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SWK 314: Human Behavior in the Social Environment

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### Reflection #5: Fowler's stages of faith development

According to James Fowler, "faith development relates to an increase in the complexity and comprehensiveness of how we understand ourselves and the world, and the ability to take the perspective to others" (Robbins. S, Chatterjee. P, Canda. E, Leibowitz. G, 2019). Fowler theorizes seven developmental stages to reach absolute order of commitment. Stage one also known as primal faith occurs during infancy. According to Fowler, infants are trusting in their parents to provide reassurance about the world. Stages two is known as the intuitive projective faith phase which occurs from infancy to age two. Fowler attributes this stage to the development of speech, inventiveness and the expansion of imaginary. During stage two toddlers learn and accept the realities of their parents, as they are not yet able to develop their own perceptions. Stage three is the Mythic-literal faith phase which begin at age six. During stage six children can understand values and belief's implemented by parents. Children are also able to empathize with others, express themselves, and understand outcomes to behavior. According to Robbins, Fowler has suggested that many grownups neglect the Synthetic-Conventional faith also known as stage four. During stage four teens can comprehend influence from their social environments and interpret its impact on their beliefs. Teens can understand their peers and reflect on their own values apart from the beliefs of their families. Stage five is called the individuate- reflective faith phase, which occurs during young adulthood. During this stage young adults began to develop

their own concept of what devotion means through rationalization of what has been instilled in them from infancy. Reflection of life events help determine their sense of dedication to their belief system. Stage six is called the Conjunctive faith phase which Fowler states occurs during early midlife. This developmental stage of faith is where adults honor the traditions of their belief system and act on the values of their religion. During this stage's adults have illuminated their life experiences and connected them to what they deem to be true about the divine power they believe in. Stage seven is the highest podium of Fowler's faith development theory. This stage is called the universalizing faith and occurs during midlife. During stage seven adults can live and act on the compassionate love from God. Adults abstain from conflicts with people in their social environments and have developed unity and love for everyone.

Fowler's seven stages of faith development are essential to social work practice because it helps build upon client's ethical standards. The faithful stage development also helps build upon client strengths through religious encouragement. Fowler's theory of faith development can assist clients in developing self-actualization. Fowler's seven stages of faith development is also an essential tool in assisting clients to self-reflect on their interactions with their environment.

## Reference

1. Robbins, S.P., Chatterjee, P., Canda, E.R., Leibowitz, G.S. (2019). Theories of Cognitive, Moral, and Faithful Development. *Contemporary human behavior theory: A critical perspective for social work practice* (4th ed.). PP. 303. Pearson Education, Inc.