

Educational Module on Spirituality and Positive Youth Development in Social Work

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Study Guide Questions for

Canda, E. R., & Cheon, J. W. (Eds). (2010). Spirituality and positive youth development [Special issue]. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1).

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Use the following discussion questions for self-study, or, in the classroom, for homework or in-class discussion exercises with students. First, read the relevant article, then write a brief essay response (or discuss your response) for any questions relevant to your interest.

Discussion Questions

Canda, E. R., (2010). Editorial introduction. Nurturing the spiritual development of youth through professional helping: Emerging issues in international perspective. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1), 1-14.

1. What is your own definition of spirituality and religion?
2. How is your definition of spirituality and religion similar to or different from the professional definitions the author provided?
3. Discuss diversity and ethical issues addressing the topic of spirituality distinct to your agency/organization and give examples.
4. The author highlighted some examples of spiritual and religious diversity from East Asia. Discuss your personal and/or professional cross-cultural experiences related to these examples.
5. How do you relate to the hazards for the spiritual development of youth the author discussed? Reflecting on your childhood and/or adolescence, have you experienced or witnessed these or other hazards? As a helping professional, how do you address these hazards if they occur to youth?

Cheon, J. W., (2010). A transpersonal understanding of youth spirituality: Implications for an expanded view of youth work. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1), 15-33.

1. Reflecting on your childhood and/or adolescence, describe any spiritual and/or transpersonal experiences you had, if any.
2. Have your beliefs, experiences, and practices regarding spirituality and/or religion changed or stayed the same over time? Please explain and give examples.
3. Are there any developmental themes involved in your growth through youth into adulthood? Please explain.
4. The author summarizes developmental theories, some involving stages and some not based on stages. Consider what is similar and different between the stage and non-stage theories. Discuss their strengths and weaknesses.
5. The author summarizes several types of helping practices for addressing youth spirituality. Choose one and discuss why you believe it could be appropriate or not appropriate in your practice setting.
6. Do you agree with the author's claim that it is important to address spirituality in work with children and adolescents? Why or why not?

Doe, S. S., (2010). Children and adolescents in socio-cultural environments: Towards a spiritual social capital theory. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1), 34-57.

1. Explain the key concepts of spiritual social capital theory addressed by the author.
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of spiritual social capital as it is described here.
3. Discuss why fostering spiritual development of children and adolescents may benefit society as a whole.
4. The author suggests that there are broad differences of approach to spirituality in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Explain why you agree or disagree with this claim. Give examples from your cross-cultural experiences or from working with clients of culturally contrasting backgrounds.

Kvarfordt, C., & Sheridan, M. (2010). Predicting the use of spiritually-based interventions with children and adolescents: Implications for social work practice. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1), 56-88.

1. In your own reflection as a helping professional, what are the contributing factors for your use (or non-use) of spiritually-derived interventions with your clients?
2. Review Table 3 that lists a variety of spiritually-derived interventions along with practitioners' usage. Discuss which of these you have used, or believe it would be appropriate to use, and why.
3. The authors suggest specific ethical guidelines for the use of spiritually-derived interventions with youth in the light of extra protections required for practice with minors. Discuss your agreement or disagreement with any of these guidelines and give examples from your practice with youth.
4. What are your reactions to the authors' five specific recommendations for working with children and adolescents? Do you agree or disagree? Are they feasible in your own work with children and adolescents?
5. Review the research methodology employed in this study. Critique its strengths and limitations. Consider how future research could build on this study.

Williams, N. R., & Lindsey, E. W. (2010). Finding their way home: Utilizing spiritual practices to bolster resiliency in youth at risk. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services*, 9(1), 89-105.

1. Discuss how spiritual themes among runaway or homeless youth, as revealed in this study, relate to your own experiences working with youth in adverse or challenging life situations.
2. What are the religion or culture-specific symbols and beliefs included in the participants' comments? How might similar or different themes appear in the lives of clients who come from different religious or nonreligious backgrounds?
3. How would you incorporate insights from this study into your actual practice with at-risk youth?
4. Consider an intervention program that may help address spirituality with at-risk youth. How would you design such a program?
5. Review the research methodology employed in this study. Critique its strengths and limitations. Consider how future research could build on this study.

Goldstein, S. N. (2010). The exploration of spirituality and identity status in adolescence. *Currents: New Scholarship in the Human Services, 9(1)*, 89-128.

1. This study found that the most prominent theme of spirituality defined by high-school-age adolescents was connection and being in relationship to others. How can professionals help adolescents to foster their spirituality in school settings?
2. Discuss the strengths and limitations of identity status theory for understanding spiritual development of youth.
3. Explore the relationship between identity status, gender and other demographic variables, and spirituality as found in this study. In what ways did this study support or not support the expected relationships are described in the research questions.?
4. Examine the participants' ideas about spirituality, as revealed in both quantitative and qualitative analysis. In what ways does this help to understand aspects of spirituality that might be distinctive to adolescents?
5. Review the research methodology employed in this study, including the various measures and the blending of quantitative and qualitative methods. Critique its strengths and limitations. Consider how future research could build on this study.

Overall

After reading all the articles in this special issue, compare and contrast them.

1. Each article provides definitions of spirituality in general and in relation to youth specifically. How are these definitions similar or different? Are there any common areas of agreement?
2. Discuss the distinctive features of youth spirituality compared to adults.
3. How do the various spiritual experiences of youth lead to consequences for adulthood?
4. The articles study youth spirituality in various ways, emphasizing or blending conceptual, quantitative and qualitative approaches. What can be learned by combining the insights yielded from these approaches?
5. Examine the references listed in all the articles. Identify additional readings to pursue in order to further build your knowledge and practice skills for addressing spirituality as a contributor to positive youth development.