

African-American Spirituality: A Concept Analysis

Culturally competent care for African Americans requires sensitivity to spirituality as a component of the cultural context. To foster understanding, measurement, and delivery of the spiritual component of culturally competent care, this article presents an evolutionary concept analysis of African-American spirituality. The analysis is based on a sample of multidisciplinary research studies reflecting spirituality of African Americans. Findings indicate that African-American spirituality involves quintessential, internal, external, consoling, and transformative attributive dimensions. Findings are considered in relation to previous conceptual analyses of spirituality and suggest that defining attributes of African-American spirituality are both global and culturally prominent. Implications for practice and research are discussed. Key words: *African American, concept analysis, culturally competent care, nursing, spirituality*

Kelley Newlin, MSN, C-ANP

Doctoral Student

Yale University School of Nursing

New Haven, Connecticut

Kathleen Knafl, PhD, FAAN

Professor

Yale University School of Nursing

New Haven, Connecticut

Gail D'Eramo Melkus, EdD, C-ANP

Professor

Yale University School of Nursing

New Haven, Connecticut

H EALTHY People 2010 mandates culturally competent care for *all* Americans in order to eliminate the nation's marked health disparities.¹ Ethnic minorities, as compared to the white, non-Hispanic majority, suffer disproportionately from both morbidity and mortality related to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and other chronic illnesses.² Increasingly, the chronic illness literature suggests that disparities in health may be reduced through culturally competent care.³⁻⁵ Culturally competent care involves the provision of health care services in a context that is sensitive to ethnically based cultural beliefs and practices in order to positively affect health.¹ For certain ethnic groups such as African Americans, culturally competent care involves sensitivity to and integration of spirituality as a component of the cultural context.

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Spirituality is a prominent component of African-American culture. It permeates nearly every domain of African-American life.⁶ Historically, spirituality has served as a personal and communal source of liberation, solace, hope, meaning, and forgiveness, particularly in relationship to social, political, and economic injustices.⁷ Further, spirituality has fostered political mobilization, action, and participation.⁸⁻¹¹ It has shaped individual, family, and communal relationships, promoting altruism and unity.¹²⁻¹⁴ Spirituality also has influenced African-American aesthetic expression through music, art, and literature.^{7,15}

Moreover, spirituality, or the religious practice in which it is expressed, has been shown to distinctly influence African-American health beliefs, practices, and outcomes. Ferraro and Koch¹⁶ found that blacks, as opposed to whites, are more likely to turn to religion as a coping resource when faced by health challenges, and that their religious practices have a significantly positive influence on their health. Conway¹⁷ and Bourjolly¹⁸ likewise revealed that black women, as compared to white women, demonstrated a higher reliance on prayer and religious thoughts when coping with a chronic illness. Levin et al¹⁹ similarly demonstrated that blacks engage in spiritual practices with greater frequency than their white counterparts. Additional studies have indicated further that African-American religious involvement positively influences health and life satisfaction and buffers the negative impact of chronic illness on both self-esteem and self-efficacy.²⁰⁻²³

Although spirituality infuses multiple aspects of African-American life, conceptual exploration of spirituality for this ethnic group is lacking in the nursing literature.

However, over the past decade, the global concept of spirituality has been increasingly examined by the discipline of nursing. But an overall consensus on a universal definition of spirituality has not yet emerged.²⁴ In fact, spirituality continues to be used interchangeably with religiosity, particularly across disciplines.

The concept of African-American spirituality thus requires further clarification. This will facilitate understanding, measurement, and delivery of the spiritual component of culturally competent care for this ethnic minority. This article presents a formal concept analysis of African-American spirituality. This article reviews the conceptual spirituality literature, explains the concept analysis method, describes the sample selection, details the data collection and analysis plan, and presents and discusses the findings and the implications for nursing practice and research.

REVIEW OF THE CONCEPTUAL SPIRITUALITY LITERATURE

For over a decade, the discipline of nursing has fostered significant, initial momentum toward a consensual, global definition of the concept of spirituality. More recently, the discipline of psychology also has contributed to the ongoing conceptual development of spirituality, exploring this concept exclusively among African Americans. This section reviews the conceptual spirituality literature, concluding with a summary of common and unique findings across the analytical studies.

In 1989, Burkhardt²⁵ published the first formal concept analysis of spirituality. According to Burkhardt, spirituality or "spirit-ing" is a process involving the "unfolding of

mystery through harmonious interconnectedness that springs from inner strength.”^{25(p72)} “Unfolding of mystery” includes one’s experience in dealing with life’s uncertainties and discovery of meaning and purpose in life. “Harmonious interconnectedness” refers to a sense of loving harmony in relationship to self, others, God, or a higher being. “Inner strength” includes one’s inner resources, awareness, or sacred source, which are experienced as the transcendent unifying force or vital principle. Spirituality, asserted Burkhardt, subsumes religiosity or religion, which may provide intellectual, behavioral, and social form to spiritual expression.

In 1992, Emblen²⁶ published a comparative concept analysis examining the definitions of spirituality and religion in the nursing literature between the years of 1963 to 1989. Emblen strikingly revealed that the conceptual definitions of spiritual and religion shared only eight common words from a combined total of 116 key words. Using the most frequently cited key words defining spiritual and religion, Emblen proposed distinct definitions for each concept. Spiritual is the “personal life principle [that] animates transcendent quality [of] relationship [with] God or god being,” and religion is a “system [of] organized beliefs and worship [that the] person practices.”^{26(p45)} The analysis indicated that spiritual care involves fostering transcendence, personal relationships, and the identification of meaning and purpose in life; whereas religious care includes promoting the maintenance of belief systems and worship practices. Overall, the comparative analysis suggested that spirituality, as a broader term, may encompass aspects of religion.

In 1997, Dyson et al²⁷ published a comprehensive literature review on the meaning of spirituality. Findings yielded key elements

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and themes essential to a definition of spirituality. Key elements included self, others, and God. Within the context of these three elements, articulating themes included meaning, hope, relatedness/connectedness, beliefs, and expressions of spirituality. Findings further indicated that religious faith and practices may be considered as spiritual beliefs or expressions. However, spirituality, it was suggested, is not exclusively related to religion.

In 1999, Meraviglia²⁸ published a critical analysis of spirituality, distinguishing it from religiosity. Spirituality was defined as “experiences and expressions of one’s spirit in a unique and dynamic process reflecting faith in God or a supreme being; connectedness with oneself, others, nature, or God; and an integration of the dimensions of mind, body, and spirit.”^{28(p29)} In this definition, faith refers to more than belief. It involves a trusting relationship with God or a supreme being, which fosters meaning and hope in life. Religion was identified as a related term and defined as a “system of beliefs and practices that nurture the relationship with the supreme being.”^{28(pp25–26)}

In 2000, the discipline of psychology uniquely contributed to the ongoing development of the concept of spirituality, exploring this concept among lay African Americans. Mattis⁶ qualitatively explored the meaning of spirituality and its distinctions from religiosity among African-American women. Content analyses of written narra-

tives revealed that female African-American spirituality was characterized by belief in and connection to a higher internal and external power; consciousness of metaphysicality; understanding and accepting the self; guidance and life instruction; peace, calm, and centeredness; positively influencing relationships with others; life purpose and meaning; and facilitation of efforts to manage adversity through support, strength, ability, and willingness to cope. Further, in-depth interviews distinguished spirituality from religiosity. Spirituality was referred to as a "relational phenomenon" and the "internalization and expression of key values," and religiosity as a "conduit for achieving spirituality."⁶(pp114-115)

Collectively, the preceding efforts to clarify the concept of spirituality reflect a beginning consensus on the defining characteristics of spirituality. Overall, the spirituality analyses indicated that spirituality involves several global attributes: transcendence, faith in God or a supreme being; discovering meaning, hope, and/or purpose in life; and interconnectedness with self, others, God, or a supreme being. Further, there was some agreement that spirituality is a process, integrating force, and inner resource or strength. The literature also commonly underscored that spirituality, although distinct from religiosity, may be expressed or fostered by religious practices and beliefs.

Uniquely, in addition to the enumerated global attributes of spirituality, the African-American qualitative analysis also highlighted peace, guidance, life instruction, and facilitation of efforts to manage or cope with adversity as defining features of spirituality. The fact that the culturally nonspecific spirituality analyses did not specifically identify these definitional attributes may be related to their samples, which largely were

based on theoretical writings and research studies reflecting spirituality of the white mainstream culture. This, in turn, suggests African-American spirituality may have culturally prominent attributes. A formal conceptual analysis of African-American spirituality is thus warranted to clarify if spirituality encompasses culturally prominent attributes as well as global attributes.

CONCEPT ANALYSIS METHOD

The Rodgerian²⁹ approach to concept analysis was used to clarify the concept of African-American spirituality. The Rodgerian approach emphasizes that concepts are dynamic and evolving as opposed to static. This approach seeks to capture the current status of a concept through the use of a descriptive inductive method involving multidisciplinary inquiry.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The target population for the concept analysis of African-American spirituality was qualitative or quantitative studies from the fields of nursing, psychology, and sociology that examined African-American spirituality. To be included in the concept analysis, the studies had to meet specific eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria included that the study's focus involved African-American spirituality, the sample largely consisted of African-Americans, and the author(s) represented the field of nursing, psychology, or sociology.

A nonprobability sampling design was used. Using OVID software, a computer-generated search was performed, specifically accessing the MEDLINE, CINAHL, PsycINFO, and Web of Science databases. The terms "spirituality," "black American," and

“African American” were entered as key words. In both the MEDLINE and PsycINFO databases, the key word “spirituality” was mapped to respective lists of several narrower terms. From these lists, the terms “religion” and “religious beliefs” were selected for inclusion in the OVID-led search to capture any additional research involving African-American spirituality. The overall search provided a convenience sample of 20 studies that met the specified eligibility criteria. Nursing is represented by seven studies, two quantitative and five qualitative. Psychology is represented by seven studies, two quantitative and five qualitative. Sociology is represented by six studies, five quantitative and one qualitative.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Each study was analyzed twice to identify key terms or phrases describing the antecedents, attributes, and consequences of African-American spirituality. For each of these aspects of African-American spirituality, key terms and phrases were tallied to determine their frequency of use. The key terms and phrases were then clustered into groups, reflecting logical and understandable categories for each aspect of the concept. Each category was labeled using general descriptors obtained from the data when possible. A limited amount of data did not fit into the categories and were considered outliers. Surrogate and related terms also were tallied across the disciplines.

FINDINGS

The most noteworthy finding in this study was the overwhelmingly congruous description of spirituality across the multi-

ple studies from varying disciplines. Although few studies specifically defined spirituality, both the qualitative and quantitative studies consistently and similarly described the antecedents, attributes, and/or consequences of spirituality for African Americans. The remainder of this section underscores this notable finding, revealing the antecedents, attributes, consequences, related terms, and surrogate terms used to describe the concept of African-American spirituality across the disciplines of nursing, psychology, and sociology.

Antecedents

Data analysis revealed that cultural influences, life adversities, faith in God, and belief in divine intervention were the predominant categorical antecedents of African-American spirituality. Cultural influences included black ethnicity, church, and family.^{14,30–36} Life adversities were described as illness, bereavement, poverty, and drug addiction.^{16,30,32,35–40} Faith in God was described as belief, trust, and reliance on God.^{30,32–35,38,40,41} Belief in divine intervention was expressed as divinely inspired strength, coping, guidance, physical healing, peace of mind, and amelioration of both fear and worry related to illness.^{30,35–40} It also was described in terms of prayer, particularly “surrendering” problems and/or “turning” illnesses over to the Lord.^{30,34,35–39,42,43}

Antecedent outliers of African-American spirituality included being authentic, seeking forgiveness, giving to others, having a limited formal education, and reporting low general self-efficacy.^{34,36,37,39,43,44} These outliers were identified in studies from the fields of nursing, psychology, and sociology.

Overall, the findings indicate that, among African Americans, an instance of the concept

of spirituality is preceded by cultural influences, life adversities, faith in God, and belief in divine intervention. The four categorical antecedents represent descriptors identified in studies representing the fields of nursing, psychology, and sociology. The relatively small number of outliers, coupled with the representative categories, suggest multidisciplinary consensus on the antecedents of African-American spirituality.

Attributes

Identification and analysis of the attributes of African-American spirituality yielded five categories or dimensions of the concept. First, African-American spirituality appears to have a central, quintessential dimension characterized by benevolence, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and transcendence.^{30-32,34,35,39,41,43,45} Describing this dimension in a qualitative investigation of spiritual beliefs among African-American mothers, a single woman raising her family in a risky urban neighborhood stated: "I got sense enough to know that a higher power created everything that's on this earth to make me function where I don't need anything, as far as physical. . . . So, you know it is a higher intelligence . . . and you need to . . . give credence where it's due."^{31(p210)} Defining spirituality in a qualitative exploration of the experience of cancer in an African-American community, the quintessential dimension was articulated as a "higher power, a causal force beyond the material or rational, that operates in all aspects of existence."^{35(p2)}

Radiating from the central, quintessential dimension are the remaining four dimensions of African-American spirituality: the internal, external, consoling, and transformative³⁵ dimensions. The internal dimension was ex-

pressed as a personal, egalitarian, caring, and intimate relationship or connection with God or a higher power.^{30-32,35-37,42,44,45} This dimension was conveyed in a qualitative investigation of how spirituality engenders coping among impoverished African-American women.³⁰ A 78-year-old widowed participant indicated that she "enjoys an egalitarian relationship with God, which seems like a friendship of long standing. . . . She also believes that God is aware of and concerned about the details of her life."^{30(p446)} Further, an 88-year-old respondent stated that "Sometimes I talk to myself. I guess I'm talking to myself and the Lord. I always say Gertie, he's better to me than I am to myself. . . . He loves me. He has brought me from a mighty long ways."^{30(p444)} The internal dimension was also distinguished as the "higher aspect or essence of the person that links one with God"^{35(p2)} in a definition of spirituality provided by a study exploring the lives of African Americans living with cancer.

The external dimension of spirituality was expressed as an interpersonal, intimate, supportive, and altruistic relationship or connection with others or organizations.^{14,16,30-35,37,39,41,42,44,46} In a qualitative study examining how black churches serve as therapeutic groups, a male congregant described the external dimension of spirituality.³⁴ Disclosing a church retreat experience, he stated "one brother opened up and another brother and we sat in a circle talking, sharing, listening. . . . [For] me, it brings to light what freedom in Christ really means . . . when you know you can just open up with whatever is."^{34(p213)} The external dimension was further indicated in a qualitative exploration of spirituality among African-American mothers coping with hospitalized infants.³⁹ This dimension

was related in terms of “prayer as support from others.” One mother reported that people all over town were praying for both her and her seriously ill daughter. “Everywhere I went, I heard, ‘I am praying for your daughter.’”³⁹(p122)

The consoling dimension of spirituality was expressed as a liberating source of peace, compassion, love, protection, warmth, and comfort.^{16,30,31,34,35,39,40,44,46} In a qualitative study of stress-related growth among women with HIV/AIDS, the consoling dimension was described as psychologically ameliorative.³⁶ An African-American woman shared that “When I found out I had HIV, [I wanted to] get closer to my creator . . . my faith has grown tremendously. . . . And I am more at peace with myself so I guess the mercy of Him has shined upon me.”³⁶(p1550) A qualitative examination of resilient African-American mothers raising families in dangerous neighborhoods further demonstrated the consoling dimension of spirituality.³¹ A single mother of four children revealed that every morning she prays for her children’s safety as they leave the house. “I stand in the window, I stand in the door . . . I ask the Lord to watch over them and protect them . . . while they are out in the world for that time. . . . I thank God when they come home.”³¹(p214)

The transformative dimension was described as a source of healing, personal growth, liberation, strength, guidance, meaning, coping, hope, purpose, renewal, and interpretation of experience.^{31–36,38–40,42,44,45,47} In a study exploring the experiences of cancer among African Americans, a male participant illustrated the transformative dimension of spirituality, describing it as a source of healing.³⁵ He said, “I believe by detecting this cancer early . . . that’s

given me an extension. . . . If you look at the thing as a whole, there are medicines that are extending man’s life. . . . Through God, all that was possible—through Him. . . . The extension of life by God can come in a lot of forms.”³⁵(p11)

The transformative dimension of spirituality, particularly its properties of healing and strength, was communicated in a qualitative investigation of daily diabetes management among African-American women.⁴⁷ “My main doctor is Dr. Jesus,” reported an interviewee. Another participant explained, “I just said, Lord . . . if it is your will, let me go back tomorrow and my blood sugar be down. . . . I went back the next day and it was down to 200, and my doctor said ‘What did you do?’ I said, ‘The Lord did it.’” Another participant shared that, “I’ve had three heart attacks. I just ask God to give me the strength to do the things that I have to do. Sometimes I think that if I would stop and sit down long enough, I would die. But I am thankful for having God on my side.”⁴⁷(p930)

In a qualitative examination of African-American women’s experiences of breast cancer, the transformative dimension of spirituality was again illustrated, demonstrating its potential for positive interpretation of illness.³⁸ Following treatment for breast cancer, an interviewee stated: “sometimes you look in the mirror and you just say, God . . . I look like a freak . . . but then you think . . . hey, I’m here and that’s important . . . thank you Jesus, thank you . . . for letting me live to see another beautiful day.”³⁸(p523)

Outlying attributes of African-American spirituality included joy, fear, identity, celebration, fulfillment, and abandonment.^{16,31,34,40} These outliers are attribute

descriptors of African-American spirituality found in the nursing, psychological, and sociological literature.

The data analysis revealed that African-American spirituality is multidimensional. It was described in terms of five attributive dimensions, including the central, quintessential dimension from which the internal, external, consoling, and transformative dimensions radiate. These attributive dimensions represent descriptors identified in studies from the fields of nursing, psychology, and sociology. The relatively limited number of outliers and representative dimensions of African-American spirituality indicate multidisciplinary agreement on the concept's defining attributes.

Consequences

Identification and analysis of the consequence descriptors of African-American spirituality yielded four broad categories: divine reciprocity, heightened interpersonal interconnectedness, emotional equilibrium, and empowering change. These categories reflect the characteristic multidimensions of African-American spirituality. Subsequent to the manifestation of the internal dimension of spirituality, an experience of divine reciprocity was described. Divine reciprocity includes strengthened faith, enhanced devotional practices, and both increased love and gratitude for God.^{30,31,34-36,39} An instance of the external dimension of spirituality was descriptively followed by heightened inter-

personal connectedness. Heightened interpersonal connectedness was related in terms of altruism, interpersonal learning, enhanced relationships, and increased love for others.^{14,31,34,35,41}

The spiritual dimension of consolation was expressed as imparting emotional equilibrium. Emotional equilibrium was related to a sense of perceived support, divine protection, peace of mind, and attenuation of stress.^{30-32,34-36,39,41,45} The transformative dimension of spirituality was described as fostering the categorical consequence of empowering change. Empowering change was articulated as active coping, personal growth, positive interpretation of life events, increased strength, and better physical health.^{16,30-32,34-36,38,40,45}

Conflict, life satisfaction, and improved self-esteem were identified as consequence outliers.^{30,39,44} These outliers represent the fields of nursing and sociology.

Consequences of the concept of African-American spirituality appear to flow from its characteristic multidimensions. These consequences were described categorically as divine reciprocity, heightened interpersonal interconnectedness, emotional equilibrium, and empowering change. Again, these categorical consequences represented descriptors identified in the nursing, psychology, and sociology literature. The representative categories and limited number of outliers suggest multidisciplinary consensus on the consequences of African-American spirituality.

Surrogate and related terms

The multidisciplinary studies used similar surrogate and related terms in expressing the concept of spirituality. Religiosity and/or religion were used interchangeably

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with spirituality across the disciplines.^{30,36,40} Religiosity was described as “interacting with a divine other in a quest for guidance or solace.”^{37(p113)} Religion was described as a “source of comfort”^{46(p64)} and as “strength . . . to effect change.”^{40(p60)} The sociological literature used surrogate terms with the greatest frequency. Related terms were clustered into two groups, spiritual and religious. The first group primarily includes terms modified by the adjective spiritual. These terms include “beliefs,” “reliance,” and “practices.” Similarly, the second group includes terms modified by the word religious. These terms include “activities,” “beliefs,” and “identity.” The religious group also includes the terms “Christ,” “Jesus,” “Lord,” “church,” and “ministers.” Identification of these distinct related terms particularly indicates that religion is correlated with African-American spirituality.

Summary of the study findings

Overall, the study findings indicate multidisciplinary consensus on the antecedents, attributes, and consequences of African-American spirituality (see the box entitled “Summary of Findings”). Further, the findings suggest that, among these three aspects of spirituality, a circular reinforcing relationship exists. More specifically, it appears that the antecedents of African-American spirituality foster manifestation of the attributive dimensions of African-American spirituality. In turn, consequences flow from these dimensions. These consequences, in like turn, reinforce the antecedents and actualization of the attributive dimensions of African-American spirituality, thereby fortifying the circular relationship.

With consideration of the circular reinforcing relationship among the antecedents,

attributes, and consequences of African-American spirituality, the following definition is proposed:

African-American spirituality is faith in an omnipotent, transcendent force; experienced internally and/or externally as caring interconnectedness with others, God, or a higher power; manifested as empowering transformation of and liberating consolation for life’s adversities; and thereby inspiring fortified belief in and reliance on the benevolent source of unlimited potential.

DISCUSSION

The present analysis, based on data representing African-American spirituality, contributes to the ongoing conceptual development of spirituality. The present study suggests that spirituality has global attributes. Overall, previous analyses indicated that black and white American spirituality commonly share several defining attributes: transcendence, faith, hope, inner strength, identification of meaning and purpose in life, and interconnectedness with self, others, God, or a higher power.^{6,25,26,28} With the exception of faith, these apparent global attributes of spirituality were similarly identified as key characteristics of African-American spirituality in the present analytical study (see the box entitled “Global and Culturally Prominent Attributes of African-American Spirituality”).

In addition, the present analysis suggests that African-American spirituality may be defined by culturally prominent dimensions or attributes. The analysis revealed that African-American spirituality has exceptionally strong transformative and consoling dimensions. Specifically, among African-Americans, spirituality appears to serve as a potent source of liberation, guidance, healing, coping, peace, comfort, and protection,

Summary of Findings

- **Categorical antecedents and corresponding descriptors of African-American spirituality**

1. *Cultural influences*: black ethnicity, church, and family.
2. *Life adversities*: illness, bereavement, poverty, and drug addiction.
3. *Faith in God*: belief, trust, and reliance on God
4. *Belief in divine intervention*: divinely inspired strength, coping, guidance, physical healing, peace of mind, and amelioration of both fear and worry related to illness; also prayer, particularly "surrendering" problems and/or "turning" illnesses over to the Lord

- **Attributive dimensions and corresponding descriptors of African-American spirituality**

1. *Central, quintessential dimension*: benevolence, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and transcendence
2. *Internal dimension*: a personal, egalitarian, caring, intimate relationship or connectedness with God or a higher power
3. *External dimension*: an interpersonal, intimate, supportive, altruistic relationship or connectedness with others or organizations
4. *Consoling dimension*: a liberating source of peace, compassion, love, protection, warmth, and comfort
5. *Transformative dimension*: a source of healing, personal growth, liberation, strength, guidance, meaning, purpose, coping, hope, renewal, and interpretation of experience

- **Categorical consequences and corresponding descriptors of African-American spirituality**

1. *Divine reciprocity*: strengthened faith, enhanced devotional practices, increased love and gratitude for God
2. *Heightened interpersonal connectedness*: altruism, interpersonal learning, enhanced relationships, and increased love for others
3. *Emotional equilibrium*: support, divine protection, attenuation of stress, and peace of mind
4. *Empowering change*: active coping, personal growth, positive interpretation of life events, and better physical health

especially when confronted with life's challenges or struggles. Many of these attributes were also distinguished in Mattis's⁶ ethnographic study exploring the meaning of spirituality among female African Americans. This ethnography found that spirituality provides guidance or life instruction, engen-

ders peace or centeredness, and facilitates coping or efforts to manage adversity. Mattis did not identify liberation, healing, or protection as attributes of spirituality. However, the sample used in this study was notably homogeneous, which may have limited the attributive descriptors of spirituality.

**Global and Culturally Prominent
Attributes of African-American
Spirituality**

- *Global attributes:* Global attributes of spirituality have been commonly identified in the present and previous conceptual studies largely reflecting spirituality of both black and white Americans.^{6,25,26,28}
 - Transcendence
 - Hope
 - Strength
 - Identification of meaning and purpose in life
 - Interconnectedness with others, God, or a higher power
- *Culturally prominent attributes:* Culturally prominent attributes of spirituality have been identified in the present study and in a previous ethnographic exploration of the meaning of spirituality among African-Americans.⁶
 - Guidance
 - Coping
 - Peace

been identified as critical or defining attributes of the concept in analyses generally reflecting spirituality of white mainstream majority literature.^{25,26,28} However, Burkhardt's²⁵ analysis suggested that guidance may provide explanatory power for the concept of inner strength, an apparent global attribute of spirituality. In addition, several chronic illness studies involving mostly white Americans indicate that spirituality may serve as a source of coping and positive mood states.^{48–52} The literature thus indicates that although white American spirituality has been described in relation to guidance, coping, and positive mood states, it has not been defined by these or similar terms. Hence, considered in the context of the conceptual literature, certain defining characteristics of African-American spirituality—guidance, coping, and peace—appear to be culturally prominent (see the box entitled “Global and Culturally Prominent Attributes of African-American Spirituality”).

Further conceptual investigation of spirituality is clearly indicated. It is necessary to validate the globally defining characteristics of spirituality. Further study also is warranted to determine the degree to which white American spirituality encompasses the powerful transformative and consoling properties used to describe African-American spirituality. It is essential to explore conceptually, for example, if guidance, coping, peace, or corresponding ideas are defining aspects of white American spirituality. The present analytical finding of culturally prominent attributes requires additional clarification and validation. In summary, it is necessary to distinguish clearly whether spirituality has culturally prominent attributes or solely global attributes through studies that explore cultural differences in how

Mattis' sample consisted of female adults who were mostly single, well-educated, and relatively young as reflected by a mean age of 31.9 years.

The present study and Mattis'⁶ ethnographic study similarly indicate that African-American spirituality serves as a salient source of guidance, coping, and peace, particularly when challenged by adversity. These attributes, reflecting the transformative and consoling dimensions of African-American spirituality, appear to be culturally prominent in terms of defining the concept of spirituality. They have not

the concept is experienced and manifested and how it contributes to various health-related outcomes.

The present study has several implications for nursing practice and research. *Healthy People 2010*¹ mandates culturally competent care for all Americans, including African Americans. Spirituality is a core feature of African-American culture, profoundly influencing health care practices and beliefs.^{16–18,22,37,47} Nevertheless, a culturally sensitive clinical assessment framework of African-American spirituality has yet to be developed. Currently, published spiritual assessment models are culturally nondistinct, thereby largely reflecting spirituality of the white mainstream majority.^{53–56} The present study's articulation of the five attributive dimensions of African-American spirituality—particularly the internal, external, consoling, and transformative dimensions—sets the stage for the development of a culturally sensitive spiritual assessment model. The development of this model will assist nursing in the identification of African Americans' spiritual resources. Identification of spiritual resources will facilitate their clinical affirmation and promotion, thereby fostering African Americans' spiritual capacity to positively transform the experience of illness through peace, hope,

positive interpretation, internal guidance, active coping, and supportive relationships.

The analysis also has implications for future research on health-related aspects of spirituality. In accordance with *Healthy People 2010*,¹ researchers are beginning to study spirituality as a cultural influence that may potentially affect both psychosocial and physiological health outcomes. Currently, the most frequently used measure of spirituality is the Spiritual Well-Being Scale.⁵⁷ It has been used in studies involving both black and white Americans. This measure taps the internal, external, consoling, and transformative dimensions of African-American spirituality. However, it does not fully address both the consoling and transformative dimensions of spirituality, particularly the elements of coping and guidance. The attributes of African-American spirituality identified in this analysis will facilitate the development of a truly culturally sensitive measurement of African-American spirituality. This will enhance study in the area of health research, clarifying how spirituality affects psychosocial and physiological outcomes. A more sensitive measure of African-American spirituality also may promote longitudinal evaluation of culturally competent care, demonstrating the efficacy of spiritual nursing interventions specific to this population.

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