

IS THERE A CASE FOR PASTORAL CARE TO BE OFFERED PRE-RETIREMENT?

Presentation based on the dissertation written
in fulfilment of the Master of Arts (Ageing and
Pastoral Studies), Charles Sturt University.

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The Baby Boomers

- The Baby Boomers are recognised as those born between 1946 and 1964
- The oldest of the Baby Boomers are on the cusp of retirement
- Are they ready for 20 + years of retirement living?
- Could services be put in place to circumvent expensive medical treatment later on?

The objectives of this preliminary study

- Gain insight into the meaning people of pre retirement age (50 - 65) place in life at present;
- Review the literature pertaining to the concept of meaning in life;
- Understand if the participants foresee the meaning they currently place in life changing as they age; and,
- Formulate discussion points for future research into the topic of 'meaning in life and life changes'.

Hypotheses



- Two guiding hypotheses underpinned the inquiry:
 - ▣ That maintaining and/or searching for meaning in life is a strong motivational force in humans; and,
 - ▣ That people approach retirement and older age with minimal foresight into the implications of the changes that might occur.

Review of literature into the term 'meaning in life'

- There is no agreed definition or explanation of the term 'meaning in life'.
- There is no universal meaning that fits everyone's life.
- Meaning in life is an essential element to recovering from traumatic life events.
- Main aspects that contribute to the construct include; a sense of order; a reason for existence; goal directedness; a sense of coherence; value based; and, the ability to reconcile the past.

Questions investigated in literature

- What is required to achieve meaning in life?
- Why are people unsuccessful in finding/maintaining meaning in life?
- What is the function of goals in meaning in life?
- What place does religion and spirituality have in meaning in life?
- Do changes to meaning in life occur with age?
- How might the baby boomers' background foreshadow the meaning they place in life in older age?

Research Methods



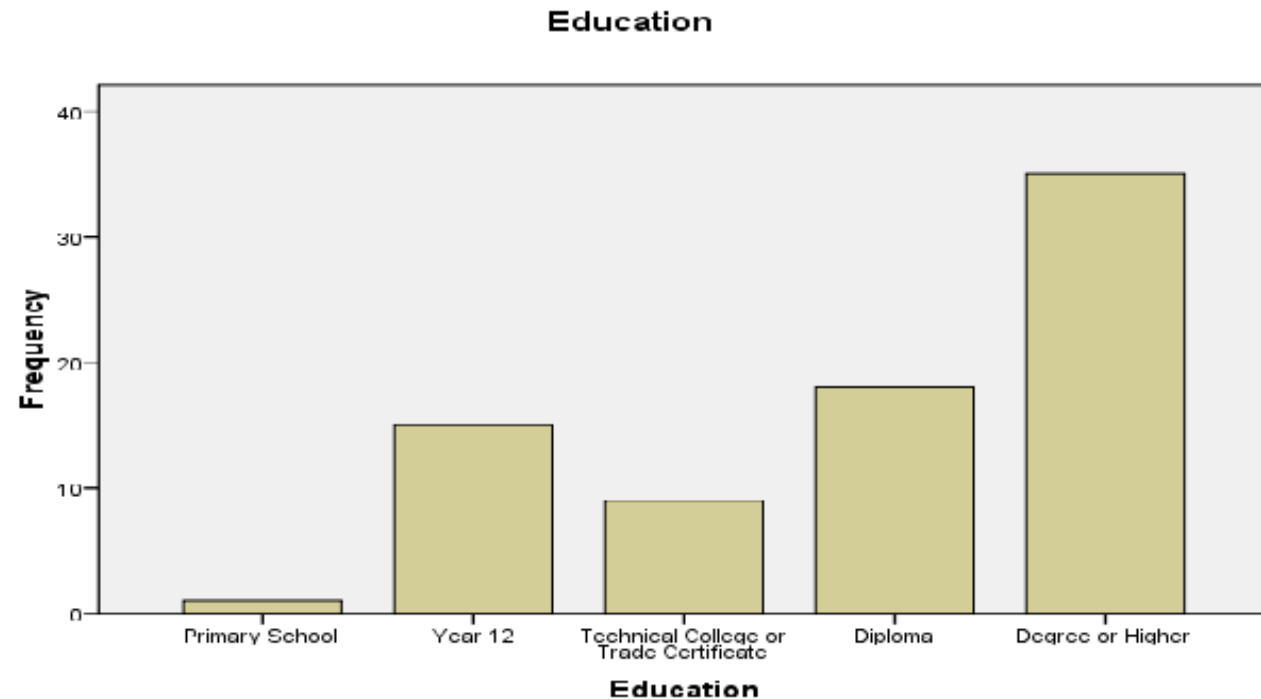
- The research was based on an interpretive theoretical perspective.
- A combination of quantitative and qualitative methodology was employed.
- A questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews.

Sample

- Recruited from various government and non government agencies and from a large singles social group.
- Participants were aged between 50 and 65 years, with the median age of 57.5 years.
- Women – 56, Men – 27
- 21 participants stated that they had retired from the paid work force.

Education and Occupation of Participants

- 44 participants indicated their occupation to be 'manager' or 'professional'.
- This was reflected in the highest level of education attained.



Statements made about retirement

- 45.1% thought that 'Retirees are often bored'
- 91.6% agreed that 'Retirees have time to pursue their chosen field of interest'
- 97.6% agreed that 'There are opportunities for personal development after retirement'
- Other factors perhaps influence the taking up of interests after retirement?

Statements made about retirement continued.

- Personal relationships in retirement
 - 90.4% agreed that 'Retirees have more time to spend with those they care about'
 - 50.6% disagreed that 'Retirees lose touch with their friends' and 22% were undecided.

Concepts that currently provide meaning in life.



- Relationships and time spent with partner and family
- Relationship and time with friends

Concepts that currently provide meaning in life cont.

The combination of:

- ▣ Spiritual practices,
- ▣ Spiritual growth,
- ▣ Religion and
- ▣ Faith - ranked third in the three most important elements to currently provide meaning in life.

Is Australia a sporting nation?



Lowest ranked of the 20 suggested concepts to provide meaning in life:

‘Attending sporting events’

All participants thought that the age related changes would likely affect the current meaning placed in life.

- 86.7% - Decline in physical health
- 79.5% - Decline in mental health
- 85.5% - Decline in mobility
- 63.8% - Less financial resources
- 57.8% - Change in living accommodation
- 62.6% - Negative change in transport arrangements
- 84.3% - Being dependent upon others for daily living tasks

How could current meaning in life be threatened?

Meaning

Contact and relationship with significant others

Aiding adult children and grandchildren

Threat

Fragmented families, distance, loneliness

Disability, ill health, dependence upon others

Optimism displayed



- Commitment to self-development or self-improvement
- Lack of materialism
- Value placed on religious and spiritual beliefs

Where to from here?



- Is pastoral care the appropriate model of assistance?
- How could pastoral care services integrate with mainstream health, welfare and aged care services?
- Intergenerational contract/baby boomers and following generations
- Clarification of the concept of 'spirituality', its role and importance in life

Thank you



- Thank you for inviting me to present this overview of my research project.

- References:

Frankl, V. (1969) *Man's search for meaning*. Cleveland, World Publishing.

Sarantakos, S. (1998) *Social Research*. 2nd Edition, South Yarra, Australia, Macmillan Education.