

Concept Analysis of Spirituality: An Evolutionary Approach

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Keywords

Concept analysis, nursing, spirituality, theory

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AIM. The aim of this article is to clarify the concept of spirituality for future nursing research.

BACKGROUND. Previous concept analyses of spirituality have mostly reviewed the conceptual literature with little consideration of the empirical literature. The literature reviewed in prior concept analyses extends from 1972 to 2005, with no analysis conducted in the past 9 years.

DESIGN. Rodgers' evolutionary framework was used to review both the theoretical and empirical literature pertaining to spirituality. Evolutionary concept analysis is a formal method of philosophical inquiry, in which papers are analyzed to identify attributes, antecedents, and consequences of the concept.

DATA SOURCE. Empirical and conceptual literature.

RESULTS. Three defining attributes of spirituality were identified: connectedness, transcendence, and meaning in life. A conceptual definition of spirituality was proposed based on the findings. Also, four antecedents and five primary consequences of spirituality were identified.

CONCLUSIONS. Spirituality is a complex concept. This concept analysis adds some clarification by proposing a definition of spirituality that is underpinned by both conceptual and empirical research. Furthermore, exemplars of spirituality, based on prior qualitative research, are presented to support the findings. Hence, the findings of this analysis could guide future nursing research on spirituality.

There is incongruence among researchers in relation to both a conceptual and an operational definition of spirituality, with some researchers suggesting that spirituality, in its essence, may not be measurable. Conversely, other researchers propose that spirituality is just as measurable as other subjective variables, such as hope, adaptation, or coping, all of which are well established in the literature (Cohen, Holley, Wengel, & Katzman, 2012; Miller & Thoresen, 2003). According to Sessanna, Finnell, and Jezewski (2007), among the confusion and complexity, it remains that spirituality is a complex and

abstract concept. Previous concept analyses of spirituality have predominantly focused on theoretical and conceptual literature, with little attention given to empirical literature. Furthermore, in previous concept analysis papers, the literature has spanned 1972–2005. Hence, this paper presents a concept analysis of spirituality based on a review of empirical and conceptual literature. This analysis is timely in light of the ever-increasing literature on spirituality and the societal changes that have occurred over the past number of years (Vincett & Woodhead, 2009).

Background

Over the past few decades, various techniques for concept analysis have been developed and applied in nursing (Hupcey & Penrod, 2005). However, some nurse authors have raised concern regarding the uncritical use of concept analysis frameworks (Beckwith, Dickinson, & Kendall, 2008; Risjord, 2009). Beckwith et al. (2008) explored the appropriateness of 13 commonly used concept analysis frameworks and concluded a lack of critique among nurse authors. Nurse authors using the frameworks failed to acknowledge any limitations of the frameworks. Nonetheless, Hupcey and Penrod (2005) state that concept analysis is useful in terms of determining a baseline understanding of a concept. However, it should not be considered an evaluation of the quality or maturity of a concept (Hupcey & Penrod, 2005).

In terms of spirituality, nursing conceptualizations have been criticized for a lack of critique, expansive definitions, and a rejection of rooted cultural and religious perspectives (Clarke, 2009; Paley, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010; Pesut, 2008a, 2008b; Pesut, Fowler, Reimer-Kirkham, Taylor, & Sawatzky, 2009). A review of the literature sourced eight papers that used a framework to conduct a concept analysis of spirituality. Three papers used Walker and Avant's (1995) framework (Kunsongkeit & McCubbin, 2002; Sessanna et al., 2007; Tanyi, 2002); one used Glaser's (1978) concept indicator model (Coyle, 2002); two used Rodgers' (1989) evolutionary concept analysis (Delgado, 2005; Newlin, Knafl, & Melkus, 2002); another used Schwartz-Barcott and Kim's (2000) hybrid model (Oh & Kang, 2005); and one used Chinn and Kramer's (1995) method of creating conceptual meaning (Buck, 2006). The spirituality literature reviewed spanned 1970–2005, indicating the need for a more recent analysis of the concept.

Kunsongkeit and McCubbin (2002) reviewed the theology, religion, anthropology, psychology, medicine, and nursing literature on spirituality using Walker and Avant's (1995) framework. The attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents were presented. However, a conceptual definition of spirituality was not proposed. Additionally, the search strategy used to review the literature was not provided, and it appears that the findings were primarily based on theoretical literature. The defining attributes of spirituality presented in the literature were not well supported by references. For example, no references were included for the first attribute: a sense of

connectedness. This limits the findings of the concept analysis.

Tanyi (2002) used Walker and Avant's (1995) framework to review scholarly articles and books that included a definition of spirituality as well as empirical studies that explored the meaning of spirituality. Data were sourced from 10 electronic databases spanning literature from 1970 to 2000. The attributes, antecedents, and consequences of spirituality were identified. Tanyi (2002, p. 506) presents a conceptual definition of spirituality. Yet it is unclear how Tanyi concludes with this definition as the defining attributes are not consistent with those outlined earlier in the concept analysis. For example, inner strength is identified in the analysis as a defining attribute of spirituality; however, it does not feature in the conceptual definition proposed. Nonetheless, one major strength of the analysis is that it reviewed empirical and conceptual research.

Coyle (2002) analyzed the spirituality and health literature from the years 1990 to 2000 using a concept-indicator model (Glaser, 1978). A trichotomy framework of spirituality was proposed incorporating three approaches to defining spirituality: the transcendent approach, the value guidance approach, and the structural-behaviorist approach. The concept analysis was based on scientific literature, predominantly theoretical papers with some qualitative research papers included. The uses of spirituality and a framework of spirituality were presented. However, a definition of spirituality was not outlined. Furthermore, cases were not presented in support of the findings.

Newlin et al. (2002) used a Rogerian approach to analyze the concept of African-American spirituality. A review of the nursing, psychology, and sociology literature, including empirical research, was conducted. The antecedents, attributes, consequences, and related and surrogate terms of spirituality were identified. Yet the authors did not present a conceptual definition of spirituality or cases as evidence for the findings of the analysis. Nonetheless, most of the steps of Rodgers' (1989) concept analysis framework were adhered to and a rigorous search strategy that included literature from multiple disciplines was used.

Delgado (2005) also used Rodgers' (1989) framework to review the nursing literature on spirituality. Definitions within the literature were examined; however, a conceptual definition was not proposed. The attributes, related concepts, and consequences of spirituality were identified. However, the antecedents and empirical referents were not presented.

Furthermore, Delgado's (p. 157) "loose" utilization of Rodgers' (1989) approach to concept development limits the findings of the analysis. One important phase of concept analysis identified by Rodgers is the identification of a sample, that is, accessing specific literature databases for specified reasons. Delgado (p. 158) states that "a computerised search of the Internet using the keyword spirituality was carried out and many references were sourced as a result." It is not clear whether the author used electronic databases or if the search was conducted using a non-academic search engine. Furthermore, inclusion and exclusion criteria, or search limits were not identified. The above limitations affect the reliability of the findings and provide further rationale for the concept analysis described in this paper.

Oh and Kang (2005) used Schwartz-Barcott and Kim's (2000) hybrid model of concept analysis, which includes three phases: theoretical phase, fieldwork phase, and analytical phase. In the first phase, the authors reviewed 65 papers relating to spirituality needs and spiritual interventions to identify the attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents. In the theoretical phase of the analysis, a conceptual definition of spirituality was proposed, and the attributes, antecedents, and consequences of spirituality were identified. In the fieldwork and analytical phases, five individuals were interviewed, including a pastor who served as director of a spirituality training centre; a married woman who was diagnosed with terminal cancer; two college students who served as missionaries for 1 year; and a Korean-Chinese student majoring in theology. Empirical findings supported the findings of the theoretical phase of the concept analysis. The fieldwork phase is a major strength of this concept analysis as it provided empirical evidence for each of the attributes identified in the theoretical phase.

Buck (2006) conducted an analysis of spirituality using Chinn and Kramer's (2004) method of creating conceptual meaning. The attributes and antecedents of spirituality were not explicitly stated; however, a conceptual definition of spirituality was presented, and the consequences of spirituality were identified. Findings were merged into a model of integrated spirituality that incorporated Reed's (1992) conception of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal connectedness.

Sessanna et al. (2007) conducted a concept analysis guided by the methodology of Walker and Avant (2005). A total of 90 references from within and

outside the nursing domain, as well as dictionary and thesaurus definitions, were analyzed. The papers reviewed ranged from 1983 to 2005. Four definitional themes emerged from the analyses, and a conceptual definition was proposed. The analysis was rigorous in terms of the extensive search strategy used, which included literature outside of the nursing discipline. Also the methods used to review the literature were clearly outlined. A limitation of the concept analysis is the simplification of the Walker and Avant (2005) framework to just the first four steps. This meant the antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents were not identified. Furthermore, a model, contrary, or borderline case was not presented as evidence for the findings of the concept analysis.

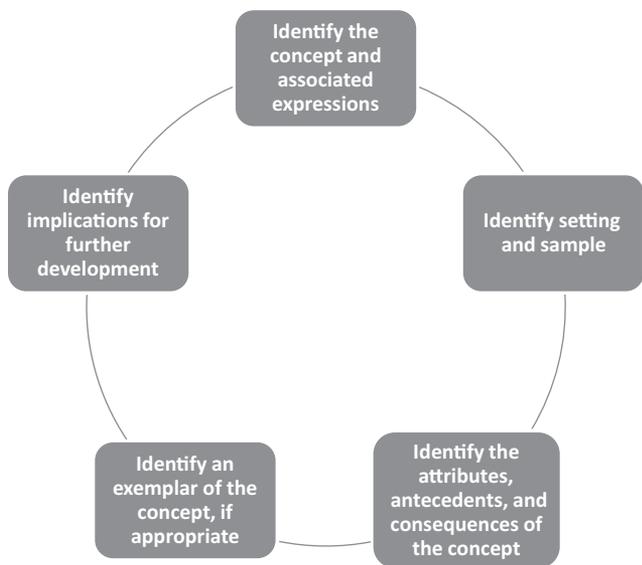
To summarize, eight papers were sourced that used a framework to conduct a concept analysis of spirituality independent of other concepts. These previous analyses have two major limitations. Firstly, these analyses have focused mostly on the conceptual literature with little consideration given to the empirical literature. In order to enhance our understanding of spirituality, it is necessary to review the empirical research, particularly the qualitative research exploring how spirituality is defined and experienced in real life and across different groups. Secondly, only two of the papers (Oh & Kang, 2005; Tanyi, 2002) included cases in their analysis. Case exemplars illustrate how a concept is commonly used in real life and are acknowledged as an important step in concept analysis (Risjord, 2009; Rodgers, 1989, 2000). The omission of the above important steps in concept analysis poses a problem because it is unclear how the defining attributes of spirituality were sourced and why. Hence, there is a need for further analysis of the concept. Several authors have advised that nursing should be concerned with what spirituality means to the patient (Risjord, 2009; Sessanna et al., 2007; Swinton & Pattison, 2010), and there has been a call for a review of the evolution of the concept of spirituality (Pike, 2011). Therefore, Rodgers' (1989, 2000) evolutionary concept analysis framework was used to review both theoretical and empirical spirituality literature from multiple disciplines.

Method

Concept Analysis Method

The use of a concept analysis framework is advocated when exploring ambiguous concepts that appear

Figure 1. Phases of Rodgers’ (1989, 2000) Evolutionary Concept Analysis



to be in competition with other concepts (Rodgers, 1989, 2000). Rodgers’ (1989, 2000) evolutionary approach was used for this concept analysis and has been previously used to explore complex concepts such as caring (Brilowski & Wendler, 2005), hope (Johnson, 2007), and professional socialization (Dinmohammadi, Peyrovi, & Mehrdad, 2013). According to Rodgers (1989, 2000), a concept becomes associated with a specific set of attributes that create a definition of the concept as a result of socialization and repeated public interaction. There are several phases in Rodgers’ evolutionary method (see Figure 1). These phases are meant to be iterative in nature, with the researcher moving back and forth between each phase and many of the activities being carried out simultaneously (Rodgers, 1989, 2000).

Data Sources

According to Rodgers (1989, 2000), an appropriate setting and sample should be identified. In a literature-based analysis, the setting refers to the time period to be examined and the disciplines or types of literature to be included (Rodgers, 1989, 2000). A comprehensive search was performed in the electronic databases CINAHL, MEDLINE, PsychInfo, and SocIndex. CINAHL was chosen to explore the nursing and allied health literature; MEDLINE ensured that literature

pertaining to the nursing and medical disciplines was sourced; PsychInfo was used to provide insight from the psychology literature; and SocIndex was used to include a sociological and social work perspective. A combination of the following search terms was used: Spirit* AND (Concept* OR Theor* OR Defin*). The search was limited by publication year (2002–2013), article type (peer reviewed), language (English), population type (humans), and search field (contained in title). It was decided to include only articles published in the last 11 years because of the increasing interest on the topic over that period and to ensure that the most recent and relevant publications were considered. Furthermore, it was assumed that recent research and writing on the subject would integrate prior knowledge. Details of the search strategy and search results are summarized in Table 1.

The search strategy yielded 288 articles. One hundred twenty-one articles were deemed relevant following abstract review and removal of duplicates. Rodgers’ (2000) framework encourages the use of a random sample of at least 20% of each included discipline in the literature review. This step has been criticized as it can cause the researcher to omit important citations (Beckwith et al., 2008; Hupcey & Penrod, 2005). Thus, for this concept analysis the researcher used rigorous selection criteria to identify a sample.

The criteria for selection included:

- Scholarly articles that presented either a clear definition or at least some definitional elements
- Articles presenting a theoretical framework of the concept of spirituality
- Qualitative research studies that investigated the meaning of spirituality across different samples and settings

The criteria for exclusion were:

- Books and book chapters as they were thought to mostly consist of syntheses of the empirical literature
- Commentaries and editorials
- Dissertations

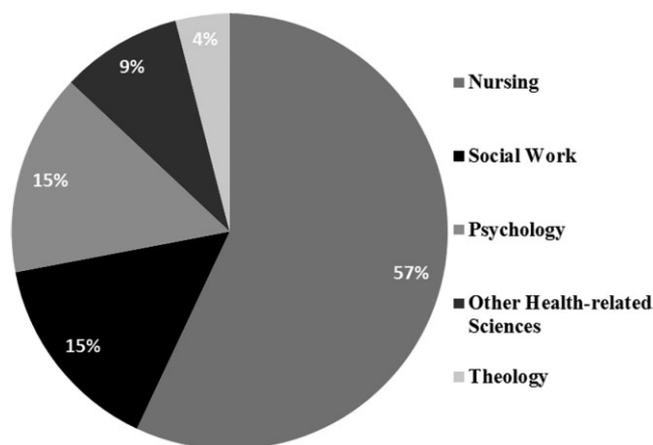
It should be noted that the eight prior concept analysis papers met the inclusion criteria and were thus included in this analysis. It was thought that the findings would provide some insight into the conceptual literature on spirituality despite any methodological

Table 1. Search Strategy

	CINAHL citations	MEDLINE citations	PsychInfo citations	SocIndex citations	Total
Search #1: spirit* ^a	5,491	5,563	8,383	5,126	24,563
Search #2: concept* OR theor* OR defin*	28,020	173,668	122,193	59,735	383,616
SEARCH #1 AND #2	145	138	300	127	710
Limits applied ^b	40	73	120	55	288
Number of articles relevant following abstract review	28	31	32	30	121
Number of articles meeting inclusion criteria	22	8	9	8	47

^aField (term in title).
^bLimited by: publication date (2002–2013); language (English); category (humans); and type (scholarly, peer-reviewed papers).

Figure 2. Overview of Literature Sourced



limitations. However, more emphasis was placed on the empirical research findings and exemplars of spirituality to support the conceptual literature.

Data Analysis

The final sample consisted of 47 studies that met the inclusion criteria. An overview of the disciplines represented in this sample is provided in Figure 2.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Rodgers, 2000). Each article was read at least twice, summarized, and coded. Primary themes were classified in the form of attributes, antecedents, and consequences of spirituality as well as any related concepts. In terms of case exemplars, Rodgers’ (1989, 2000) method favors a focus on real cases as opposed to constructed cases. Exemplars of the concept should be identified rather than constructed (Rodgers, 2000). In

an analysis of the use of Rodgers’ framework, Toftthagen and Fagerstrøm (2010) further substantiate that exemplars of a concept are not the ideal or model case of a concept, but are instead practical examples of the concept taken from the data material. Therefore, in this analysis, participant quotations from the empirical research reviewed are presented to support the results and exemplify spirituality as experienced in real life. These exemplars and an overview of the literature sourced are included in Table 2.

Results

Attributes

Rodgers (2000, p. 91) asserts that the “identification of the attributes of the concept represents the primary accomplishment of the concept analysis” and constitutes a “real” definition of the concept. Examination of the attributes of a concept is critical to understanding the concept (Rodgers, 2000). Three defining attributes for spirituality were identified from the data: connectedness, transcendence, and meaning in life.

Connectedness. Many conceptualizations of spirituality in the interdisciplinary literature have emphasized the attribute of connectedness. Connectedness, as defined in the literature, is said to include a sense of relatedness to oneself, to others, to nature or the world, and to a Higher Power, God, or Supreme Being (Albaugh, 2003; Banks-Wallace & Parks, 2004; Buck, 2006; Chiu, Emblen, Van Hofwegen, Sawatzky, & Meyerhoff, 2004; Cohen, Thomas, & Williamson, 2008; Coyle, 2002; Daly, 2005; Delgado, 2005; Ho & Ho, 2007; Hodge, 2002; Hodge & McGrew, 2006; Kunsongkeit & McCubbin, 2002; Miner-Williams,

Table 2. Overview of Sample, Themes, and Case Exemplars

Author, Year	Discipline	Research design and sample	Themes—attributes	Exemplars (if applicable)
Coyle (2002)	Nursing/sociology	Conceptual paper	Connectedness Transcendence Meaning in life	N/A
Hodge (2002)	Social work	Discussion paper	Connectedness that is based on a person's beliefs, values, worldview (including religious beliefs)	N/A
Kunsonkeit and McCubbin (2002)	Nursing	Concept analysis	Connectedness Meaning in life	N/A
Mount et al. (2002)	Nursing, medicine, pastoral care, education, psychology, social work, and theology	Report of a working group devised to develop a shared vocabulary on spirituality and health	Search for meaning in life	N/A
Newlin et al. (2002)	Nursing	Concept analysis	Connectedness Transcendence Meaning in life	N/A
Tanyi (2002)	Nursing	Concept analysis	Connectedness Meaning in life	N/A
Walton (2002)	Nursing	Grounded theory (Glaserian method) 4 men and 7 women receiving outpatient hemodialysis in the United States	Self-transcendence Confronting mortality and searching for meaning Connecting or reconnecting with God Connecting with self (introspection and reflection) Connection with people, environment, nature Faith (beliefs, religion, relationship with God) Transcendence	"[My] quality of life isn't as good now as it was. But I guess you have to redefine what quality is" (p. 451). "My spirituality is what keeps me going..." (p. 451). "... I always look at the bright side of stuff instead of looking at the bad and complaining" (p. 451). "Since I've been on dialysis, I've had an entirely different outlook on life" (p. 453). "I feel really connected to the world most of the time. I am really touched by things other people might not notice" (p. 455).
Albaugh (2003)	Nursing	Qualitative phenomenological design Individuals with life-threatening illness (<i>n</i> = 7)	Connectedness with others and with a Higher Power Transcendence Meaning in life	"... everybody who talked to me either when they're at church or friends around me, I thought that was wonderful... a prayer is like a gigantic hug from a number of people..." (p. 595). "What it's done is made me regroup, made me remember my roots, and go back to where I was... for me it's been more of a wake-up time" (p. 596). "I guess I would say that a life-threatening thing happening to you is not the worst thing that can happen to you, it can make you a better person. It can make you appreciate things more" (p. 597).
Papathanassoglou and Patiraki (2003)	Nursing	Hermeneutic, phenomenological design Individuals with past hospitalization in an intensive care unit (<i>n</i> = 8)	Connectedness Transcendence Meaning in life	"I look out from the window and I see people walking and I cry out of joy, because I am alive..." (p. 17). "I try to cram in as much living as I can, because it could all end tomorrow..." (p. 18).

Pesut (2003)	Nursing	Discussion paper	Intrapersonal connectedness (connection with self and/or God) Interpersonal connectedness (connection with others) Keeping the spirit alive Meaning in life Connection with self, other, religion, and life Transcendence (belief that they would get through the "tough times") Connectedness with God/a Higher Power Transcendence	N/A
Woodgate and Degner (2003)	Nursing	A longitudinal, qualitative research design Children with cancer and their families (<i>n</i> = 39)		"A way of being in the world" and "living through it" (p. 111). "A sense of self or the changing self" (p. 112). "... a combination of positive attitude, determination, perseverance..." (p. 114).
Banks-Wallace and Parks (2004)	Nursing	Qualitative descriptive study Five focus groups with African American women resulting in 247 stories		"And I really have just tried to put so much, grow in terms of my realisation that I'm going to learn and benefit from whatever experience whether it's the worst of experiences or whether it's the greatest of experiences..." (p. 29). "... to realise how much the physical health is related to the mental health and to realise how much mental health is dependent on the spiritual health... because of the trinity of body, mind, and spirit. The need for the spiritual health, making the mental health and physical health so much easier to work on and accomplish" (p. 31). "I like that, overall, in terms of relationships that African Americans have with each other, whether it be a daughter, sister, or mother. It is very positive and unique in many, many ways" (p. 37).
Bash (2004)	Theology	Discussion paper	Spirituality can be defined according to three different terms: the nontheistic, the theistic, and a via media, a position halfway between the two. The answers have to do both with what people experience and with the effect that the experience has on them. Meaning and purpose in life Connectedness: a connection with self, others, nature, and a Higher Power Transcendence	N/A
Chiu et al. (2004)	Nursing	Integrative review		N/A

Table 2. *Continued*

Author, Year	Discipline	Research design and sample	Themes—attributes	Exemplars (if applicable)
Geertsma and Cummings (2004)	Counseling	Qualitative exploratory design Interviews with women living in a midsize Canadian city (<i>n</i> = 10)	A belief in God, Energy, or Higher Power. Connectedness not just with God or a Higher Power; but also with other aspects of the world An element of mystery and the unknown aspect of spirituality Religion was described as authority, judgment, and being incomplete on its own	"I see spirituality as connectedness . . . with nature and people and God" (p. 30). "It wasn't something out there doing something to me; it was me making a choice" (p. 30).
McSherry et al. (2004)	Nursing	Grounded theory design Nurses (<i>n</i> = 12), patients (<i>n</i> = 5), and representatives from four of the major world religions (<i>n</i> = 5) from a hospice and two acute trusts	Universal to all people and is within a person	"Spirituality, I think it is personal, it depends on what the individual believes . . ." (p. 938).
Morrison-Orton (2004)	Social work	Qualitative phenomenological design Rehabilitation professionals working with people with disabilities (<i>n</i> = 15)	Personal and unique to each individual More than religion Connection with self, God, or other individuals Discovery of meaning in life	"Spirituality is the feeling part . . . whatever that emotion is, negative or positive" (p. 46). "Knowing more about myself, [about] who I was made me more effective both personally and professionally" (p. 47). "Spirituality [gives] this inner peace . . . a sense of belonging . . . and of being accepted . . . a connection" (p. 47). "Spirituality is what connects us, it's what connects people to people, it is what connects people to God" (p. 48). N/A
Rican (2004)	Psychology	Discussion paper	Meaning and purpose in life Connectedness Transcendence Search for the sacred	N/A
Walton and Sullivan (2004)	Nursing	Grounded theory design Men with prostate cancer (<i>n</i> = 11)	Connection with self (thinking, pondering, and trusting) Connection with a Higher Power (praying, meditation, and reflection) Connection with others, that is, friends, family, and community A worldview, a mind-set Finding new meaning	"I've had more people praying for me than I can imagine. . . . People that I had no idea had a spiritual life on that level and reached out, or maybe I had an idea, but it's just the wonderful supportiveness of friends, family, church community" (p. 138). "Having prostate cancer has certainly enhanced my understanding of my mortality . . . it just makes me appreciate all the more the life that I have" (p. 143).
Crossley and Salter (2005)	Psychology	Qualitative investigation using semi-structured interviews Clinical psychologists (<i>n</i> = 8)	Transcendence Meaning or purpose of life Individual and personal Different to religion	"So it's a quite personal, individual, internal thing" (p. 302). "It's just difficult to find the words, because all the words that you have I think are couched in religious terms . . . one might say 'no it's not a part of my life at the moment,' but I think it is a part of most people's life, but they call it something else" (p. 304). N/A
Daly (2005)	Theology	Discussion paper	An existential meaning Transcendence Connectedness	N/A

Delgado (2005)	Nursing	Concept analysis using Rodgers' (1989) approach	A search for meaning or purpose in life Connection Self-transcendence A belief system	N/A
Oh and Kang (2005)	Nursing	Concept analysis using the Hybrid Model (Schwartz-Barcott & Kim, 2000) Fieldwork phase: empirical observations with individuals who had the possibility of spiritual experience (<i>n</i> = 5)	Harmonious interconnectedness Transcendence Meaning and purpose in life Integrative energy	"It was truly a tragedy when I lost my child, but now I think that it allowed me to refine my nature and to sympathise with the problem of others . . ." (p. 715). "I have to live my life because my family is in need of me. I hope to continually share love with my family and neighbours" (p. 715). "My view of this world as well as my perspective has changed" (p. 715). N/A
Buck (2006)	Nursing	Concept analysis using Chinn and Kramer's (2004) framework	Connection with self, others and nature/higher power (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal connections) Meaning and purpose in life Transcendence	N/A
Hodge and McGrew (2006)	Social work	Mixed methods (survey with qualitative questions) A sample of graduate-level social work students affiliated with the National Association of Social Workers (<i>n</i> = 303)	Connection with a higher power Connection with God Transcendence Connection with others, nature, the world, and the Universe	"An individual's means of connecting with something bigger than themselves" (p. 645). "Connection with all life" (p. 645).
Hyman and Handal (2006)	Psychology	Mixed-methods design Religious professionals, for example, imams, ministers, priests, and rabbis (<i>n</i> = 32) Discussion paper	Subjective Relationship with God	N/A
Miner-Williams (2006)	Nursing		Connectedness with self, others, a deity Transcendence Meaning Energy	N/A
Bjarnason (2007)	Nursing	Concept analysis of religiosity	Recognition of religious affiliation (e.g., Protestant and Catholic) Religious activities (e.g., praying and church attendance) Religious beliefs (e.g., relationship with a higher power, believing in the religious scriptures of their belief, or degree to which religion is important)	N/A

Table 2. *Continued*

Author, Year	Discipline	Research design and sample	Themes—attributes	Exemplars (if applicable)
Griffith et al. (2007)	Occupational therapy	Grounded theory approach guided by Glaser and Strauss (1967) Community-dwelling older adults with autonomy loss (<i>n</i> = 8)	Connection with greater power through prayer and meditation Connection with the universe Transcendence	“I am lucky, lucky in a sense because with this disease there are times when it is less intense, it stops and I am able to function for a while. I call this my free time. I am able to move. I appreciate these moments” (p. 85). “I collect flower petals and say to myself—look at the beauty in this! I have a whole assortment of petals, pressed in books. I look at them at times when I can’t move . . . until my nerves settle down” (p. 86). “. . . you don’t know what the future holds—that’s for sure! But I don’t worry about it. I take it as it comes. It’s the only way. And why not? I’ve gotten this far, eh?” (p. 87). N/A
Ho and Ho (2007)	Psychology	Discussion around the study of spirituality in psychology	Existential-transcendent quest Spirituality is at the core of a person’s value system and belongs to the domain of supraordinate values underlying all aspects of life Relationship with self, others, humanity, society, nature, cosmos, and (to believers) the divine God, or Ultimate Reality Connection with self and a higher power Transcendence Search for meaning Spiritual expression, that is, significant relations with others; religious belief or behavior	“I think that if anything is associated with spirituality, it is emotion. Lots of times, emotion acts in a spiritual way. Sometimes, people are in a situation—not in a religious context—that they feel something big, important” (p. 15). “. . . to be spiritual means you have to accept yourself and the idea that there are some things you will never understand and to be comfortable with that idea” (p. 19). N/A
Sessanna et al. (2007)	Nursing	Concept analysis guided by Walker and Avant (1995)	Life meaning and purpose Connection with others	“Spirituality is expressed and experienced through family, embracing family history, teaching children . . .” (p. 290).
Cohen et al. (2008)	Social work	Exploratory qualitative design using focus group interviews Three different religious or ethnic groups of older adults, that is, Jewish, African-American Protestants, and Caucasian Protestants (<i>n</i> = 29)	Connection with self, others, and God	“The spirit has to dwell within you. That has to be number one” (p. 291).
Pesut (2008a)	Nursing	A review of nursing textbooks (<i>n</i> = 10) using philosophical inquiry	Connectedness Meaning Purpose Transcendence Harmony Integration	N/A

Williams (2008)	Occupational therapy	Exploratory pilot study Well older adults at least 55 years of age (<i>n</i> = 3)	Connection (with God) Meaning in life	<p>"My spirituality addresses why I am here. It is the purpose for my being" (p. 12).</p> <p>"My wife of 51 years died two years ago. I miss her terribly, but I realise we shared some great times. . . . My spirituality gives me the ability to cope as I know I will be with her again someday" (p. 13).</p> <p>"You see my spirituality allows me to realise, I have something to offer my grandson. I have a meaningful job in helping with him" (p. 13).</p> <p>"Religion or spirituality, again, those are two different words there . . . spirituality for me is really a personal thing" (p. 362).</p> <p>"This is a man who has a quiet dignity about him and is very accepting of many things" (p. 363).</p> <p>"[Clients], in their moment of desperation, would turn to spirituality as a way of making meaning in their experience" (p. 364).</p> <p>"Powerlessness becomes a way of connecting, seeking, and receiving direction" (p. 100).</p> <p>"The traditions taught me how to interact with other people. Going to meetings, talking, and identifying with others . . . I think I will always need that interaction" (p. 101).</p> <p>"For me, in the beginning, my sponsor was my Higher Power. She was the person who unconditionally loved me" (p. 102).</p> <p>"Probably the biggest change is the relationship I have with myself" (p. 102).</p> <p>"Spirituality is the care . . . of the soul. It requires a level of maturity to be in touch with your spirit or soul" (p. 165).</p> <p>"Spirituality is strength, a power that I believe is within all people regardless of faith or personal beliefs" (p. 165).</p> <p>"Spirituality is feeling emotionally, psychologically, and physically connected to a higher being or to the world around you" (p. 167).</p> <p>". . . being united with the universe, a higher being, and/or humanity. A state of being that calms, heal, and uplifts emotion" (p. 167).</p> <p>"Even though you face some troubles . . . you know that God is there for you. He's going to help you go through whatever it is you are going through" (p. 56).</p> <p>"The other day I was looking at myself in the mirror and said, 'You know what HIV, I know you've been fighting with me and I didn't want you in my body . . . we must live in peace and be partners'" (p. 60).</p>
Barker and Floersich (2010)	Social work	Qualitative exploratory study Social workers who were currently in practice with 3 or more years of post medical social worker experience (<i>n</i> = 20)	Difference between religion and spirituality Connectedness Transcendence Meaning in life	
Bradley (2011)	Social work	Qualitative exploratory study Five focus groups with women in Alcoholics Anonymous (<i>n</i> = 29)	Connectedness with God/a Higher Power Connectedness with self and others Transcendence	
Gall et al. (2011)	Psychology	Grounded theory and phenomenological analysis Participants from various nationalities (<i>n</i> = 234)	Connection with self Self-actualization and self-transcendence Ultimate purpose in life	
Barney and Buckingham (2012)	Social work	Grounded theory Individuals living with advanced AIDS (<i>n</i> = 8), paraprofessional caregivers (<i>n</i> = 12), and family members (<i>n</i> = 4) in South Africa	Connectedness with God/a Higher Power, ancestral spirits Connection with others (lack of connection) Transcendence	
Buck and Meghani (2012)	Nursing	Qualitative design using focus groups and thematic analysis Six focus groups made up of six to nine participants per group. Three groups had African-American participants while three groups had White participants.	Transcendence Meaning in life	N/A

Table 2. *Continued*

Author, Year	Discipline	Research design and sample	Themes—attributes	Exemplars (if applicable)
Lowry (2012)	Nursing	Qualitative descriptive study Older adults (<i>n</i> = 40) representing three levels of health, that is, well, some health deficits, and those requiring skilled care	Connectedness with God/a Higher Power Connectedness with others Transcendence	“Spirituality keeps me from being depressed and giving up” (p. 359). “I do have to stay optimistic because I have a lot of health problems and I have to think positive all the time” (p. 359). “I think that spirituality did play a part. . . . Like I truly believe that there is something that drives our destiny” (p. 2351). “. . . it changed my plans and thinking” (p. 2352) “. . . there is something there, but . . . I cannot explain it. . . and it’s something that is, faith in a way is there. . . but I cannot grasp it, cannot get hold of it” (p. 278) “. . . it changed my focus, the glasses I was wearing . . . put into context a zillion things that were going well” (p. 1828)
Molzahn et al. (2012)	Nursing	Narrative inquiry adopting social constructionist approach People with serious illness (<i>n</i> = 32)	Transcendence Meaning in life Connectedness with a Higher Power	
Rykkje, Eriksson, and Raholm (2012)	Nursing	Gadamerian hermeneutical design Older people aged 70 years (<i>n</i> = 17)	Connectedness Transcendence Meaning in life	
Van Dover and Pfeiffer (2012)	Nursing	Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss) Patients receiving care from parish nurses (<i>n</i> = 20)	Purpose in life Transcendence	“A human is not a purposeless being. . . .” (p. S26). “I found that cancer patients have more needs and I care and support them to help them achieve their own actualisation” (p. S26). “Spirituality—concerning deep feelings including a sense of inner peace, purpose and connections to others and the meaning of life. . . .” (p. 3175)
Markani et al. (2013)	Nursing and psychology	Descriptive, exploratory study Oncology nurses (<i>n</i> = 20)	Meaning Connections Transcendence	
McSherry and Jamieson (2013)	Nursing	Descriptive, exploratory study Royal College of Nursing members (<i>n</i> = 2,327), including staff nurses, healthcare assistants, student nurses, lecturers, midwives, nurses specialists, etc.	Transcendence Connectedness (with self, others, and God/a Higher Power) Religion and culture were means of expressing spirituality	“I have wiped off the cancer out of my thoughts. I do not dwell on it nor am I in denial of it, but I have changed my state of mind. Engaging in spirituality makes me feel powerful as it gives me strength and courage to persevere” (p. 42). “For me, engaging in spiritual matter reflect the intimate times like when a friend would accompany me to the doctor, sleep with me in the hospital or cook for me. . . .” (p. 43).
Penman et al. (2013)	Nursing	Hermeneutic phenomenological design Individuals with a life-limiting condition in Australia (<i>n</i> = 14)		

2006; Morrison-Orton, 2004; Newlin et al., 2002; Oh & Kang, 2005; Papathanassoglou & Patiraki, 2003; Pesut, 2003, 2008b; Rican, 2004; Rich & Cinamon, 2007; Sessanna et al., 2007; Tanyi, 2002; Walton, 2002; Woodgate & Degner, 2003). For example, one woman in a study by Geertsma and Cummings (2004, p. 30) says: "I see spirituality as connectedness . . . with nature and people and God." This sense of connection is said to be influenced by a person's beliefs, values, or worldview (Cohen et al., 2008; Hodge, 2002; McSherry, Cash, & Ross, 2004; Miner-Williams, 2006). Furthermore, connectedness with oneself has been described as introspection, reflection, thinking, and pondering (Chiu et al., 2004; Gall, Malette, & Guirguis-Younger, 2011; Morrison-Orton, 2004; Walton, 2002; Walton & Sullivan, 2004; Woodgate & Degner, 2003).

A sense of connectedness with others, and with God or a Higher Power, has also been referred to in the literature (Chiu et al., 2004; Geertsma & Cummings, 2004; Griffith, Caron, Desrosiers, & Thibeault, 2007; Hodge & McGrew, 2006; Hyman & Handal, 2006; Morrison-Orton, 2004; Pesut, 2003; Rican, 2004; Walton, 2002; Williams, 2008; Woodgate & Degner, 2003). Walton (2002) conducted a grounded theory study with hemodialysis outpatients, and one participant said: "I feel really connected to the world most of the time . . . I am really touched by things other people might not notice" (p. 455). In describing connectedness with a Higher Power, the following terms have been used: praying, meditating, and reflecting (Griffith et al., 2007; Walton & Sullivan, 2004). Gall et al. (2011) explored the meaning of spirituality to people from various nationalities. Participants referred to a connection with a Higher Power: "Spirituality is feeling emotionally, psychologically, and physically connected to a higher being or to the world around you" (p. 167).

Transcendences. Many authors on spirituality have referred to transcendence as a dimension of spirituality (Albaugh, 2003; Banks-Wallace & Parks, 2004; Barker & Floersch, 2010; Barney & Buckingham, 2012; Bradley, 2011; Buck, 2006; Buck & Meghani, 2012; Chiu et al., 2004; Coyle, 2002; Crossley & Salter, 2005; Daly, 2005; Delgado, 2005; Gall et al., 2011; Griffith et al., 2007; Hodge & McGrew, 2006; Lowry, 2012; McSherry & Jamieson, 2013; Markani, Yaghmaei, & Fard, 2013; Miner-Williams, 2006; Molzahn et al., 2012; Morrison-Orton, 2004; Newlin et al., 2002; Oh & Kang, 2005; Papathanassoglou &

Patiraki, 2003; Penman, Oliver, & Harrington, 2013; Pesut, 2008b; Rican, 2004; Rich & Cinamon, 2007; Tanyi, 2002; Van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2012; Walton, 2002; Woodgate & Degner, 2003). Self-transcendence has been defined as the ability to see beyond the boundaries of the self, the environment, and present limitations (Reed, 1991). Every person is said to have the capacity to self-transcend and transcend suffering (Frankl, 1985; Howden, 1992; Reed, 1991). Thus, transcendence emerged in this analysis as a capacity to change one's outlook on a given situation and on life overall. This capacity is evident in research with individuals with life-limiting illness: "I have wiped off the cancer out of my thoughts. I do not dwell on it nor am I in denial of it, but I have changed my state of mind. Engaging in spirituality makes me feel powerful as it gives me strength and courage to persevere" (Penman et al., 2013, p. 42). Similarly, the capacity to transcend a situation and to transcend suffering is reflected in Walton's (2002) study with individuals receiving hemodialysis. One participant stated: "Since I've been on dialysis, I've had an entirely different outlook on life" (p. 453).

Meaning in life. The third attribute that has been consistently referred to in the spirituality literature is meaning in life (Albaugh, 2003; Barker & Floersch, 2010; Buck, 2006; Buck & Meghani, 2012; Chiu et al., 2004; Coyle, 2002; Crossley & Salter, 2005; Daly, 2005; Delgado, 2005; Gall et al., 2011; Kunsongkeit & McCubbin, 2002; McSherry & Jamieson, 2013; Miner-Williams, 2006; Molzahn et al., 2012; Morrison-Orton, 2004; Mount, Lawlor, & Cassell, 2002; Newlin et al., 2002; Oh & Kang, 2005; Papathanassoglou & Patiraki, 2003; Pesut, 2008b; Rican, 2004; Rich & Cinamon, 2007; Sessanna et al., 2007; Tanyi, 2002; Van Dover & Pfeiffer, 2012; Walton, 2002; Walton & Sullivan, 2004; Williams, 2008; Woodgate & Degner, 2003). This attribute of spirituality is exemplified in a study by Walton and Sullivan (2004), in which one man with prostate cancer said: "Having prostate cancer has certainly enhanced my understanding of my mortality . . . it just makes me appreciate all the more the life that I have" (p. 143). Likewise, in another study by Williams (2008) with older adults, one participant stated: "My spirituality addresses why I am here. It is the purpose for my being" (p. 12). It was clear from this statement that the participant took ownership of their spirituality (i.e., use of the word "My").

Antecedents

Rodgers' (1989, p. 334) states that the antecedents of a concept are "the events or phenomena that are generally found to precede an instance of the concept." Four antecedents emerged from this concept analysis. The first one was the presence of a belief system or philosophical worldview. In other words, in order for spirituality to occur, one must have a belief system or worldview—be that theistic, atheistic, agnostic, or otherwise. One participant in a study by McSherry et al. (2004) exemplifies this: "Spirituality, I think it is personal, it depends on what the individual believes . . ." (p. 938). The other antecedents that emerged were that every person has a responsibility to care for the spirit, and every person is accountable for their daily life choices. This is exemplified in a study by Geertsma and Cummings (2004) in which one participant stated: "It wasn't something out there doing something to me; it was me making a choice" (p. 30). The final antecedent that emerged from this concept analysis was the experience of a difficult life event such as illness or death. It was evident within the literature that participants who experienced a difficult life event described a stronger sense of spirituality (Albaugh, 2003; Barney & Buckingham, 2012; Bradley, 2011; Lowry, 2012; McSherry et al., 2004; Molzahn et al., 2012; Papathanassoglou & Patiraki, 2003; Penman et al., 2013; Walton, 2002; Walton & Sullivan, 2004; Woodgate & Degner, 2003). However, a difficult life event is not a prerequisite to spirituality, rather it influences it.

Consequences

Rodgers' (1989, p. 334) states that the consequences follow an occurrence of the concept. The primary consequences that emerged from this concept analysis were an alleviation of suffering, a sense of well-being, enhanced ability to adapt and cope with adversity, a sense of peace, and inner strength. For example, in terms of inner strength and a sense of peace, these consequences were exemplified in a study by Morrison-Orton (2004) in which one participant stated: "Spirituality (gives) this inner peace . . . a sense of belonging . . . and of being accepted . . ." (p. 47). Similarly, a participant in McSherry and Jamieson (2013) said: "Spirituality—concerning deep feelings including a sense of inner peace . . ." (p. 3175). Other secondary consequences

included several positive feelings such as hope, motivation, empowerment, love, joy, compassion, belonging, and assurance.

Related Concepts

Religiosity is the main concept that is related to spirituality in the literature. There is much debate in the literature regarding the differentiation of spirituality and religiosity (Hay & Socha, 2005; MacLaren, 2004). Some authors argue that spirituality is at the core of religion (Helminiak, 2006; Pannenberg, 2006; Walach & Reich, 2005). Gillette (2005) discusses the Latin origin of the word religion, which denotes "reconnection" or "intensive connection" with a higher power or with the universe. Hence, Gillette (2005) maintains that religion is not about God or gods, but can apply to theistic and non-theistic traditions as it is about connection with oneself, with one's family and friends, with larger social and ecological groups, with the global ecosystem, with the universe, or with a higher power. Findings of a concept analysis of religiosity carried out by Bjarnason (2007) identified religious affiliation, religious activities, and religious beliefs as the defining attributes. In the context of these findings, it is clear that religiosity and spirituality are related but different concepts.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the popularity of institutional religion in Western society, with many authors referring to the secularization of Western society (Brown, 2001; Tacey, 2003). Yet there are an increasing number of people claiming to be spiritual but not religious (Ammerman, 2013; Lambert, 2004). Hay and Socha (2005) suggest that this societal shift has led to a propensity within society to differentiate the concepts of spirituality and religion which have been traditionally thought of as inseparable within Western culture. The findings of the analysis reported herein reflect these societal changes. The difference between spirituality and religiosity was evident in a study by Barker and Floersch (2010) in which one participant said: "Religion or spirituality, again, those are two different words there . . . spirituality for me is a personal thing" (p. 362). Similarly, a participant in a study by Rich and Cinamon (2007) said: "Sometimes people are in a situation—not in a religious context—that they feel something big, important" (p. 15). For some people, spirituality can be expressed through their religious affiliation, religious activities, and their religious beliefs.

Conceptual Definition

Several conceptual definitions of spirituality have been proposed. These definitions vary considerably; however, there are a number of commonalities among all of them. For example, all of the definitions refer to the:

- Multidimensionality of spirituality
- Uniqueness of spirituality to each person
- Understanding that spirituality is broader than religious beliefs or affiliation

Furthermore, in terms of defining attributes, all of the definitions make reference to the:

- Transcendent dimension of spirituality
- Connectedness of self, others, nature, and/or a higher power
- Need to find meaning in life

Hence, the following conceptual definition of spirituality emerged based on the findings of this concept analysis:

Spirituality is a way of being in the world in which a person feels a sense of connectedness to self, others, and/or a higher power or nature; a sense of meaning in life; and transcendence beyond self, everyday living, and suffering.

Discussion

Spirituality is a concept that has gained widespread attention in several disciplines. In the nursing literature, the issue of conceptualizing spirituality has created a lively debate. One major contributing author to this debate is John Paley, who has criticized the nursing literature on spirituality for a lack of consistent scholarship and scientific rigor, and for its expansive definitions (Paley, 2008a, 2008b, 2010). Several authors have challenged some of Paley's critiques (Hussey, 2009; Leget, 2008; Newsom, 2008; Nolan, 2009; Pesut, 2008a). However, most of these authors would agree with Paley, that there is a need for critical questioning within the literature on nursing and spirituality, and also that some aspects of spirituality may be beyond words or quantification (Bruce, Sheilds, & Molzahn, 2011; Clarke, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009; Henery, 2003; Newsom, 2008; Nolan, 2009; Pesut, 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Pesut et al., 2009). This concept

analysis has addressed a call (Sessanna et al., 2007) for a definition of spirituality developed from the perspective of individuals who are recipients of health care. It has done this by including both empirical and conceptual research and has demonstrated that spirituality is not an artificial concept as posited by Paley (2008a, 2008b)—rather, it is an important and necessary concept especially during times of illness. As Hussey (2009) reminds us, among all the debate and deliberation, the implications of spirituality for nursing care should be of central concern.

Another key strength of this concept analysis is that it has provided an overview of the common themes within the conceptual and empirical literature on spirituality. For example, it appears that spirituality is considered by many to be intrinsically human or innate, as well as highly personal and unique. Furthermore, spirituality is said to develop and grow as a person ages or as a result of a difficult life event or trauma, and it is not limited by cognitive ability (McSherry & Smith, 2012).

Three defining attributes of spirituality were identified in this concept analysis: connectedness, transcendence, and meaning in life. These attributes were evident within the empirical research, and exemplars of these attributes were provided in the text and also in Table 2. The attributes identified in this concept analysis were similar to attributes identified in previous concept analyses. However, this was the first paper to analyze previously published qualitative research and to use real-life case exemplars to support the findings. A conceptual definition of spirituality was proposed based on the findings of this concept analysis. Rodgers' evolutionary approach considers concept analysis a basis for further inquiry and concept development. Hence, the conceptual definition proposed from this analysis has potential to guide further research and concept development. In order to conduct research on spirituality, it has been recommended that researchers select and clearly explain the choice of definition (Cohen et al., 2012).

This concept analysis adds to the body of nursing knowledge on spirituality. However, it has some limitations. Firstly, the majority of the literature sourced came from the nursing literature, even though several databases were specifically targeted in the search strategy in order to capture literature outside of the health sciences. This may be reflective of the increasing interest in the topic within the nursing literature. It may also reflect the inclusion criteria for the search, which sought conceptual papers and qualitative research,

which are abundant within the nursing literature. Secondly, a non-random sample with predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria was used in order to ensure that no relevant information was omitted. This may have introduced bias to the results. Nonetheless, this analysis included case exemplars from published qualitative research to support the findings.

Conclusion

Spirituality is an important, yet highly complex concept. Nurses interested in researching the concept should acknowledge that some dimensions of spirituality can be conceptualized and operationalized. However, similar to other complex concepts (e.g., caring), some parts of spirituality may be immeasurable or difficult to authoritatively define. This article adds to the body of nursing knowledge by including both conceptual and empirical research. Future operational definitions of spirituality should include the three dimensions of transcendence, connectedness, and meaning in life. Future research should focus on gaining further understanding of these dimensions as experienced in real life. For nurses in practice, this analysis provides some understanding of the complex concept of spirituality. Furthermore, the exemplars are based on qualitative data from healthcare recipients and thus are based on real-life cases. Nurses in practice can relate to these exemplars. In terms of nurse education, this analysis provides an up-to-date overview of the concept and a useful framework for teaching nurses about spirituality.

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