (Halstead, 1992). In short, "spirituality is essential to human happiness and mental health" (Elkins, 1999, p. 44).

What occurs between the client and the social worker involves not only the traditional interventions, methods, and skills the social worker applies, but also a two-way exchange of ideas, feelings, beliefs, and values that may or may not be directly addressed or acknowledged. "Whether professionals are 'believers' in the spiritual dimension is important. 'Nonbelievers' may not be fully able to accept clients who consider spirituality and religion to be meaningful and useful within the context of their life experiences" (Sermabeikian, 1994, pp. 178-79).

Social workers, therefore, should develop self-understanding regarding personal biases, their own experiences that lead to strong assumptions about others, existential issues and spiritual growth (Canda, 1988; & Schriver, 2001). "Self-inquiry must be a disciplined and consistent process of personal and professional growth. Social workers should examine their beliefs, motivations, values, and activities and consider the impact of these factors upon the client's spirituality" (Canda, p. 245).

A spiritual bias can be just as harmful as racism or sexism. When considering the issue of spirit, spiritual, and spirituality, a social worker must also consider his or her assumptions about the process of growth, deepening awareness and the meanings attached to this spiritual development. Whether the philosophical tenets of climbing Jacob's ladder or those supporting dancing Sarah's circle are embraced, social workers must enter into an awareness of the sacred for themselves and for the persons with whom they work.

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