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Religion and life meaning: Differentiating between religious beliefs and religious community in constructing life meaning

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Abstract

Religion is one of the major resources used to generate meaning in life. An individual's religion involves not only a set of beliefs, but also an involvement in a community of like-minded others. The purpose of this study is to differentiate between religious beliefs and religious community in constructing life meaning at the end stage of life. Twelve women, who resided at various assisted-living facilities, participated in qualitative interviews about the current and past meaning of religion in their lives. They were distributed among fundamental Christian, Catholic, liberal Protestant, and Jewish faiths. Differences between and within the groups were the result of the content, as well as certainty, of belief. These differences influenced the sufficiency of a belief system to construct life meaning. When belief alone was insufficient, life meaning was supplemented with social and secular interactions.



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Keywords

Life meaning; Religious beliefs; Religious community

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