Adolescent Well-Being and Religiosity
A Theoretical Integration & Visualization

Adolescent Development

Adolescent identity formation is a developmental period marked by transition, exploration, and self-discovery. Between the ages of 11-22+, the adolescent will sort through familial and cultural beliefs, attitudes, and life expectations based on a wide range of crises and commitments (Bilsker & Marcia, 1991; Comstock, 1994). As they embark on their search for autonomy, the adolescent will explore new ways of being and believing as they select their own perspective on work, religion, education, relationships, sexuality, and ideology (Bilsker & Marcia, 1991; Comstock, 1994; Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010; Mascheroni & Jimenez, 2015).

Distress & Discrepancy in Adolescent Identity Development
(Marcia, 1967)

Commitment

Crisis

Achievement
Sense of self has been explored and grounded in choice

No Crisis

No Commitment

Foreclosure
Unquestioned sense of beliefs, values, priorities and expectations

No Commitment

Crisis

Moratorium
Actively exploring and questioning a sense of identity

No Crisis

Commitment

Diffusion
Ambiguous beliefs based in the absence of struggle

Identity Exploration

Healthy and adaptive identity achievement occurs after the experience and resolution of crisis, conflict, and active identity consideration when the adolescent feels free to explore new ideas and beliefs without fear of long-term consequences to family and community (Klimstra, et al., 2010; Muuss, 1996). Critical to this formative period, wrought with increased self-awareness and desire of social acceptance, is the meaning seeking process of making sense of one's past while constructing a sense of one's future (Marin & Shkreli, 2019).
This identity work is complicated when the adolescent begins to reconsider childhood beliefs and self-constructs identity; sifting and sorting previously believed ideas and ways of being that conflict with family, friends, and community (Klimstra et al., 2010; Kroger, 2000; Marin & Shkreli, 2019).

Maladaptive Traits

Perfectionistic
Self-presentation
Comparison
Disconnection
Rumination
Doubt
Task Focused
Fear
Shame
Rigidity

Adaptive Traits

Striving
Authenticity
Compassion
Connection
Reflection
Vulnerability
Goal Oriented
Courage
Guilt
Flexibility
Well-being

Actual

CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS

Self-Discrepancy Theory

Ought

Ideal

Hope

GOALS + AGENCY + OPTIONS

Connections

Relationships and social connections become critical for positive well-being outcomes throughout adolescence.

Family
School
Friends
Religion and Self
Spiritual
Media
Community
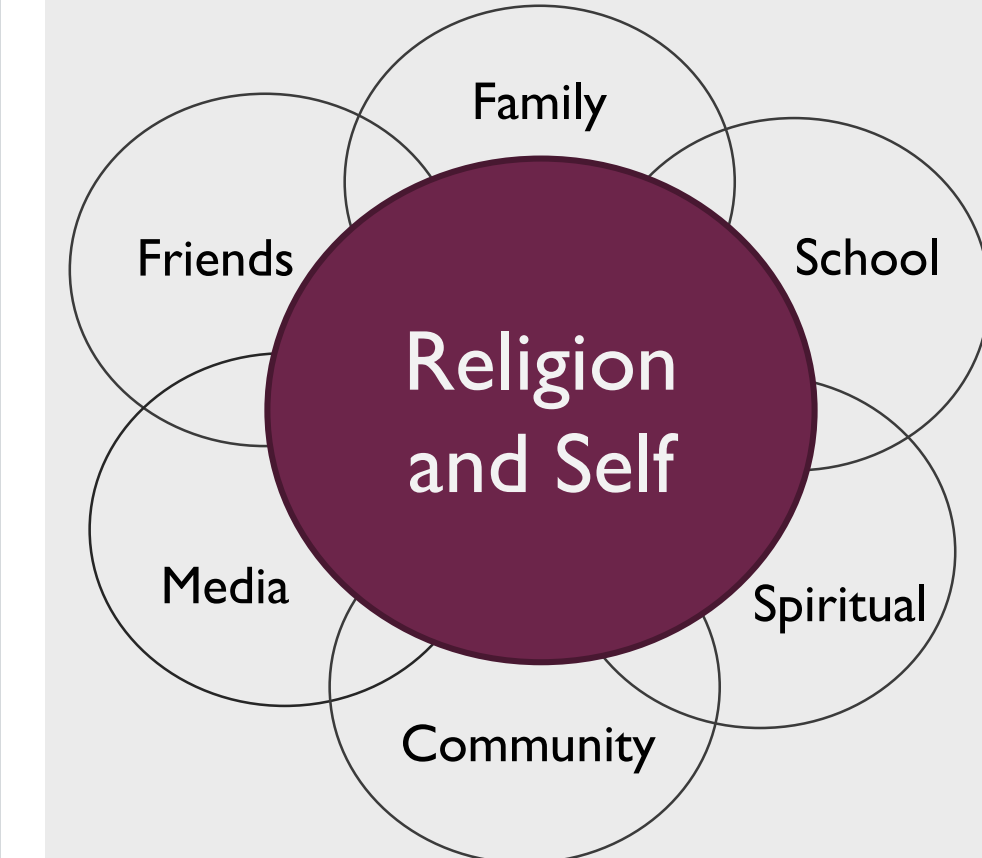
Adolescents who fear rejection and undesired social outcomes struggle with doubt, shame, and excessive rumination; all of which can increase emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual distress as the adolescent (Peterman, LaBelle, & Steinberg, 2014).

Religion and Identity

Religious familialism suggests that institutional religion promotes an ideology of optimal traits, beliefs, and characteristics, leaving many adolescents to feel as if they are not 'good enough' (Allen & Wang, 2014).
A critical variable in the development of perfectionistic traits is the level of discrepancy between expectations and the individuals' perceived sense of self. Maladaptive traits include doubt, shame, rumination, fear, and chronic self-scrutiny which intensifies feelings of discouragement, loneliness, and hopelessness (Steffen, 2014).
As an individual, familial, and relational construct, religion shapes and intertwines through relationships and social connections (Mahoney, 2010).
For some, affiliation and participation in religiously subscribed beliefs, practices, and traditions lead to higher levels of happiness and lower risks of depressive symptoms and at-risk behaviors (Mahoney & Cano, 2014; Mahoney, & Krumrei, 2013; Michaelson, King, Inchley, Currie, Brooks, & Pickett, 2019).
The adolescent journey that violates familial religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and expectations may trigger individual distress that further exacerbates the fear of rejection, isolation, and negative relational outcomes that breeds hopelessness and despair (Allen & Wang, 2014; Steffen, 2014).

References & Handout
http://bit.ly/NCFRadolescents2019