A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF AGING: A CONTEXTUAL VIEW OF GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES FROM CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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The Need for Spiritual Unity

“It seems clear that an inclusive global spirituality, unifying spiritual identity, and ethical commitment are needed to draw the human family together across our deep differences.” (Clinebell, 1996)
**Spirituality & Culture - Inter-related. Together- Create Sense of Wholeness for Aging Individuals**  
(MacKinlay, 2002; Moberg, 2005; Moody, 2001 ;)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spirituality:</th>
<th>Culture:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meaning and Unity</td>
<td>1. The way a group defines meaning</td>
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<td>2. Force or belief in power outside one’s self</td>
<td>2. Embodied in symbols</td>
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<td>3. Breath and it’s activities</td>
<td>3. Inherited conceptions</td>
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<td>4. Non-observable and metaempirical</td>
<td>4. Expressed in symbolic forms</td>
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(Aldridge, 2002) (Gertz, 1975)
Spirituality and aging

A spiritual life, one focused on personal growth and deep human experience, is a major focus and motivator for people over the age of forty...

...Yet there is marked lack of rigorous academic study of spirituality's importance in the lives of aging people.

(Atchley, 2009)
Need for Research: Moody, 2005

- Including the refinement of methodological procedures, expansion to new topics, and extension to international culture

- The outlook for research on aging and spirituality and the consequent practical applications to humanity
Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative research is inquiry process that’s explores social or human problem.
- Builds complex, holistic pictures
- Analyzes words
- Reports detailed views of informants
- Is conducted in natural setting

Phenomenology: Perception of lived experience:
- Individuals who experience phenomenon
- Researcher who has interest in phenomenon
Purpose of the Study

- Interest in aging interfaith discourse and spiritually focused social action to create global unity

- What common themes in aging and spirituality could serve as a unifying paradigm for the world's religions in an age of globalization

- Hearing elders’ voices from a global perspective can move societies from seeing the world as separate and unrelated, to viewing it as whole and interconnected.
The study:

Question:
Overarching question: What is the overall spiritual experience of the baby boomer as s/he ages?

Participants:
Self selection - Identify as Middle East, Scandinavian, Hispanic
**Preliminary Primary Themes from the Study**

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<th>Primary Theme</th>
<th>Meaning Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>I. Deep self knowledge and profound understanding of others</td>
<td>“Most of our problems basically is not understanding who we are; who I am, and who are others that I am dealing with. So, if I know who I am, and I know who you are, then we are okay. But, if I don't know myself or I don't know you then we are in big trouble in dealing with each other.”</td>
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<td>II. The path of wisdom</td>
<td>But, like I said, at times you find a little window that opens up somewhere in your brain and you see a whole new aspect, a whole new concept, or perspective on something.</td>
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<td>III. The process of detachment as a movement towards peace</td>
<td>But I noticed I could detach myself a lot more, almost like I living outside, like I was watching somebody else go through these emotions and going through living my life. And the inside of me, the core of me is detached. And, that has just brought so much tranquility and peace.”</td>
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<td>III. Recognition of responsibility to others</td>
<td>“Day-to-day things alter our worlds... And ultimately, I guess, the whole world...because the whole world is like the concept of Ubuntu...” I am, because we are.”</td>
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<td>IV. Movement towards completeness</td>
<td>“We have been put in this world to do the best that we can do. To be the best that we can be. And so, all of these things are in a way, it’s a test. Whether you get this huge success, that’s a test just as much as if calamity happens to you...This is my opportunity...it is just like an exam paper. How do I approach this situation?”</td>
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<td>V. Aging as decision making process</td>
<td>“...age will not be the issue. Decisions will be the issue; if I choose to do those things or not. So, that is a different attitude about aging.”</td>
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Implications for Research and Practice

Common themes in aging and spirituality can serve as a unifying paradigm in age of globalization

• Contemplation and reflection are critical aspects of midlife development

• Engagement with other faiths and spiritual practices can deepen and enhance one’s own spiritual identity. It can lead to personal transformation (King, 2003).
Implications for Research and Practice

- Dialogue can lead to greater mutual understandings and willingness of persons of other faiths to come together to address the pressing social issues of our day.

- “Engaged spirituality” is congruent with globalization

- The wisdom from the “lived experience” of elders is required to direct “engaged spirituality”
References


References


