"Shaking the World Awake": A Constructionist Cross-case Analysis of the Phenomenon of Mature Spiritual Activism

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Socially engaged spirituality is emerging in lay and scholarly literature but little researched in community psychology. Mature spiritual activism is completely absent from community psychology investigation. Multiple case studies of 3 exemplar-networks from Buddhist, Christian, and Native American faith traditions explored mature spiritual activism. Two female exemplars and 1 male exemplar participated, ages 37 to 79 years old, along with 22 individuals from the exemplars' social networks. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, documents, and direct and participant observation and analysed using a case study and constructionist grounded theory hybrid. Cross-case analysis determined the qualities of mature spiritual activism. Findings suggested that mature spiritual activists underwent positive and healthy transformations of self and contributed to positive shifts in others and in the collectives of which they were a part through their dual spiritual and social engagement. The model inducted posited that personal and sociocultural changes may be catalysed through the dynamic intersection of the exemplar's nature, behaviours, and sociocultural collectives. Catalysing personal change entailed learning and growing cognitively, evolving spiritually, developing resilience, and deepening in humanness. Catalysing sociocultural change involved making a difference, calling others to greater freedom, enabling philosophical and structural changes, and empowering others.

World-renowned environmentalist Paul Hawken (2007) believes that we are in the midst of the largest human social movement in our history. The totality of this movement remains shrouded, mysterious. This movement propels social transformation, or "intentional attempts to change a particular social group or some aspect of an entire society for the better according to some kind of shared norms" (Ruffing, 2001, p. 18). It arises when change agents decide the status quo is disadvantageous and persuade others to join a collective project of social refashioning. Social transformation has always been central to community psychology (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000).

Social transformations in the emerging integral worldview (Ferrer & Sherman, 2008; Rothberg, 2008) include the manifestation of an entirely new emergent (Gebser, 1949/1985) form of cultural consciousness that includes "a sense of connectedness to the whole of humanity, a sense of oneness, an experience of foundational love, [and] a direct intuition of evolving consciousness" (Wall & Louchakova, 2002, p. 254). As such, in the integral worldview, spirituality is embedded in new spheres of influence beyond limits of modernity and is no longer isolated into an individualised and privatised subjectivity (Rothberg, 2008). In contemporary discourse on societal betterment, for instance, spirituality has shifted from irrelevance (Falk, 2003; Rothberg, 1993, 2008) and alienation (Walsh-Bowers, 2000) to interest and inclusion (Dalai Lama, 1999; Jones & Dokecki, 2008; Loy, 2003; Sarason, 2001; Sivaraska, 2005).

Given that a common definition of spirituality has yet to and likely will not be established (Jones & Dokecki, 2008), for the purposes of this article, spirituality is defined as the "doctrines and practices that help facilitate lived transformations of self and community toward fuller alignment with or

expression of what is 'sacred'" (Rothberg, 1993, p. 105). As such, spirituality in this article is not to be confused with religion. In spirituality, faith is experienced "through a direct relationship with the divine" (DeYoung, 2007, p. 8) in contrast to a religion where one is a part of a system with a particular set of beliefs, rituals, and ethics (Hill, 2000). As the current concept of spirituality means being in "fuller alignment with or expression of what is 'sacred'" (Rothberg, 1993, p. 105), it is connected to mysticism (Rohr, 2009; Woods, 1996). Mysticism, while impossible to define fully given its ultimate ineffability (DeYoung, 2007), is commonly misunderstood. In some Eastern traditions mysticism refers to the attainment of non-dual consciousness, "the highest [human] expression of human awareness and psychological maturity" (Costeines, 2009, p. 1). In some Western traditions, mysticism involves union with the divine (McGinn, 2006). Mystics undergo a "transformative process that supports self-transcendence" (Ruffing, 2001, p. 12), "a transformed life" (McGinn, 2006, p. 519), and the direct apprehension of the nature of reality (Rohr, 2009). Spiritual and/or mystical development is viewed positively as it shifts values and enables personological growth that fosters "individual and collective survival" (Grof & Grof, 1993, p. 252), increased tolerance and compassion, profound understanding of the interconnectedness of life, a far-reaching concern for humanity. Maton (2001) writes that spiritual development is correlated with increases in individual wellbeing and "a glimpse of the reality that we are all a part of a larger whole [in which we are all]… valuable, necessary, and interdependent" (p. 611).

Marrying Spirituality and Social Change

A growing number of experts in international development (Edwards, 2004; Hochachka, 2007), community development (Kaplan, 2002; Macy, 1991), social justice (Rakoczy, 2006), peace studies (Burdge, 2006), social work (Brenner & Homonoff, 2004; Ryan, 2000), service (Dass & Bush, 1992), social activism (Horowitz & Maceo Vega-Frey, 2006; Rothberg, 2008), and public service (Houston & Cartwright, 2007) advocate for the incorporation of spirituality into social change theory and action, stating that the combination of inner spiritual development and outer social change functions dialectically to engender constructive transformation.

Marrying spiritual development and social change efforts is the principle focus of socially-engaged spirituality, which can generally be described as an emerging model that combines the work of social transformation with the work of individual development (Movement Strategy Center [MSC], 2007). Socially engaged spirituality is viewed as an innovative and promising alternative to secular social change (Rothberg, 2008), fundamentalism (Rothberg, 1993), and disengaged forms of religious/spiritual traditions (Edwards & Sen, 2000).

Conversations in community psychology regarding spirituality and social change began receiving more attention in early part of this century (Dokecki, Newbrough, & O'Gorman, 2001; Hill, 2000; Walsh-Bowers, 2000). Spirituality is described as essential to the development of personal and community wellbeing (Maton, 2001), related to how communities are bound together (Dokecki et al., 2001) and built, and motivating meaningful action (Trout, Dokecki, Newbrough, & O'Gorman, 2003). Community psychology experts have drawn relationships between spirituality and the adequacy and competency of the social change agent, or community psychologist (Wolff, 2010). Wolff (2010) advises that developing and maintaining spiritual grounding is essential so that social change agents can sustain "clear connections to what

called us to the work in the first place" (p. 21).

Little in the field (Jones & Dokecki, 2008) has been published in the last decade that has continued these investigations. Jones and Dokecki (2008) explain that the aspects that religion/spirituality regard as "mysterious, yet essential, aspects of the human situation related to wellness, oppression, and liberation have often been hidden to community psychologists simply because they have been reluctant to venture into the ultimate aspects of the spiritual realm" (p. 151). Walsh-Bowers (2000) cautions that "only a holistic psychology can enable community psychologists to effectively study and respectfully engage in emancipatory action" (p. 222).

The Emergence of Mature Spiritual Activism

A growing focus of the field of socially engaged spirituality is the contribution of advanced levels of spiritual development to social activism, a phenomenon that has been termed mature spiritual activism in this study based on Kornfield's (1993) concept of spiritual maturity. Kornfield (1993) outlined 10 determinants for spiritual maturity: non-idealism, kindness, patience, immediacy, integrated and personal, questioning, flexibility, embracing opposites, relationship, and ordinariness. Non-idealism refers to a spirituality that is not based on seeking perfection but it based on "the capacity to let go and to love" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 311). Kindness implies attaining a foundation of self-acceptance, which nurtures "a compassionate understanding" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 312). Patience allows one to move beyond "gaining or grasping…to open to that which is beyond time" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 313). Immediacy refers to the here and now focus of attention in spiritual maturity as well as its manifestation in the transcendent and immanent. With immediacy, "we become more alive and more present" (Kornfield,

1993, p. 314). Being integrated means that life is no longer compartmentalised and the personal quality honours "spirituality through our own words and actions" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 314). These two qualities acknowledge that being of service to the world starts with oneself. Questioning means open-mindedness, an ability to discern, and a willingness to see life as it is rather than how we would like it to be or how we have been conditioned to see it. Having flexibility means being able to be present and let go and "to respond to the world with our understanding and our hearts [and] to respect the changing circumstances around us" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 316). Embracing opposites means being able "to hold the contradictions of life in our heart" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 317). Relationship means that all things are seen as sacred, and community and interconnectedness are honoured. Lastly, spiritual maturity manifests in ordinariness, which is disinterested in "attaining mystical states or extraordinary power" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 319), but that shows itself as "a simple presence" (Kornfield, 1993, p. 319) that listens and allows the mystery to reveal itself.

The concept of mature spiritual activism is theoretically analogous to DeYoung's (2007) concept of mystic-activism. DeYoung (2007) found that mystic-activists were motivated by their religious faith, had a worldview that emerged from the margins of society, had an identity [that] was rooted in a belief that we share a common humanity, and held an ethics of revolution that demanded structural change. In DeYoung's (2007) words, mystic-activists are leaders who experience an unmediated relationship with the divine and:

> …whose activism consumes them yet is deeply rooted in their faith and in the mystery of the divine. Their activism compels them to reach passionately inward toward the divine for sustenance, wisdom, perseverance, and belonging. (p. 7)

DeYoung (2007) elaborates further that the:

> …lived faith of mystic-activists gives birth to unique worldviews, identities, and ethics…[which] compel faith-inspired activists to reach for authenticity in their leadership and propel them to struggle for a society that aligns with the vision for social justice in the Scriptures. (p. 138)

While mature spiritual activism might be quickly equated to liberation theology's consciousness-raising process (Trout et al., 2003), mature spiritual activism differs in that it requires the attainment of non-dual consciousness, which is related to but not equivalent to liberation theology's consciousness awakening (Watkins & Shulman, 2010).

Although community psychology offers its theoretical development and findings in the nexus of spirituality and social change, empirical investigations on mature spiritual activism are non-existent in community psychology. Study of mature spiritual activism stands to benefit community psychology by broadening horizons of understanding and providing practical guidance for social change agents who desire more holistic, grounded, and potentially more effective social change methods.

Method

A hybrid research methodology of multiple case study (Stake, 2006; Yin, 1994) and constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was utilised. The central research question studied was, "What is characteristic of social change agents identified as spiritually advanced?" Multiple case study informed participant selection, data collection, procedures, recruitment, analysis, and presentation of results while grounded theory guaranteed an inductive style of data analysis and interpretation. Adequate data were available to enable limited theory building and provided the possibility of making cautious generalisations (Stake, 2006; Yin, 1994).

Participants

Participant selection was based on achievements in social change, level of spiritual advancement, and ability to meet the requirements for case study research. Exemplars had completed a minimum of 10 years of social change work, some of which was direct action. Spiritual advancement was determined using multiple factors to ensure the selection of the most qualified participants given that an appropriate and reliable empirical measure of spiritual advancement does not yet exist. These factors included a community accreditation of spiritual advancement, my felt sense of the participant's level of spiritual development, and in some cases, exemplar nomination and public recognition of degree of spiritual advancement. Exemplars selected for study had achieved a non-dual level of spiritual development and qualified as mystic-activists according to DeYoung's (2007) criteria. Exemplars had to work with others willing to participate in the study (e.g., co-workers, family members, friends, spiritual and/or religious mentors, colleagues, and those from populations served).

Exemplars were no less than 35 years of age to ensure that they met the minimum requirements for social action and spiritual advancement. The nationalities represented were American (Phileena Heuertz), Native American (Grandmother Mona Polacca), and Srkan (Dr. Ari. T. Ariyaratne). Grandmother Mona and Phileena identified as heterosexual, and Dr. Ari did not identify as any sexual orientation. Grandmother Mona is divorced, and the other exemplars are married. Phileena has a bachelor's degree, Grandmother Mona has a master's degree, and Dr. Ari has a doctorate degree. Each participant came from a different faith tradition: Buddhism (Dr. Ari), Christianity (Phileena), and Native American/ Indigenous (Grandmother Mona). Grandmother Mona's ethnicity is Hopi-Havasupai, Phileena is European-American

(German and English), and Dr. Ari is Sri Lankan/South Asian. All self-identified as abled, indicating that none was experiencing a disability.

Procedure

I recruited and found exemplar participants using mixed purposeful sampling and through nominations. I invited socially engaged spirituality experts to nominate exemplars and my literature review generated a qualifying candidates list. Before a participant was chosen, he/she was verified to be qualified by at least one socially engaged spirituality expert. Non-exemplar participants were nominated by exemplars in the cases of Phileena and Grandmother Mona and were selected through convenience sampling in the case of Dr. Ari. In the cases where exemplars nominated non-exemplar participants, I directed exemplars on how to select such participants based on how well the exemplar perceived that this person was able to understand the his/her personality and developmental growth. As consistent with theoretical sampling, I changed the recruitment for non-exemplar participants after the first case (Dr. Ari) because some of the non-exemplar participants recruited through convenience sampling did not know the exemplar very well and therefore very little useful data was able to be collected from such participants. I decided that greater value and priority would be placed on recruiting non-exemplar participants that had more significant experience with and understanding of the exemplar so that more intimate data could be collected. Given the paucity of time and financial support available for field research, greater reliance had to be placed on the exemplar for recruiting these participants.

I selected cases based on the opportunity they provided for learning (Stake, 2006) including the overall selection of cases and their inherent diversity. Recruitment for each of the exemplars ranged from six to seven months. Once I

received nominations for Dr. Ari and Phileena, email contact ascertained interest and availability. I contacted Dr. Ari first through Sarvodaya's international volunteer department and then directly. I emailed Phileena directly. I invited Grandmother Mona in person during her workshop in Sarasota, California, and I corresponded with her assistant to determine research feasibility. Once interest was indicated, I screened the exemplar candidates. After I obtained consent, in-person meetings were scheduled to complete the semi-structured interview protocols. Three non-exemplar participant interviews were conducted by phone. I secured translators to conduct interviews with participants that did not speak English. The ethics review board approved participant identity disclosure following case study's methodological recommendation to reveal participant identity (Stake, 2006). Exemplars signed a supplementary consent form.

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data included documentation, interviews, direct observation, and participant observation. I created a case study database and maintained a chain of evidence in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I utilised theoretical sampling and saturation (Charmaz, 2006) to assure successful data analysis. I pilot tested exemplar, family member, and co-worker interview protocols to assess question wording and order. Formal exemplar interviews lasted 90 minutes (Dr. Ari), 150 minutes (Phileena), and 190 minutes (Grandmother Mona) and were audio-recorded. Five (5) formal interviews were completed with Dr. Ari, 3 with Grandmother Mona, and 2 with Phileena. Non-exemplar participant interviews (co-workers, family members, friends, spiritual guides, colleagues, and recipients of social action) lasted 60 to 90 minutes and were audio-recorded. Eleven, five, and six non-exemplar participants were interviewed in Case 1 (Dr.

Ari), Case 2 (Grandmother Mona), and Case 3 (Phileena) respectively.

I completed direct and participant observation during field visits. I spent 22 hours with Dr. Ari in direct and participant observation. Data were collected through meals or tea, trips to local and nonlocal Sarvodaya events, and morning meditations. I spent 15 hours with Grandmother Mona in direct and participant observation activities, including sharing a meal, spending time together travelling to other interviews, e-mail conversations, a conversation at her sister's home as well as earlier participation in one of the exemplar's workshops. I spent 17 hours with Phileena in direct and participant observation through four shared meals, a yoga class, tea, a staff lunch, a staff meeting, weekly community prayer hour, and a spiritual accompaniment meeting.

Data Analysis

I developed individual case descriptions using data analysis strategies from social constructionist-based grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). I utilised line-by-line, incident-by-incident, and focused coding. Constant comparison was employed to discover code matches and nuances demanding new code creation. Memoing (Corbin & Strauss, 2009) inducted focused codes from initial codes and themes from focused codes. Chosen themes captured a vital aspect of the central research question. Exemplars reviewed and approved their case report drafts. After individual case analysis, I conducted cross case analysis to cull out overarching themes. Triangulation was employed, and insiders and outsiders to the research examined the cross case report and commented on its veracity. I engaged in indwelling (Anderson, 2000), or 'taking breaks,' which enabled intuitive/nonlinear levels of analysis.

Biographical Findings

Dr. Ari T. Ariyaratne

Dr. Ari has worked for social change for 54 years and is "one of the most

successful living examples of blending Gandhi's ideas with the Buddha's" (Ingram, 2003, p. 121) for his development of Sarvodaya, a nonviolent movement of more than 3 million individuals in 15,000 villages in Sri Lanka (Sarvodaya, n.d.). The movement has grown from work camps for privileged high school students in 1954 to the vision for sarvodaya, or awakening for all. The movement emphasises "decentralization and self-reliance" (Ingram, 2003, p. 119) and implements highly effective programs in community development. Dr. Ari is an active practitioner of Buddhism and has maintained a consistent meditation practice for the 40 years. He claimed to have forged his own spiritual path through different teachers and religious resources. He has been the recipient of many awards for his social engagement.

Grandmother Mona Polacca

Grandmother Mona has worked for social justice, environmental sustainability, indigenous rights, and healing for 40 years. She is widely known for her participation in the International Council of the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers as well as her contributions to United Nations' committees working with indigenous human rights; research in the social sciences on alcoholism, domestic violence, and culturally appropriate treatments for Native Americans; and, leadership in the Native American revitalisation movement. She is a life-long spiritual practitioner and an active practitioner of Native American spirituality having participated in the Native American Church since 1978. She cites ancestors and elders both living and deceased as her spiritual teachers.

Phileena Heuertz

Phileena has worked to live in solidarity with the world's most impoverished and disadvantaged for 17 years as an integral part of the WMF movement. WMF serves vulnerable populations through a prophetic ministry and incarnation and holistic missions in Asia, Latin America, Europe, and

Africa. She is most widely known as the international executive co-director of the WMF movement, a New Friars movement leader, and a contemplative activism luminary. She has engaged with marginalised and oppressed communities that include abandoned children, people living with HIV/AIDS, sexually exploited women and children, people recovering from drug addictions, homeless children, refugees, and children of combat and war. Her conversion to Catholicism from Protestant evangelism represented a key spiritual development. Significant spiritual experiences led her to identify with the contemplative activism of Clare and Francis of Assisi. She engages in a number of spiritual practices and personal development systems.

Cross Case Analysis Findings

The macrotheme "Shaking the World Awake": Living Transformation: Self, Other, Society describes the emergent phenomenon. Contained within the macrodynamic are three domains referring to the exemplars' interior-individuality (Exemplar Nature), their exterior-individuality (Exemplar Behaviours), and their sociocultural milieus (Social Systems and Cultures). Exemplar Nature and Exemplar Behaviours relate to the 'I' realm, and Social Systems and Cultures relates to the 'We' and 'It' realms. Where each of these domains intersects, interaction occurs and dynamic processes are catalysed. The thematic dynamic, Catalysing Personal Change, results from the intersection of the Exemplar Nature and the Exemplar Behaviours domains. When Exemplar Behaviours meets Social Systems and Cultures, the thematic dynamic Catalysing Systems Change occurs. Finally, where Exemplar Nature joins with Social Systems and Cultures, the thematic dynamic Catalysing Cultural Change is produced. Changes in social systems and cultures were combined and treated together in the thematic dynamic Catalysing Sociocultural Change.

See Figure 1 for a graphic depiction of the dynamic.

Social Systems and Cultures Domain

The exemplars engaged with intersubjective and interobjective systems categorised in the following themes: Socially Engaged Spirituality Movements; Marginalised, Impoverished, and Privileged Populations; Family Systems; Governments; and Organisations. For example, while variance occurred, all exemplars interfaced with socially engaged spirituality movements, were leaders in movements, and engaged with marginalised, impoverished, and privileged populations. Exemplars also connected to family systems, local, national, and global governing bodies, and various organisations.

Exemplar Nature Domain

All cases included interior qualities spoken of by exemplars and characteristics and dynamics perceived by non-exemplar participants.

Possessing virtues and skills. Exemplars embodied virtues of compassion, honesty, generosity, humility, kindness, strength, perseverance, devotion, discipline, industry, tranquillity, mercy, and equanimity. Phileena was described as having "compassion beyond belief [and]…a heart for other people" (WMF Board Member). Phileena's priest shared that she is able to keep her ego in check and explained, "One of the dangers of delving into developmental [work is]…your ego exerts its ugly head…. She does not do that. She is able to listen to that voice and laugh at it." Grandmother Mona is "always positive, vibrant, happy, bringing a joyful presence" (Family Member) to her life and to others, and, when she enters a new situation, she believes that "whatever it is, it's going to be good" (Family Member).

All demonstrate social intelligence abilities of interpersonal effectiveness including social awareness, seen through empathy, attunement, and social cognition and social facility including the skills of influence, concern, self presentation, and
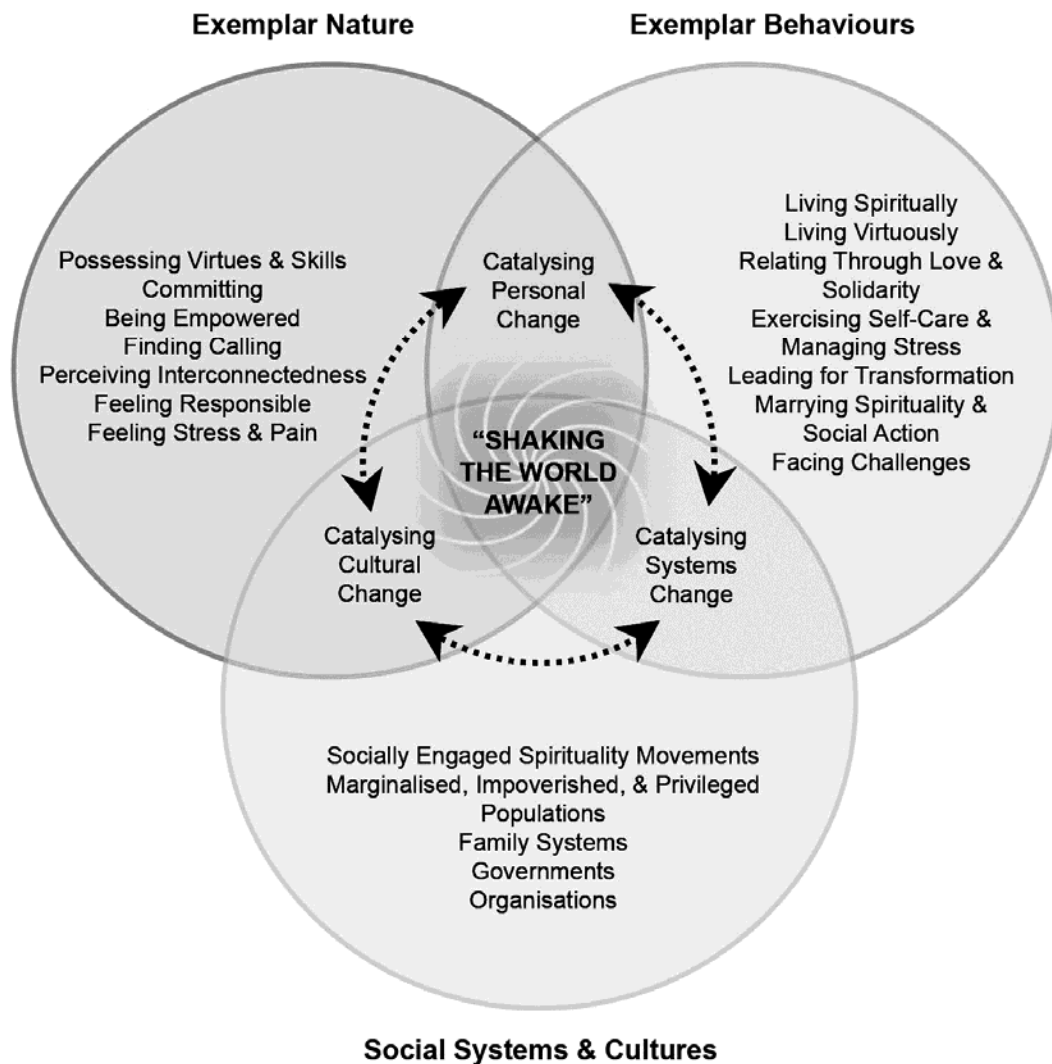
Exemplar Nature   **Exemplar Behaviours**

Possessing Virtues & Skills
Committing
Being Empowered
Finding Calling
Perceiving Interconnectedness
Feeling Responsible
Feeling Stress & Pain

Catalysing
Personal
Change

Living Spiritually
Living Virtuously
Relating Through Love &
Solidarity
Exercising Self-Care &
Managing Stress
Leading for Transformation
Marrying Spirituality &
Social Action
Facing Challenges

"SHAKING
THE WORLD
AWAKE"

Catalysing
Cultural
Change

Catalysing
Systems
Change

Socially Engaged Spirituality Movements
Marginalised, Impoverished, & Privileged
Populations
Family Systems
Governments
Organisations

Social Systems & Cultures

Figure 1. Theoretical model of mature spiritual activism advanced in this research.

synchrony with others. Grandmother Mona was described as having skills of social cognition and social facility:

> She reflects back on what people are able to do and from a heart point of view. When I was at the community meeting, she was really in tune with what people in the community were thinking, saying, and feeling, and reflected back to them what she heard them think and say and feel…. She's almost like a mirror where she mirrors back how people are thinking and feeling. (Co-worker)

The exemplar confirmed her attunement stating, "I'm feeling them, I'm watching them seeing how they're responding." One of Dr. Ari's co-workers described him as "a friend to everybody," and a friend confirmed stating that "his kindness is not for one particular group or whatever particular person but to everybody." A Sarvodaya villager explained that when Dr. Ari is speaking, "he understands the level of the people, [and] when he is talking to the people, he can communicate."

Committing. The exemplars had lifelong commitments to their faith traditions, spiritual development, and spiritual practices. Exemplars committed to social change in their late teens (Grandmother Mona) or early adulthood (Phileena and Dr. Ari) and continued their social engagement uninterrupted. Commitments to social change were deep and passionate. The exemplars remained in close connection the populations with which they engage in order to increase the wellbeing of those groups. Dr. Ari's family member stated, "The movement and his life, it's just one." Grandmother Mona's family member, in describing her commitment style, observed that "this is her life. She doesn't have a job per se or a home per se, she just goes wherever this leads her."

Being empowered. Participants described exemplars as empowered, and exemplars appeared to act from an empowered state. Her priest characterised Phileena as "empowered by the Holy Spirit, and also she's often empowered by others." Dr. Ari's family member stated that his "spiritual development, the meditation practices makes a person to be strong and able to face any obstacle in the society, and I feel his meditation practice has helped him to develop and to bring this movement into this level."

Finding calling. Part of the exemplars' intrapsychic landscapes included an inward experience of feeling called and living this calling. Grandmother Mona stated:

> So it's like sometimes people ask, "So how did you become a grandma?" [laughter]. I can't even begin to tell them… It's been the journey – it's been the journey of life, and it's everything. I guess in some ways it's just like [my sister] was saying. It's just the path I've been put on.

Dr. Ari had a strong vision for his work and has lived that calling for most of his life. One co-worker described how Dr. Ari wanted to change the country, and his travel assistant explained that without "his visions Sarvodaya wouldn't have been here today. If not for his visions Sarvodaya wouldn't have survived for 50 years." Dr. Ari understands his path as "a very, very rare chance opportunity we have got to consciously try to understand the way that we can attain spiritual enlightenment."

Perceiving interconnectedness. The exemplars perceived a sense of interconnectedness. According to Dr. Ari, this state of interconnectedness and non-separateness did not develop at any point in his conscious awareness. In his words, "I could see the unity of even two separate things always." Grandmother Mona sees that "nothing is separate" and explained that when she sits in circle with others, "we become one mind, one heart, one body, one spirit." Phileena stated that she has a "sense of connectedness to all beings, all created beings [and]…a sense of oneness that we are all the same and we're not different."

Feeling responsible. Each exemplar spoke of an internal drive toward responsibility that was other- and/or self-directed. Grandmother Mona stated that she recognises and acknowledges "ourselves as being the ones that we've been waiting for" meaning that she knows that responsibility rests with her. Phileena contends that "as a white, affluent, North American, I have the responsibility to respond," but acting responsibly for her means examining choices thoroughly:

> I often think about how so many of our good deeds help, and so many of those things end up hurting people…. Were the slaveholders' intentions really bad? No, they probably convinced themselves that no, this is good…. So I am just constantly thinking about what is it we're doing now that we think is good and right?

Feeling stress and pain. Engaging in mature spiritual activism was intrapersonally challenging for the exemplars and feeling stress, including compassion fatigue and/or burnout, was common. Exemplars experienced pain and difficult emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety. Dr. Ari stated "I feel…sometimes very upset when something goes wrong." Grandmother Mona commented that she gets "mad" when indigenous cultures are not honoured, and she feels the continuous stress of having to "walk in two worlds…[and live] in the Western society," which is not her own. Phileena noted:

> At the peak of the busyness of life, building WMF, and the height of…my travel schedule, we had set a pretty intense pace, and it was catching up to me…. A mentor asked me, "Do you ever doubt the goodness of God?" and I answered yes. I think that was a definite moment of recognising, beginning to recognise my limitations in a world of need and the effects that it was having on me.

Exemplar Behaviours Domain

Engaging in mature spiritual activism meant the exemplars acted in specific ways categorised in the themes Living Spiritually, Living Virtuously, Relating Through Love and Solidarity, Exercising Self-Care and Managing Stress, Leading for Transformation, Marrying Spirituality and Social Action, and Facing Challenges.

Living spiritually. All exemplars' spiritual living included engaging in a committed spiritual practice; having spiritual experiences; adhering to and being guided by spiritual teachings, their faith tradition, and spiritual elders and guides; following a spiritual path; and emanating the fruits of their spiritual development. Dr. Ari stated, "I am trying to tread the noble eight fold path to attain supreme happiness called nibana." From the time Grandmother Mona was a child, prayer has been "the beginning of

every day [and]…an everyday part of life." She stated:

> Before I get up, I give thanks, and I'm stretching my body, moving my body before I get up and thinking positively, feeling good…. I give thanks for the water, and I give thanks for the air I breathe, and then I go outside. The first time I walk outside I breathe the day, give thanks for the day, greet the day and Mother Earth because I'm going to walk on her. I make a motion toward the earth and bless myself, make a motion toward the sun and bless myself. Give thanks and I walk the day. So everything that happens throughout the day is part of that prayer.

Phileena's spiritual director viewed her practices as helping her "to know who she really is and be able to embrace that." She stated that spiritual practice "opens her up to the pain in a way that if she were not as attentive to contemplative prayer, she might be able to gloss over it…. My suspicion is it also makes her much more compassionate."

Living virtuously. The exemplars' virtues are lived, and they lived compassionately, generously, humbly, with strength, discipline, and perseverance. Participants noted the ways exemplars demonstrated these virtues in their daily living. While Dr. Ari and others agree that he has not attained spiritual enlightenment, he is described as spiritually advanced by participants. A Buddhist monk elaborated:

> Bodhisattva means someone who practices all the good virtues and qualities without hatred, grudge, and all these bad thoughts. With kindness, compassion, generosity, if you can work [with] somebody, he's a bodhisattva. [Dr. Ari] can be one of them. Without any selfish motive and any one can work with kind heart, with compassion to help

everybody, he's a bodhisattva…
Bodhi means realisation, sattva
means being. Someone who
working toward the highest
realisation.

Grandmother Mona's co-worker noted that the humility she possesses is not "something she went looking for" rather it is "something she just is." A co-worker added that "she doesn't move in her life from her ego," and another co-worker stated that "her spiritual understanding translates into direct action that is very honest and forthcoming but also compassionate and loving." Living virtuously has meant persevering. A WMF board member stated that Phileena "never lost that faith…. There has been a lot of struggle, but there has never been a desire to give up the fight."

Relating through love and solidarity.
Exemplars cared for and supported others. Dr. Ari described his sense of love as a "friendliness towards all that is living." His friend remarked that Dr. Ari gives "everything for the benefit of others," and radiates "kindness, love, compassion to the enemies and to everybody" without discrimination. Grandmother Mona's co-worker noted that people "choose to be around her [to] feel her warmth, tenderness, and spiritual strength." Phileena remains in social action because of her connection to others, stating, "I want more for them, and I want more for myself, and it's in relationship with each other that we can really start to find that…we need each other, and that's why I stay."

Exercising self-care and managing stress. Examples of self-care included engaging in meditation, study, relaxing activities; maintaining healthy boundaries and avoiding unhealthy interpersonal entanglement; expressing emotions appropriately; maintaining consistent spiritual practices; avoiding overworking; taking time for vacation and retreats; and, enjoying life.

Grandmother Mona explained that from a young age her elders taught her self-care:

The number one thing we've heard all of our lives [and]…anytime we're getting ready to leave the house…. Our grandparents… [would] always say to us, "Now take good care of yourself"…. They'd say, "Do you hear?"…. They never had to tell us what taking care of ourselves meant. We just feel it inside, and you feel it inside your heart, your being that it means everything about life.

She stated, "There are times when I feel like I need to back off and stay home, relax, and enjoy my quiet time alone or with my family." Phileena stated that by taking care of herself, she was taking care of everyone else because "in order for me to be fully present, available, and effective in the area of justice, compassion, and being an agent of social change required that I be in my best condition and be able to offer my best." Dr. Ari explained that managing stress comes with spiritual maturity:

For example, we work very hard and so you put up a series of houses for victims of war. Then after those people settle down there, violence breaks out again and those houses are all destroyed. Naturally you get disappointed, frustrated, you become angry. So at that point remember, everything is impermanent…. So a person who is spiritually awakening…will never get disturbed by all these obstacles because your ultimate goal is spiritual.

The exemplars exercise self-care and manage stress by relying on support networks. A family member shared that Grandmother Mona "surrounds herself with good people… that take good care of her." A co-worker stated:

There are people that throughout the world wherever she goes, they take care of her that are providing prayer also for her, providing a nice massage, or providing a place for her to stay and have some quiet time.

Leading for transformation. All of the exemplars were described as leaders, and all were leading movements for social change. Each was seen as pioneering innovative social action interventions, working for structural change, teaching, guiding, healing, modelling, building bridges, and being inspirational. Dr. Ari "with loving-kindness, he collects thousands of people but well, maybe they're not all Buddhist. They are Hindu, Christian, Muslim…. I have seen thousands, tens of thousands of people" (Friend). Another co-worker stated laughing that "most people follow him, [and] even some people [who] have negative thinking, they're also following him [and] his philosophy." As a teacher, Grandmother Mona is guiding and shepherding and many learn from her. Her family member stated, "You're constantly accumulating these gifts of knowledge and little pearls of wisdom about the global community and about the universe as a whole [from her]." As a leader, Grandmother Mona explained:

> I go in there with the full determination and confidence that there is going to be a change in that. [laughter]…. Part of that presentation is that there is change, [and] there is hope. When they start looking at what they've done in the past with regard to protecting their territories, they see that they've been successful.

Grandmother Mona's nephew stated that that "when she talks people listen."

Marrying spirituality and social action. Marrying spirituality and social change for the exemplars referred to the integration of personal spiritual practices into social engagement, which was associated with a depth of engagement and a strong feeling of

the presence of Spirit in their work, all of which appeared to be connected with an embodied understanding of interconnectedness. Grandmother Mona described how the teachings from the Native American Church guide her philosophically, stating:

> In that circle inside the tepee and the altar is a half moon. That's the spirituality; that's the prayer. But, when you walk out the door, what you do and how you walk your life is what makes the moon full. So you have to do this. The prayer and spirituality is important, but you also have to live life and put it into action. Put that prayer into action.

Another co-worker remarked that the exemplar's spirituality and work are "inseparable," and her family member named the exemplar's spirituality as "critical to all of [her] successes." Dr. Ari stated that:

> …in almost everything I did, there is a very strong spiritual content to that….If I go to a village for the first time, before I step into that village even at a distance, in my own mind I think, may all these people I am going to visit, be well and happy in their body and mind. May they get some benefit from my visit…. Sometimes I could feel that they got it long before I came.

He shared that he has worked from a profound intuitive sense his "whole life. From the time I can remember. Never intellectual, never argumentative, never analytical. Always intuition." He explained that intuition comes "from unbounded love [and] from reducing and reducing to the point to elimination, the ego. It can come when your five senses as well as when the mind are rested." One of Phileena's co-workers stated that Phileena's "spirituality drives her action." Phileena sees contemplation and action as naturally "intertwined," where social action:

…ought to lead us…to a place of solitude, silence, and stillness, and then that place of solitude, silence, and stillness would naturally lead us back out into the world.

Facing challenges. The theme Facing Challenges includes how the exemplars made sacrifices and confronted external threats and faced the difficulties engendered by their personalities. Grandmother Mona shared that she wrestles with feeling an "us against them" adversarial dynamic in her social engagement. She explained, "I can't say anything good about the multi-national corporations and the mining companies who are destroying Mother Earth. And all the contamination from all of these oil extractions from the natural resources. I cannot say anything good about that." Phileena's husband explained that she has endured many "forms of death."

I think there is the dying of the illusions of sort of formulaic answer-filled fundamentalism, [and] in some sense, there was a real grieving of that. Subsequently, I think [with] Phileena's awakening and the growth and the depth of her spirituality, especially as it's practiced now, there was a real sense of loss in terms of being understood by friends and family, and I think for her folks in particular. It's really difficult for them to see her join the Catholic Church.

Catalysing Personal Change

As the exemplars' internal states and experiences and outward actions met their interobjective world, self development and self growth occurred in processes of learning and growing cognitively, evolving spiritually, and developing resilience. Dr. Ari's family member reported, "That change is there." Dr. Ari himself noticed "a very big, big change as time went on," stating that "certainly in my conduct, in the words I speak, the

thoughts that come to my mind, certainly I can see a very, very big change as time went on." His family member observed that "the wisdom that he practices and preaches comes from [his] practices like meditation." Without her spiritual growth and development, Grandmother Mona's family member stated:

She would be a very different person. She might be that rich lady living up the hill hording all her wealth. Instead, she's the humble person that we all should be striving to become [laughter]. Because that's what this is all about – being humble before everything – the universe, everything that's out there it's being aware of that.

Another co-worker described Grandmother Mona as growing through spiritual challenge:

When you've gone through enough tests, because Spirit will initiate you through the doorway of challenge – when you've met those challenges, they weather you and they deepen you and they test one's integrity. It's like when a potter puts a pot inside of an oven, the kiln, and they heat it up for a while and they pull it out and then heat up for a while. It's got to be just right before they cool it or it will crack and it won't hold when it was made for. And when someone has reached that level of spiritual integrity where it can hold what's being poured into it by Spirit, then it operates differently.

Phileena related how she had grown:

I had this deep longing in me…. It was moving from me holding my faith as something that I control and determine to this faith holding me. And so there was the sense of it doesn't matter. I don't need answers…. It's this new sense of trust in the unknown…. That if we

can take that leap of faith into the unknown, there's this deeper trust of that unknown holding us.

Catalysing Sociocultural Change

Catalysing sociocultural change meant that the exemplars have impact through calling others to greater freedom, enabling philosophical and structural changes, and empowering others. Phileena is credited with profoundly reworking the WMF movement's culture and practices and stimulating change in the larger ecumenical community. Phileena has been "a huge benefit for us [WMF staff] and the community," (Coworker) and her willingness to share what she has learned has "had a sweeping effect to even people in other countries." Phileena's:

> …contemplative awakening changed everything for WMF…. It's arrested our activism – literally arrested our activism and reoriented it and redefined it. When we self-describe as contemplative activists, that's because of the reform that Phileena brought. (Husband)

Her priest further commented that the exemplar's own spiritual development allowed her to see how to lead the WMF more thoughtfully and safeguard the community from compassion fatigue and burnout. One co-worker shared that Phileena brought an emphasis of accountability to the movement and created structures to support the community's growth, including the development of a comprehensive approach to handle and prevent personal crises and staff burnout. She has redefined the WMF organisational culture and challenged the standard that contemplation cannot be supported structurally in the workday. Her husband elaborated further that Phileena "really brings peace in the places, the lives, the communities, the organisations, and the things that she connects to." Furthermore, Phileena and her husband are catalysts in the ecumenical world to move from "saving souls to being in solidarity with

people" (WMF Board Member), and Phileena "has been a major force for a lot of people in recognising the humanity of people [globally] and in the inter-exchange" of culture and ideas. She and her husband have challenged the established practice that prioritises pastoral care within mission-based organisations and are instead enabling the development of more autonomous missionaries capable of self-care.

Participants commented that they see Phileena empowering others, and that they have felt empowered by her. A co-worker stated that Phileena has empowered those in the WMF community to redefine the limits of their traditions and find healthy balance. In particular, he remarked that Phileena has done a great service to women and men in redefining what it means to be a woman. He explained:

> She's really allowed, especially the women in our community, but I would say it goes beyond that to the men as well, to take a hard and thoughtful and even a renewed theological perspective of what it means to be a woman, a woman of God, a woman in the church, a woman in social action among the poor. What does motherhood mean? What does being a single woman mean? But all of that kind of rethinking, again, going back to some of the social and cultural and religious traditions that we had come from and trying to unravel from that. I think it's been really interesting because she's…opened up conversations…with the women, but it has [had] an effect on the men who are in relationship with the women.

He added that he has felt personally empowered by her to have the courage to check out and perhaps "embrace other ways of expressing" his faith and its forms.

Dr. Ari was seen as enacting significant change in Sri Lankan society and beyond. A co-worker stated that he has "has contributed so much for the well being of ordinary people."

> The difference between his compassion and his concept of sharing to mine is that his is scientific. He would always say we have to remove the root cause of the poverty…. That is the specialty with him…. But he will ask that person why don't you have a shirt, why don't we do something to get a shirt. He will eventually give him a shirt, but he will try to remove that root cause of poverty.

One co-worker stated that Dr. Ari was bettering society by applying his utopian vision and achieving tangible results. Village beneficiaries of the movement spoke of how Dr. Ari brought house- and road-building projects to their village, and a co-worker explained that Dr. Ari helped villages learn how to work collaboratively, "as a team," rather than to maintain distance between family groups. Three participants spoke of how Dr. Ari encouraged them to develop meditation practices, which they continue to maintain, sometimes more than 20 years later. One co-worker explained how she shared Dr. Ari's teachings with her family and helped her family members become happier. His family member explained, "Though we cannot solve everything…in our own way, I think we have helped so many people now." Dr. Ari builds bridges across "party lines" (Friend) and collaborates with diverse groups:

> Through this work of Sarvodaya, he [Dr. Ari] managed to unify, get everybody into one place and work together for the benefit of the country and [for] the benefit of the people and [for] benefit of all the living beings…. He is good with every politician. Whatever the

leader coming to power, he works with him. (Friend)

Moreover, Dr. Ari fosters sociocultural change by inspiring others. His travel assistant said that after he heard Dr. Ari speak for the first time:

> I got bowled out. I thought, "Oh my God, this man is talking something totally different. This is the kind of vision we need for this country." That evening I didn't drink. I went home, and I isolated myself, and I meditated upon what he said.

Finally, Grandmother Mona makes sociocultural change happen:

> [Laughter] almost like a butterfly. A butterfly that lives like in a cocoon and then the butterfly comes out, and the butterfly represents change. Wherever she goes she helps make change to happen whether it's individually or collectively or globally or whatever the case may be. She draws her energy to make change happen…. Positive changes take place through her efforts. (Co-worker)

Another co-worker called her one of "the echo people" who will leave a mark of her presence even after she passes. One co-worker noted that the exemplar has done much for her tribal communities by helping them preserve their language and cultures. Her advocacy efforts brought sweat lodges and cultural activities into the Arizona prison system for Native Americans, she advocated with the Joint Commission for Hospital Accreditation to permit talking circles be acknowledged as a valid form of treatment for Native Americans in substance abuse and mental health programs, she helped bring spirituality into the treatment protocols in Native American behavioural help services, and she advocated at the United States Congress to persuade congressman against

separating substance abuse and mental health issues in Native American populations. Finally, her advocacy in the United Nations established spiritual practice and belief as basic rights of indigenous people in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Grandmother Mona's positive impact occurred in her ability to empower others. One colleague stated that the exemplar helps "people recognise their own gifts," and she "helps communities see their own capacities to hold the role that they have to protect their own traditional territories" so that they can take action. Grandmother Mona identified creating opportunities as one of her mission statements: "Some of the things I have done I do not get paid for…but the payoff is creating opportunities for people who provide service to a bigger circle."

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the phenomenon of mature spiritual activism through the lived experience of three mature spiritual activists and those who know them. Overall, the results support the assertion made by theorists and practitioners who argue that marrying social and spiritual engagement enables a synergistic interaction promoting healthy transformations in self and world. Results also affirmed the necessity of personal development for the exemplars as mature spiritual activists. The cross case analysis suggested that personal change was being catalysed as the individual psychological-phenomenological experiences and personality traits of mature spiritual activists met outward actions in social contexts. Catalysing Personal Change was identified as an intrinsic process, which when combined with Catalysing Sociocultural Change, seemed to lead to a dynamic, living macroprocess that yielded ongoing individual and sociocultural transformations. It is evident from the results of this investigation that the exemplars believed combining spiritual and social engagement was critical for their own needs, and each supported its

perpetuation throughout their affiliated movements. This analysis suggested that the exemplars mitigated stress and resisted experiences of compassion fatigue/burnout through resilience, and engagement in committed, long-term spiritual practice was a key component of developing resilience.

Limitations

Study limitations included being predominantly cultured within dominant cultures and being European American raised in the United States thus benefitting from racial and socioeconomic privilege. It is hoped that my more limited experience of being a social outsider combined with previous immersions in non-dominant cultures (e.g., Peace Corps Haiti) as well as my familiarity with varying types of spiritual leaders and degrees of spiritual advancement have offset these primary social biases to some degree. As was seen in the data collection, those from less privileged populations commonly 'mythologised', and my privilege might have even served to limit unfounded positive projections. The qualitative method and data treatment chosen only interpreted data made accessible by participants. Multiple streams of data were collected to offset this limitation. Cross-cultural differences likely affected both the data collection and the data analysis as misinterpretation of semantic and conceptual meanings is common in cross-cultural settings. It is hoped that exemplar approval of their case studies signified that the cross-cultural differences were managed effectively.

My bias in this study posed a limitation. I believe that mature spiritual activism is a positive development that offers a more constructive approach to social issues than either social change or religious/spiritual traditions offer independently of one another. In order to minimise this risk, memoing allowed a forum to analyse conjectures versus empirically-valid evidence of processes, whereby safeguarding against

unfounded thematic presentations Additionally, I worked closely with my committee chair and grounded theory methods expert as well as other committee members to receive feedback on areas where my own bias interfered with conclusions drawn.

Data collection did not include more negatively critical commentators of the exemplars, which likely led to a less complete and more inherently positive view of spiritually mature activism. It is widely known that religion/spirituality is not universally good (Sarason, 1993; Walsh-Bowers, 2000) and groups exist that "espouse the spiritual, or religious, or transcendent to be intolerant or destructive of others with different perspectives" (Sarason, 1993, p. 600). Also, organised religions foster disconnection from social conditions and justifications of the status quo (Walsh-Bowers, 2000). While the purpose of this study was not to ignore the pernicious aspects of religion, there was an intentional focus to investigate more integrated forms of spirituality coherent with integral era epistemology to empirically uncover the potential of healthy forms of socially engaged spirituality. In addition, this study did not collect sociological and/or anthropological data, which would have provided a more nuanced understanding of the historical, ethnographic, and sociocultural factors that contributed to the factors assessed in this study. The results garnered are limited to the perspectives provided by the lenses utilised and potentially overstate the positive impact of personal and spiritual growth on the exemplars' social activism. The case studies presented are not necessarily representative of all related cases, and the results of the data analysis are not generalisable to the wider population. However, as Lukoff, Edwards, and Miller (1998) elucidate, it is possible the results generated will gain credence as valid

general principles because conclusions drawn were triangulated.

Conclusion

The current investigation of mature spiritual activists and activism added relevant findings to socially engaged spirituality, community psychology, social action, and religious and spiritual traditions. The results of this study tentatively indicate that mature spiritual activism is capable of catalysing personal and sociocultural transformations. Results supported the theory that mature spiritual activism enables balanced and deep engagements in both spiritual and social domains. The study endorsed the theory that committed social action and profound spiritual engagement can function synergistically where the sum of both is greater than its constituent parts alone. The potential potency of profound spiritual development and social engagement further confirms the relevance of spirituality in community psychology.

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