Universal or Not? The Role of Culture in Faith Development Theory

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Recommended Citation
Mullen, Maggie, "Universal or Not? The Role of Culture in Faith Development Theory" (2012). Washington University Undergraduate Research Digest, Volume 8, Issue 1.
http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/vol8_iss1/107
Toward a Better Understanding of...

Universal or Not? The Role of Culture in Faith Development Theory

Maggie Mullen

Mentor: Keith Sawyer

This project will employ interviews with individuals of two cultures to investigate the universal claims made by James Fowler regarding his Faith Development Theory. Faith, according to Fowler, is better understood as a relation to the ultimate questions in life or a worldview than as a belief in something. According to FDT, people develop faith through a structural developmental stage theory similar to that of Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory and Kohlberg’s Moral Development Theory. I will challenge the universality of this stage theory (not of “faith” itself) by interviewing subjects in the U.S. and in a culture foreign to us to determine if FDT can stand the test of cultural impact on faith. Is FDT universal? Will an individual across the globe experience the same progression of stages in her faith as an American? Does a progression of faith stages even exist?