

Introduction: Special Issue on Spirituality and Adult Development, Part II

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This article reviews the purpose of the 3-part Special Issue on Spirituality and Adult Development, described in the Introduction to Special Issue Part I (J. D. Sinnott, 2000). It also outlines the contents of Part II. Developing adults express their belief that spirituality plays a key role in their development, yet developmental psychologists have given comparatively little attention to this factor. Also the concept of spirituality has seldom been considered separately from that of religion. The purpose of this special issue is to begin to remedy this neglect. This introduction is a summary of the 7 empirical and theoretical articles that form Part II of the Special Issue on Spirituality and Adult Development.

KEY WORDS: aging; logical positivism; development; religion; theory.

As originally outlined in Special Issue Part I (Sinnott, 2000), developing adults express the belief that spirituality, considered separately from religion, plays a key role in their development. The articles in these special issues represent the application of scientific psychology to answer the question "How do the spiritual aspects of an individual's life relate to his or her development during maturity and old age?"

The articles are empirical and theoretical scientific explorations that make significant contributions to the dialog about the relation of spirituality to experiences of life changes in middle adulthood and old age. But as we approach this topic it is important to reiterate that the issue is primarily about *spirituality* and not about *religion*, although the two sometimes are hard to disentangle because theories and measuring devices have not always made the distinction. I could discuss the definitions at greater length (see Sinnott, 2000), but my introductory comments will be brief this time to save space for a larger-than-usual number of interesting articles (appearing in alphabetical order, based on the last name of the first author).

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In the first article in this issue, Tonya Armstrong and Martha Crowther offer a state-of-the-art review of the role of spirituality among older African Americans, a group that is rapidly increasing in number. The paper provides a profile of the group, and a review of factors that inform their spiritual development.

Timothy Belavich and Kenneth Pargament offer data on the role of attachment in predicting the spiritual coping of individuals faced with the common event of a loved one undergoing surgery. Based on the responses of 155 respondents who were waiting in a hospital setting at the time of the surgery, attachment to God was predictive of spiritual coping, which, in turn, was related to personal adjustment.

Mark Brennan examines data related to another relatively common health dilemma, that of vision loss. He measures the buffering effects of spirituality on stress, interpreted in terms of Erikson's theory. Based on the responses of 195 middle-aged and older participants with vision impairment serious enough for them to seek rehabilitative services, spirituality did ameliorate this negative life experience.

In a classic review article, David Moberg writes about the dilemma of assessing and measuring spirituality, particularly the problem of to what degree

evaluative criteria represent universal or particular elements of spirituality. Research and theory have developed out of differing frames of reference in this regard. But scales intended to be universal override group differences, resulting in knowledge loss. Suggestions are made for combining particularistic and universal strategies for clinical assessment and for scientific research.

Lauren Seifert attempts to examine together the topics of aging, meaning-search in life, and spirituality. Selected areas of past research are reviewed, problems with methods are discussed, and practical applications are made to issues of adjustment and to coping outcomes.

Evangeline Wheeler, Lena Ampadu, and Esther Wangari address the question "What can be gained in examining lifespan development, particularly spiritual aspects of development, through an African-centered lens as well as through a Western lens?" Traditionally, in the field of psychology, most theories were developed from the perspective of Western male scholars. The authors present a definition of

spirituality using an African-centered lens, and then propose a synthesis between Western and non-Western developmental theories, with the issue of spirituality at the center.

In the last article in this issue, Paul Wink and Michele Dillon analyze a large longitudinal data set to address spiritual development across the lifespan. The data set was drawn from 290 respondents who are part of studies established by the Institute of Human Development at the University of California, Berkeley. The authors' major findings include the following results: while all respondents increased significantly in spirituality between their 50s and older adulthood, cohort and gender were factors in the increase.

Enjoy the provocative ideas you encounter in these articles!

REFERENCE

- Sinnott, J. D. (2000). Introduction: Special issue on spirituality and adult development, Part I. *Journal of Adult Development*, 8, 199-200.