Phenomenological study of Korean American elders’ and their family caregivers’ meaning of family spirituality

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OVERVIEW

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Background

• Family spirituality and religion
  – Strengthen family relationships
  – Improve family coping
  – Enhance family wellbeing
    (Kloosterhouse & Ames, 2002; Theis et al., 2003; Wright, 2005)

• Limited research on spirituality within the family context
  – Regard spirituality as an individual matter

• Korean traditional culture: filial piety, familism, and Confucianism
  – perceive self as an interdependent part of family
  – emphasize connectedness with family members
  – caring for elderly parents is family obligation.
Purpose of Study

• To explore the experiences and meaning of family spirituality among Korean American elders and family caregivers in the context of family caregiving
Methodology

- Hermeneutic Interpretive Phenomenology

- Three broad open-ended questions:
  - Please, tell me about your experiences of spirituality in family relationship?
  - Are there any differences in your experiences after your immigration to the USA?
  - Could you describe what the meaning of family spirituality is for you and your family?
Participants

- Purposive Sampling
  - Both Korean American immigrant elders and their family caregivers
    - recruited from senior welfare centers at local Korean church congregations in central NC.

- 27 Elders (Male 17/Female 10) and 24 Caregivers (Male 5/Female 18)
  - Caregivers: the wives (64%); daughters (12%); or daughters-in-law (2%); husband (2%); son (18%) or son-in-law (2%).
Participants

- The inclusion criteria
  - for both elders was 1) older than 20 years old, 2) absence of a serious cognitive disorder which means that they are able to communicate clearly with an interviewer or to complete questionnaires by him/herself, and 3) living with family or receiving family caregiving.
  - for family caregivers: 1) older than 20 years old, 2) defined self as primary caregivers of eligible elders, and 3) living with the elder or providing care for the elder. A primary caregiver means family members who primarily attends to the needs of an elder and provides care functionally or economically or at least daily assistance with ADLs for elders.
Data Analysis

- **Method by van Manen (1990)**
  
  Transcribed interviews were initially read and reread to uncover the cultural and social meaning of family spirituality

- Original verbatim => Significant statement => Meaning statement => Key elements => Themes

- The initial themes were verified by two independent researchers and the participants
Findings

- Family Spirituality: Family Unity

(1) Togetherness
(2) Strength family relationship, communication
(3) Interdependency
(4) Copying resource

- “Family Spirituality is an essential component of family unity” (9-1)
Figure 1. Meaning/Expression of Family Spirituality

- Togetherness in family religious rituals
- Passing family core values into the next generations

- Interdependent influences
- Parents as a role model

- Improving family communication
- Improve quality of family time

- Serving as a spiritual encourager/mentor
- Spiritual growth/maturity
Findings

Togetherness

- Togetherness in family religious rituals
  - traditional memorial service and ancestor worship & Harvest Moon festival
  - attending church services together; prayers, reading bible
- Passing family core values into the next generations
  - Having same religion and religious values: family peace and happiness
- Father as a spiritual leader
《선산김씨 점필재(권행조) 김종직(金宗直) 종가의 예》
로덕의 네 남자 로덕네 No.2 로덕네 No.1 로덕시어머님 로덕시 아버님
Findings

☐ Strength family relationship

• Improve family communication
  – Communicate spiritually, emotionally, and physically

• Improve quality of family time
  – deeply understanding each other
  – Understanding the importance of family
Findings

- Interdependence
  - Interdependent influences
    - Spirituality of a family member influences other family members’ spirituality
  - Parents as an role model
    - Expression (both visible and invisible) of Parents’ spirituality is observed by children
    - Influencing children’s way of thinking and behaviors
Findings

☐ Coping resources

• Serving as a spiritual encourager/mentor
  – Being with, caring for each other
  – Praying for others

• Spiritual growth/maturity
  – Changing their attitudes and behaviors
  – Providing good environment for children’s growth
Discussion

• Understanding the meaning and expression of family spirituality
  – providing an important foundation to design specific interventions to improve family health

• Providing in depth knowledge about family spirituality from the cross-cultural perspective
  – Inform holistic care interventions toward immigrant Korean American elders and family caregivers
Thank you!

Do you have any questions?