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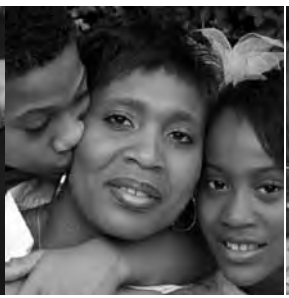


INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

ARTICLES

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THE BLACK CHURCH AND SOCIAL REFORM

Introduction: Special Issue on the Black Church and Social Reform

Tanya Brice & Kimberly Hardy

> The Negro Church is the only social institution of the Negroes which started in the African forest and survived slavery; under the leadership of priests or medicine men, afterward of the Christian pastor, the Church preserved in itself the remnants of African tribal life and became after emancipation the center of Negro social life. As a result, today the Negro population of the United States is virtually divided into church congregations which are the real units of race life. It is natural, therefore, that charitable and rescue work among Negroes should first be found in the churches and reach there its greatest development (DuBois, 1898).

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HELPING TRADITION BEGINS ON THE CONTINENT of Africa (Martin & Martin, 2002). It is a holistic tradition that incorporates the physical, emotional, social, and, most importantly, the spiritual needs of a person, within the context of the family and the community (Martin & Martin, 1985, 1995). According to ancient African tradition, a chronically sick person was not only treated for the physical ailment, but there was also an inherent acknowledgement of an accompanying spiritual ailment that needed to be treated (Jackson, 2000; Robinson, 2012). And, there is evidence that these ancient helpers recognized the impact of these ailments on the emotional and social being. A remedy not

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only considered the physical ailment, but also considered healing the whole being. Other evidence suggests that a holistic approach was taken when there were relational conflicts between people and communities. Conflict was treated as an ailment that required a holistic healing. There were efforts, in the conflict resolution, to create balance and harmony.

This concept of holistic healing was continued through the Black church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), which emerged during the institution of chattel enslavement of Africans in the United States. While there were systems of care developing for Whites, these systems excluded Blacks from services. Motivated by race pride, social uplift, and a spirit of mutual aid, free Blacks, those Africans who were not enslaved, developed a parallel system of care as the foundation of social services for the Black community.

In 1787, Richard Allen, a Methodist preacher, and Absalom Jones, an Episcopal preacher, started one of the first formal social institutions in the Black community, in direct protest to racial segregation in worship services of a racially diverse Methodist congregation. The Free African Society, a nondenominational mutual aid society, assisted fugitive slaves and new migrants to Philadelphia (Douglass, 1862). One objective of the Free African Society was to teach thrift and savings to build wealth in the Black community. Members were encouraged to deposit a certain amount of money per month to be used just in case "they, or their wives, widows, or children fell into poverty, provided that this necessity is not brought on them by their own imprudence." Members were expected to live a "sober and orderly life." In addition, there was an appointed committee of monitors to oversee the needs of Blacks in Philadelphia. These monitors conducted surveys of the needs of the community, and then provided those needs. The Free African Society provided access to funds, clothes, education, jobs, and religious services to those escaping slavery and to free blacks who were migrating to Philadelphia. As an outgrowth of this work, Allen founded the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787, also known as Mother Bethel. This marked the birth of the AME denomination, the oldest Black denomination in the country. The land on which Mother Bethel sits is the oldest parcel of real estate in the U.S. owned continuously by Black people.

The efforts of the Free African Society sparked the same kinds of efforts among Blacks throughout the country. These include the Free African Union Society, Newport, Rhode Island (1780s); Free African Society, Boston (1787); Free Dark Men of Color, Charleston, South Carolina (1791); New York African Society for Mutual Relief (1808); African Benevolent Society, Chillicothe, Ohio (1830); and, the Coloured American Temperance Society, Philadelphia (1831) (DuBois, 1898, 1903; National Humanities Center, 2009).

Other mutual aid efforts developed through women's organizations, such as the National Association of Negro Women and its state affiliates. The North Carolina Federation of Negro Women founded the North Carolina Industrial Home for Colored Girls, a home for wayward girls, in 1921.

The mission of this home, also known as Efland Home for Girls, was to "save Negro womanhood and we shall hope to surround these girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were 'Go in peace and sin no more'" (Brice, 2005, 2007). Efland Home was a home developed by Black women to provide holistic care to delinquent Black girls. Its founders believed that increasing the faith of these young girls would protect them from future delinquent behaviors (Brice, 2011).

The efforts of the women of the North Carolina Federation of Negro Women were typical of the Black clubwomen's movement. Black women, led by their faith, founded orphanages, hospitals, schools, and homes for the elderly during the early 20th century (Carlton-LaNey & Alexander, 2001; Carlton-LaNey & Burwell, 2014; Carlton-LaNey, Hamilton, Ruiz, & Alexander, 2001; Carlton-LaNey & Hodges, 2004; Carlton-LaNey, 2006, 2001, 2000, 1999, 1989). As the social work profession developed, African American social workers continued to develop culturally relevant approaches to addressing the needs of the African American community that encompasses holistic approaches rooted in Black church traditions.

This special issue exemplifies the fertile diversity of efforts to understand and build on the history of the Black Church's tradition as a social services institution for its congregants and geographic community members.

Tricia Bent-Goodley, and her colleagues, in their article, "The Role of Men of Faith in Responding to Domestic Violence: Focus Group Themes," extend Bent-Goodley's contribution to the role the Black Church plays in responding to domestic violence. This article reveals the struggle that men of faith have in addressing this very personal matter in a sensitive way. The Black Church is often the preferred resource for mental health services among African Americans.

Krystal Hays' article "Black Churches' Capacity to Respond to the Mental Health Needs of African Americans" highlights this preference, and offers ways in which the Black church, as an institution, can appropriately address mental health needs in a way that is supportive, not stigmatizing. Hays' article seeks to support church-based mental health efforts in the African American community.

Sharon Moore and colleagues' article "The Black Church: Responding to the Drug-Related Mass Incarceration of Young Black Males" seeks to couple empowerment theory with Black Church theology as a foundation on which Black Churches address the issue of mass incarceration. This article highlights the role the Black Church can play in re-entry and reintegration efforts.

Kesslyn Brade Stennis and colleagues' article "Lessons Learned: Conducting Culturally Competent Research and Providing Interventions with Black Churches" provides a conceptualization of the Black Church as a site for conducting research. The authors rely on their collective years of experience doing research in Black Churches to provide suggestions for best practices when engaging in this work.

Victoria Venable's article "Black Church Members' Perspectives on the Role of the Black Church in the Rehabilitative Process of Juvenile Sex Offenders" provides a perspective that is driven by the congregants. This article examines the perspectives of congregants on juvenile sex offender treatment as the foundation for offering suggestions for policy- and practice-development within the Black Church setting.

Watson and Stepteau-Watson's article entitled "Troubled Waters: The Black Church in Mississippi, A Single Subject Case Study" examines the way in which a Black Missionary Baptist church addresses the social needs of its congregants and community members. This in-depth study finds that the church's social service and outreach ministries have a positive impact of the quality of life of its congregants and community members.

Kimberly Hardy's article, "Capturing the Spirit: Validation of the Attitudes Toward Religious Help-Seeking Scale (ATRHSS)" focuses on the intersection of psychometrics and culture in research on religion with African Americans. The article offers a statistically reliable, culturally relevant tool that social workers and African American pastors can use in their work with this uniquely religious community.

This special issue provides examples of the Black Church as a social services institution as well as the Black Church as a context for the provision of social services. Our hope is that this issue will serve as a resource for social workers seeking culturally relevant approaches to addressing the needs of their African American clients through the Black Church. ❖

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Keywords: Black Church, African Americans, Black helping tradition

The Role of Men of Faith in Responding to Domestic Violence: Focus Group Themes

Tricia Bent-Goodley, Zuleka Henderson, Lavar Youmans, & Christopher St. Vil

Men of faith have a unique role to play in responding to domestic violence. Yet, there is limited information available as to how men of faith view domestic violence and their role in responding to domestic violence. This manuscript reports on focus groups conducted with men of faith to ascertain their perceptions of domestic violence and how they felt men and boys could be engaged to address this issue. Fifty-four men participated in six focus groups and seven themes emerged from their participation. These themes included a focus on individual, faith-based, and community level responses that could be utilized to engage men in the prevention of domestic violence.

> *"Our Father in heaven we thank you for your presence in this place, for in your presence our minds have been opened and we have felt something in our spirits that will make us better people, men of faith doing what you require us to do, and that is to walk humbly with you Lord, and to be merciful, and to love one another….bless each and every one of us that we may carry on the message of domestic tranquility as opposed to hostility. That somehow in our world, in our community, we might see the kind of peace that you bring, the peace that the world can't give and the world can't take away. Bless us we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Amen." – Prayer from a focus group participant*

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The role of the Black Church as a steward of hope and social justice in the Black community has historical and contemporary relevance. The Black Church has been an igniter of social movements, including the civil rights movement (Billingsley, 2003). It is a place where many come to receive clarity on life circumstances, to restore the mind and spirit, and to seek refuge in times of need. Therefore, the role of the Black Church is a key to responding to the issue of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a serious issue in all communities; however, the focus of this paper is on the role of men of faith within Black churches in responding to domestic violence.

Intimate partner violence and sexual assault have been found to be more prevalent and have a greater rate of lethality and serious physical injury in the African American community (Bent-Goodley, 2013a; Rennison, 2003). Despite this, African American women are less likely than White females to turn to formal provider systems, such as domestic violence shelters or mental health providers, and are most likely to turn to informal provider networks, particularly their faith-based community, to receive support on how to address the violence they are experiencing (Anderson, Renner, & Danis, 2012; Bent-Goodley, 2006; Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006). Yet, most African American churches, while female dominated in number, are led primarily by men who often have not received any formal training on issues of violence against women while in seminary or during clergy training (Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009).

As a result, these women are at even greater risk of not getting the help and support they need to make life-empowering decisions to end the violence in their lives, despite their continued search for support and refuge within church walls (Bent-Goodley, St. Vil, & Hubbert, 2012), making the Church both a support and a barrier to responding to domestic violence (Pyles, 2007). "Clergypeople have often not been helpful in dealing with the problem of domestic violence. While many women affirm the overall value of their religious faith, few say that spiritual leaders have supported their struggle to leave an abusive situation" (Miles, 2011, p. 23). Instead of abusing scripture and religious writings, churches can be a place of safety, offender accountability, and reinvigoration of building healthy relationships within the church and the broader community (Alpert, Miles, & Coffey, 2005).

The need to educate men of faith about violence against women and how they can respond is critical. There is a significant gap in services that target Black men in faith-based settings on this issue and Black women often turn to their faith communities first before reaching out to formal or external providers (Bent-Goodley, 2006; Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009). There is a gap of knowledge in what Black men of faith understand about domestic violence and what they perceive as appropriate responses to addressing such violence. Consequently, it makes sense for the Black church to be an integral partner as a source of influence to address domestic

violence. It makes even more sense to engage men of faith in developing responses to this type of violence. This paper will examine how a group of Black men of faith perceive the role of the Black church in responding to domestic violence.

A Review of the Literature

Much of the literature related to men and domestic violence is focused on how to address men as perpetrators of domestic violence. Research is limited in examining how men can be allies in responding to domestic violence. The literature is even less developed on how men of faith and Black men can respond to domestic violence. Yet men have an important role to play in responding to domestic violence. "It's time for those of us who are well meaning men to begin acknowledging the roles male privilege and socialization play in domestic and sexual abuse as well as violence against women in general. It's time for us to claim the collective responsibility we have in ending men's violence against women. It's time for us to be part of the solution" (Porter, 2006).

Instead of focusing entirely on men as perpetrators, it is vital to include a focus on men as allies to promote, prevent and respond to domestic violence (Bent-Goodley, 2012a; Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe & Baker, 2007). Men can challenge sexist ideologies and beliefs, and negative, false, and damaging notions of masculinity and manhood (Porter, 2006). In doing this, they can examine how male privilege, even within the Black community and the Black church, intersect with domestic violence. Encouraging men to address sexism and gender inequity is an important step towards "breaking out of the man box" and recalibrating ideas of positive and healthy masculinity. Men can work with women as allies to tackle these areas and build dialogue with men that are rooted in their experience and worldview.

In a previous study (Bent-Goodley, 2006) examining African American faith-based responses to domestic violence, men of faith acknowledged that it was important for men to be a part of the solution to end domestic violence. Yet, they also stated that there was a "male code of conduct" that, at times, prohibited non-violent men from addressing the abusive and sexist behaviors of other men. They later explained that the male code of conduct essentially reinforced the idea of staying out of other's men's business to avoid the spotlight being placed on the man addressing the negative behavior. The call among men of faith is to create a sense of accountability among men to address domestic violence and to combat sexism and gender inequity even within the church. "We don't hold men accountable in the same way. How many mamas really tell their sons, 'I'm not gonna say it's okay'…. How many fathers say 'this is not going to happen'…..There's a huge burden that she [the victim] has to bear because we don't interrupt the violence….." (Bent-Goodley & Williams, 2008, p. 25). Essentially, men

of faith are being called to be an active part of stopping domestic violence and helping to strengthen the role of men as important voices to end abuse.

In order for these men to be engaged, there must also be an acknowledgement of the importance of having a gender-based approach that is designed for men. The movement to address violence against women has largely been shaped by a feminist approach, which can create a feeling that men are displaced or not welcomed as important contributors to finding solutions to address this issue. Therefore, it is important to create a shared understanding that does embrace men's roles as allies and allows for gender-based approaches to engage men in stopping violence against women (Stathopoulos, 2013). They cannot be based on gender stereotypes of manhood and masculinity (Bent-Goodley, 2012b; Stathopoulos, 2013). This approach involves recognizing that men require different types of engagement strategies from women, and that these engagement strategies should be rooted in an understanding of how men see and experience the world (Bent-Goodley, 2013b; Bent-Goodley, 2012b; Fabiano, Perkins, Wesley, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003; Maxwell, Scourfield, Featherstone, Holland, & Tolman, 2012), particularly men of color who have different socioeconomic experiences that need to be captured (Gordon, Nichter, & Henriksen, 2013; Johnson, 2010). The literature evidences a dearth of understanding directly from men and men of faith about their ideas regarding the role of the Black church and men within the Black church in responding to domestic violence. This article reports on findings from focus groups that included hearing directly from men of faith as to the role of the Black church and men in responding to domestic violence.

Methodology

Focus groups were used to obtain the perspectives of men of faith about their knowledge and perceptions of domestic violence and key strategies to engage Black men and boys in domestic violence prevention. A total of six focus groups were conducted at two Black churches among men of faith. For one church, the focus groups were held after a Sunday service and the other church accommodated the focus group in place of a regularly scheduled men's ministry meeting. Recruitment for the groups was coordinated with members of the church from a Community Advisory Board (CAB) convened as part of a larger project. The CAB representatives organized and recruited participants from their respective churches and facilitated introduction of the focus group facilitator to build trust with the participants. Consent was obtained from all of the study participants, along with permission to audiotape the focus groups.

An interview guide was developed in collaboration with the CAB. The interview guide included questions and sub-questions as well as prompts to both initiate and follow-up on discussion questions. Group facilitation

was conducted by one of the male staff on the project with an additional male staff member observing the session. Both persons received training on the interview guide and how to conduct focus groups prior to the sessions.

Data from all focus group sessions were transcribed. Transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and then used for analysis of major themes. The first stage of data analysis was conducted by two members of the research team who separately reviewed the transcripts and identified major themes emerging from the focus group discussions. These independent analyses were then examined and discussed by the team for congruence and to ensure that all themes were captured and accurately reflected the content of the discussion.

Demographics

There were 54 men that participated in the focus groups and completed anonymous demographic surveys (Table 1). Of the participants, 98% were African-American and 2% were Turkish. The men ranged in age from 15 to 82 years old, with the majority of men (39%) being between 48 and 63 years of age. The majority (63%) had completed high school as their highest level of education, followed by 22% with a bachelor's degree, 9% with a master's degree, 2% percent with a law degree and doctorate respectively, and 2% of the participants did not provide their level of education. The majority of the participants (64%) were married, 22% were single, 6% divorced, 6% widowed, and 2% in a committed relationship. The majority (65%) of the participants was employed; while unemployed and retired members represented 5% and 26%, respectively. Most of the participants (42%) had been with their church for up to 20 years, while (52%) of the participants reported being members of their respective church for 21-60 years.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

Characteristic	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Race & Ethnicity		
African-American	53	98
Turkish	1	2
Age		
15-31 years old	9	17
32-47 years old	4	7
48-63 years old	21	39
64-82 years old	20	37

Characteristic	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Highest Level of Education		
High School	34	63
Bachelor's	12	22
Master's	5	9
JD	1	2
Doctorate	1	2
Missing	1	2
Marital Status		
Single	12	22
Committed Relationship	1	2
Married	35	64
Divorced	3	6
Widowed	3	6
Number of Years with Church		
0-20	23	42
21-40	12	22
41-60	14	26
61-82	3	6
Missing	2	4
Number of Years in Christian Faith		
0-20 years	12	22
21-40 years	14	26
41-60 years	14	26
61-82 years	11	20
Missing	3	6
Total Participants	**54**	**100**

Themes

There were seven themes that emerged from the focus group findings. The themes included the following:

1. The fact that men have been exposed to domestic violence and have an interest in responding to domestic violence;
2. The importance of the church and men serving as role models;
3. The role of the church as being a safe place to discuss and address domestic violence;
4. The role of the church in promoting healing and forgiveness;
5. The need for the Church to partner with professionals and advocates;
6. The importance of using an intergenerational approach; and
7. The significance of putting God first.

1. Men's Exposure to Domestic Violence

The men discussed having been exposed to domestic violence in a number of ways. They shared how this exposure has impacted them both

personally and in terms of their relationships. A number of the men shared their experience having witnessed domestic violence in their homes as children. This experience had a profound effect on them. One participant described how he carried the experience with him into adulthood.

> I hated him until I went away to college. I mean I knew the Lord; my grandmother instilled it in me to be that God type of young man. When I came back home, is when I opened up to him and tried to understand. I asked him, "Why did you hit my mother when I was a child?" And, he said that he didn't believe in God. That was his thing. But he's saved now. He's saved now and it's totally changed our love for him, but I'm not the type of guy, I'm not an abusive man, and I hate it, and what made me get to that boiling point was he hit my mom real bad and I went and got my grandfather and he came down there with his gun and he said, "I'm going to do you right now", and I think I said "Pop Pop, I don't think you should do that" and my grandfather was like "No", and he pulled that revolver and that thing clicked and I was like "Uh oh, this about to be a serious matter." But I jumped in front and my grandfather said "Ok. Get out the way," and then he just said "Okay" and then my father went in the room and my grandfather went upstairs. So that was the Lord at that point. And so, ever since then every time I see a woman gets hit or something, it bothers me a lot.

A number of the men shared this participant's experience. They attempted to make sense of what they were exposed to as a child witness of domestic violence. There was a feeling that it was important to use the experience to ensure that they did not further the cycle of abuse in their own lives. One participant shared the following:

> When I was coming up it happened to my mom and it got physical, so when I seen it and experienced it from that aspect I knew that it wasn't right, so I broke the cycle. It's like you have to break the cycle, cause like you said it can happen to family members and when you're small coming up, you see it as a man growing up you feel as though it's right. And I think it comes from jealousy and whatever, insecurities stuff like that and you have to break that cycle. And I think when I turned my life over that helped me, because I knew it wasn't right. You know. I've seen my mom almost killed by my father…and I'd hate to see anybody in that type of situation.

A number of the men had not witnessed domestic violence in their homes but they had been exposed to domestic violence in their community. These participants stressed how experiences impacted them and their sense of what was right and wrong related to domestic violence. They also described their sense of outrage that a man would be abusive towards a woman. One of the participants described it as follows:

> It really affects me a lot…there was a young man that was on the corner beating his girlfriend. He was literally beating her, like punching her. And there were five of us coming around the corner. We beat him. I mean, he socked her in the eye, and I was like "What is he doing." We couldn't understand.

The men talked about how being exposed to domestic violence impacted them and how they tried to develop an understanding of why a man would be abusive to a woman. They also talked about how they used their faith to help them through these challenges.

2. Importance of Role Modeling

The men discussed the importance of role modeling. They shared that it was very important for the Black church and for men of faith to be positive role models in promoting healthy relationships, domestic violence prevention, and gender equity. They emphasized that this was important for Black men due to the number of young men that grow up without fathers in the home. One participant shared that men of faith should lead by example:

> As men of faith, we need to continue to be strong examples and let our light shine. Like the brother said, don't cover the lamp. And the outside world, and the family will see that. I've had people, young guys on my job, they come to me, and they give me all this information, and I'm like, man, you giving me a little too much information. This one young brother told me, he said, man, I never met my father. I don't know who my father is. I'm like wow. You know, he opened up to me like that, so I'm talking to him. But, people won't come to you if you're grouchy, and mean, and putting up this macho front. You've got to humble yourself as a man of God.

They emphasized that being a role model could be different based on whether or not the man is a person of faith. They stated that the approach was important based on the man's sense of his connectedness with God. However, change first begins with the man of faith being an example of God's love. This idea was expressed as follows:

We also have to realize that we're dealing with two types of people. The person that believes in God and then there's the person that may not know God. They're going to act two different ways. So in order for the men of faith to interact in that environment, they first have to do it themselves. We have to be the ultimate example for all the world to see.

> The men also felt that the Church has a responsibility to address domestic violence. The Church must actively discuss domestic violence prevention and be committed to growing in its role as a place of refuge. They also emphasized that the Church must be a beacon where persons can obtain help for domestic violence and where men can also be held accountable for their actions.

Just to go back to Nazareth…it says do you hide a lamp up under a bush or do you set it up on the hill? The church has to be the light, and not just a verbal light, it has to be a physical light where you can go and see, what a husband is, what a man is. What a man is according to what God said a man should be, and then that's how the world is supposed to learn. That's the whole purpose of the church being here in the first place.

> Therefore, men of faith must be role models for each other and the next generation. They also must be supported by Black churches that have the philosophy that the church itself must provide an example of positive and healthy masculinity and gender equity.

3. The Church as a Safe Place

The participants emphasized the role of the church as being a safe place to discuss and address domestic violence. The men described a number of ways that the Black church can serve as a safe place. First, they stressed that it is important to meet men where they are. One man described this as follows:

> Men of faith, in dealing with the different demographics of those who don't believe and might be babes in Christ, compared to ones that are the meek saved in Christ, and also those who don't know Christ, we have to meet them where they are number one. We can't look at them as saying, we're all this, we have arrived and we're any better than them.

As part of meeting the men where they are, it is also important to remember that one is no better than the person being helped. It was stressed that looking down on another man is unacceptable and does not create a safe place for an exchange and for growth. One of the participants identified it as follows:

> I knew when to say no. That's the only difference, and so we have to meet those persons that same way. We're no better than you. We've had challenges. We've had skeletons in our closets; some of us if we're honest got cemeteries in our closets, but look at them, not for what they've done, but who they can be. I think that's how I would address it as men of faith, in a faith-based formulation.

It is important that men can feel safe in sharing their pain. In order to have a place where men can be challenged and grow in healthy masculinity, one must be able to comfortably and without judgment share their feelings and their pain. Men must also commit to ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. One of the participants described it as follows:

> This goes right on top of what you both just said, and that is men of faith have to demonstrate a sense of confidentiality so that people feel comfortable with sharing some of their pain and the distress they're going through. Cause I believe in our sanctuary every Sunday, there's somebody with a lot of pain, they don't know how to unburden themselves. They hold on to it, and they ask God to help them through it, but God is expecting us as men of faith to be able to help them and work with them without saying to everybody else that I prayed for sister so and so, they going through this and that, and did you know that she-you know that's not a man of faith. We keep it to ourselves and give people the confidence that they can share things with us, so we can help them.

Finally, it was noted that men of faith must be good listeners and able to really hear someone when they share their experiences. In addition, it is important that men of faith be observant of the person and able to engage men based on what they are seeing and hearing. One of the participants described it as follows:

> Be good listeners. If you just listen when someone comes to talk to you they crying out. Like they said, they could be smiling on the outside, but crying on the inside.

4. The Church as Promoting Healing and Forgiveness

The men also concurred that the church should be a place that promotes healing and forgiveness. They stressed that Black men are dealing with a multitude of challenges that impact their sense of self and their growth as men. They felt that it was important that the Church be a space where men can reconnect with themselves and find solace.

> You have to love self first, and you have a lot of guys who do not love self. Until you love yourself for real, you are not going to love nobody else. You think you will, but you're not.

They also stressed the importance of men forgiving themselves and others for what they have witnessed, experienced, and continue to try to work through in their everyday lives. Therefore, they emphasized that the Church should be a place of forgiveness, whereby men can safely express themselves and forgive themselves. It is important to mention that they did not talk about forgiveness from the standpoint of women being taught to forgive abusers. The idea of forgiveness was really about giving men a space where they can heal and find forgiveness for other issues that affect their emotional and spiritual well-being. One participant described it as follows:

> …it comes with lack of knowledge and wisdom that's necessary in life today. We punish ourselves, a lot just like on a spiritual journey, you know, a lot of people may feel like they can't get to what the Lord has for them because of all that they've done, which is in turn not forgiving themselves, so bottling up within self and not allowing it to heal or forgive definitely plays a role in how things are....

They described the power of men being able to share their stories. The idea that sharing one's testimony was very important towards finding healing and forgiveness. They felt that the Church was a place where men should be able to learn from the testimony of others and share their own testimony as part of healing themselves.

> Most people feel more comfortable talking about it when you give them personal testimony because they can relate to that versus you like coming on them, asking them what's going on with them. You gotta first, open it up.

These strategies for healing and forgiveness are important and were given as examples of how men of faith can find a safe place within the church.

5. The Need to Partner with Professionals and Advocates

The men also emphasized the importance of churches partnering with professionals to address issues of domestic violence and other issues that cross into the church. Churches do not have the ability to singularly address any specific issue. They represent a microcosm of issues within a community. There is not always expertise on each issue to fully address them. Therefore, having partnerships with professionals and advocates is important in order for the church to build its capacity to address domestic violence.

> Another thing we can do, and we've done it before through our Christian education ministry, is brought in other professionals to talk about things that we need for our life, outside of the church building…bringing in professionals that can talk about alternatives to violence that can keep a tranquil home environment. People need to know the 1-2-3 to do…. We may not have the answers to that experience, but there are professionals who can tell you, 1,2,3, this is what you do. We could bring the men and have all the men there.

6. Using an Intergenerational Approach

The men stressed the importance of using an intergenerational approach. They discussed the importance of being able to build relationships across generations around these issues. The church often has men representing different generations within the church. Therefore, it is a place where men can engage each other and boys around how to address domestic violence.

> You do have a responsibility, because you have people that look up to you. Young kids need to look up to the elders, and elders need to abide by the unwritten rule of morality. I mean, you've got to have morality within yourself so that somebody can follow you.

In addition to older men serving as examples and resources for younger men, it is important that older men minister to younger men and boys and offer them positive examples that they may or may not have been exposed to as children. The men described ministering to younger men and boys as follows:

> So I think if we get the church and just start ministering to our young brothers, our men, and talk about these issues that have been so taboo that no one wants to talk about, bring [them] here to the church and maybe create a ministry, you know, just on [that].

7. Putting God First

The men acknowledged that first and foremost, above all things mentioned, that one must put God first in responding to domestic violence. They stressed that men of faith must do all things first rooted in God. Efforts to address domestic violence must begin in prayer and a true commitment to grounding the work needed in God.

> We really cannot forget to put God first. We must pray about this constantly, we must come together and pray, you know pray individually, you know, and just keep God first because He can do things that we can't. You know because this is a battle that we can't win. Brothers as strong as we are together you know there's an enemy out there that's a lot stronger and we need the Lord to guide us and be with us, and really work on those things out that we can't work out ourselves.

Discussion and Implications

Men of faith are important partners in responding to domestic violence. They have an interest in being a part of the solution and can be energized to galvanize around this issues and creating lasting change. The Black church also has an important and notable place in responding to domestic violence. It is important to note that the men were clear that they had a role to play in addressing domestic violence and they understood that, as men of faith, their responsibility was even greater. They also acknowledged that the Black church must be engaged and be willing to be engaged to make a difference around this issue. It is important to note that the men wanted to be engaged. They were eager to share their ideas and be a part of the action steps necessary to actualize their ideas.

While women must be engaged, it is equally important that men of faith are engaged using gender-based approaches that are respectful of who they are as men. One should not assume that men do not want to engage. The focus group findings show that there are men interested in responding to domestic violence. It also shows that many men who have witnessed domestic violence as children and have been impacted by this issue can be engaged because of their awareness of how this issue can impact men and women as they grow. There is also a group of these men that want to change the cycle of abuse in their families and communities. They can be powerful partners in addressing domestic violence.

Men of faith can help other men in their healing process and can be supportive in creating a sense of emotional and spiritual well-being needed in communities. The church is a vehicle that can help support such inner examination, reflection, and growth. It is important that the work being done is intergenerational, allowing different groups of men to model and be modeled. Hearing these messages from other men is powerful. The messages, however, must be rooted in God's word and his positive messages of empowerment and victory.

Professionals and advocates must be willing to engage these men and support them where they are. Such professionals need to be comfortable

within their own sense of spirituality and religion and ability to engage men. In order to assist, the social worker must be clear about his or her faith and religious beliefs.

There must be an ability to work with persons that may not share the same faith and religious beliefs. Being able to do this requires significant inquiry into transference and countertransference issues that could arise in the helping process. Therefore, the practitioner needs to conduct self-examination regarding how faith and religious beliefs can impact the helping process. They must be able to confront their own ideas and notions of working with men and connect with men in positive ways that build on their strengths and what they can offer.

In order for this to work, the practitioner must see the value of working with men and trust that they have something to contribute to responding to this issue. Practitioners may need to confront their own ideas about the role of men in responding to domestic violence. There has to be a conscious effort to learn the skills to engage men. Finally, it is important that more research is done with men to understand their ideas and perceptions about domestic violence and how they can help as allies to end domestic violence.

Conclusion

While there is significant research on how to engage men as perpetrators of abuse, there is little literature that discusses men's role in responding to domestic violence, and even less that includes the thinking of men of faith and Black men of faith. This study provides perceptions from such men about how men and men of faith can be engaged in responding to domestic violence. They also discuss the role of the Black church in preventing domestic violence. Further inquiry and understanding of the role of men is important to being able to truly address domestic violence from a comprehensive stance. There is an opportunity and willingness from many men to be a part of the solution and to work with women as allies to stop domestic violence. It is time to create new opportunities to engage men of faith and churches to creating last change around this issue in their communities. ❖

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Black Churches' Capacity to Respond to the Mental Health Needs of African Americans

Krystal Hays

Although African Americans have a lower incidence of many mental health disorders, they continue to have poorer mental health prognoses and worse treatment outcomes than non-Hispanic Whites. Many African Americans prefer informal church support and rely on religious coping instead of visiting specialty mental health clinics for mental and emotional problems. As a result, Black churches may continue to be a preferred resource for mental health services among African Americans. However, the ability of Black churches to meet their community's mental health needs is unclear. This article argues for the need to explore the organizational capacity of Black churches to promote mental health and provides a brief review of the literature and theory regarding mental health promotion, existing church-based programs, and models of capacity building in an attempt to answer these questions. A guide for assessing the organizational capacity of Black churches is provided and the concept of capacity building is introduced. This work will inform the development and implementation of church-based mental health efforts.

African Americans have poorer mental health outcomes than Whites (Atdjian & Vega, 2005; American Psychiatric Association Fact Sheet (APAF) Office of Minority and National Affairs, 2010) and they are less likely to seek help from a professional (Snowden, 2001; Barrio, et al.,, 2003; Wang, Lane, Olfson, Pincus, Wells, & Kessler, 2005; Gonzalez, Alegría, Prihoda, Copeland, & Zeber, 2011). Racial disparities in mental health care faced by African Americans are both a social justice problem and a public health concern because untreated mental illness is associated with individual and societal burden (e.g. loss of earning potential, increased mortality, decreased quality of life) (Kessler et al., 2001). To

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reduce disparities in mental health care and improve outcomes for African Americans, it is important to consider the role of interventions in community settings, such as churches (Campbell et al, 2007).

Black churches are enduring and trusted institutions in the African American community (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990) and many successful health promotion interventions have been implemented in collaboration with Black churches (Hankerson & Weissman, 2012). However there is limited evidence regarding the effectiveness of church-based interventions and the capacity of Black churches to tackle mental health issues. Thus, this paper explores the following research questions: Do Black churches have the capacity to provide systematic mental health promotion to meet the mental health needs of individuals and families in their congregations and the broader community? Further, what specific resources do churches already have, what barriers do they face, and to what extent can their capacity be increased so they can address mental health issues? This article will briefly review the literature and theories regarding mental health promotion, describe existing church based programs, and explore models of capacity building in an attempt to answer these questions.

Although this article does not test any specific hypotheses, there are several assumptions that underlie these research questions**.** The main assumption is that Black churches do have the capacity to successfully provide mental health promotion to church members and the community at large. Further, it is assumed that many of the components needed to adequately address mental health issues are already being exercised by Black churches, although not necessarily in a systematic way.

The goal of this article is to make the case for the need to examine the capacity of Black churches to engage mental health promotion. First, mental health among African Americans will be described. Second, the nature of Black churches and their significance in the African American community will be explored. Third, a brief description of current church efforts to address community needs will be provided. Finally, organizational capacity literature will be used to outline components of capacity that should be considered with regard to Black churches. This work has multi-level implications for health promotion interventions and disparities research. Most notably, this article will present a guide to aid researchers and social workers in assessing the capacity of Black churches to identify strengths and barriers churches face when engaging in mental health promotion.

The operational definition of "Black churches" is one used by other scholars in the field to refer to those Christian churches in the United States that are independent, historic, and totally black controlled denominations (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Specifically, there are seven denominations which comprise the Black Church institution: African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, National Baptist Convention, USA; National Baptist Convention of America,

Unincorporated; National Baptist Convention of America, Incorporated; Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the Church of God in Christ (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Although there are local congregations in other denominations that have primarily African American memberships, the meaning of Black Church used here will be limited to the historic definition.

The primary interest of this paper is the "capacity" of Black churches to respond to community mental health needs. The definition of capacity used here is common in the organizational literature and refers to the skills, motivations, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to implement innovative change (Wandersman et al., 2006). Although capacity exists at the individual, organizational, and community levels (Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008), this paper is focused on organizational capacity, which is most applicable to an evaluation of Black churches.

African Americans, Mental Health, and Religion

Scope of the Problem

Despite similar or lower prevalence rates of most mental disorders among African Americans compared to other racial and ethnic groups, racial disparities in mental health remain. African Americans have more severe, persistent, and disabling depressive episodes compared to Whites (Bailey, Blackmon, & Stevens, 2009; Bailey, Patel, Barker, Ali, & Jabeen, 2011; Williams et al., 2007). They also present to primary care with more depressive symptoms than any other racial or ethnic group (Dwight-Johnson, Unutzer, Sherbourne, Tang, & Wells, 2001; Stockdale, Lagomasino, Siddique, McGuire, & Miranda, 2008).

Although African Americans are not necessarily at greater risk of clinical psychiatric disorders than other groups (King & Williams, 1995), they are disproportionately exposed to a variety of psychosocial stressors (e.g., economic deprivation, violent neighborhoods, racial discrimination) that are risk factors for mental health problems (Mizell, 1999). Because of the relatively low prevalence of mental disorders among African Americans, many psychiatric illnesses often go unrecognized, undiagnosed, and untreated (Gary, 2005). African Americans whose symptoms are recognized are often misdiagnosed with conditions such as schizophrenia (Atdjian & Vega, 2005) and inappropriately treated by mental health professionals (Whitley & Lawson, 2010).

Barriers to Treatment among African Americans

Not only do African Americans have poorer mental health outcomes but they also are less likely to seek help from a professional (Snowden, 2001; Barrio et al, 2003; Wang et al, 2005). Most notably, cultural mistrust

(Whaley, 2001), lower beliefs in treatment efficacy (Gonzalez, et al., 2011), and stigma regarding mental health issues (Gary, 2005) are barriers to seeking help for mental health problems among African Americans. Specifically, Gary (2005) concluded that being a member of an ethnic minority group and facing mental health problems can pose a double stigma that can impede treatment and well-being. In addition, a qualitative study by Thompson, Bazil, and Akbar (2004) explored barriers to mental health treatment among African Americans. They concluded that key barriers to treatment include stigma, lack of knowledge, lack of affordability, and lack of trust as well as impersonal service, lack of cultural understanding, and insensitivity to the African American experience among treatment providers (Thompson et al, 2004). These barriers to accessing professional mental health services further contribute to disparities in mental health care and outcomes faced by African Americans.

Religiosity among African Americans

The literature regarding religion and African Americans consistently has shown that African Americans have higher rates of religiosity and use of religious coping practices than other ethnic groups (Chatters, Taylor, Bullard, & Jackson 2009; Taylor, Chatters, Bullard, Wallace, & Jackson, 2009; Taylor, Chatters & Jackson, 2007; Cooper, Brown, Ford, & Powe, 2001). Religiosity can involve subjective religiosity (self-assessed religiousness), non-organizational religious involvement (prayer, listening to religious music, and reading the Bible), and organizational religious involvement (church and service attendance) (Chatters et al, 2008). Organizational religious involvement has been found to have the most significant impact on health and mental health outcomes (Chatters et al, 2008).

Because of the importance of religion in the lives of many African Americans, religiosity must be considered when exploring the mental health experiences of this population. In general, religion has been found to be a protective factor that promotes health (Strawbridge, Shema, Cohen, & Kaplan, 2001). Studies consistently have found that individuals who are more religious have lower rates of mental health disorders including obsessive-compulsive disorder (Himle, Taylor, & Chatters, 2012) and suicide (Taylor, Chatters, & Joe, 2011). Although often a protective factor, higher levels of religiosity are also associated with lower levels of mental health help seeking (Abe-Kim, Gong, & Takeuchi, 2004; Moreno & Cardemil, 2013). Qualitative research by Matthews, Corrigan, Smith, and Aranda (2006) revealed that religious African Americans are less likely to seek professional help for mental problems and feel that they have been taught to cope through God instead. Additionally, African Americans who seek clergy first for a serious problem are less likely to subsequently visit a mental health professional (Neighbors, Music, & Williams, 1998). In some cases,

having a mental illness that requires professional mental health help can be seen as weakness among church members (Mattis, Mitchell, Grayman, Zapata, Taylor, Chatters, & Neighbors, 2007). Negative religious views of mental health therefore may have a negative impact on formal help seeking among African Americans who are church involved, and may result in poorer mental health outcomes. Whether positive or negative, churches have a significant impact on the mental health attitudes and behaviors of African Americans. Therefore a further understanding of their role in addressing the mental health needs of congregants is needed.

The Black Church

History

A comprehensive description of the history and development of the Black Church is beyond the scope of this article. However, some background on its development and organization is necessary to provide context for a discussion of church capacity. Although the seven different denominations that comprise the Black Church have unique histories and organizational structures, this article will describe the general evolution of Black churches in the United States.

In their book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) refer to Black churches as a shorthand reference to the various Black Christian churches in the United States that are historically and completely Black controlled. It is believed that the first formal Black Church was established in 1750 (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990) although the evolution of the Black Church spans slavery, emancipation, and the civil rights eras (Moore, 1991). African Americans stand out as the most religious racial group with 53% attending church weekly (Pew Research, 2009). An estimated 80% of Black Christians belong to one of the seven Black Church denominations (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Throughout time, the Black Church has been the most important social institution in the Black community (Levin, 1984; Nelsen, Yokley, & Nelsen, 2011; Watson, Bisesi, Tanamly, Sim, & Branch, 2003). The Church has evolved as an agent of mutual help, empowerment, and social change and has created opportunities that were nonexistent in the larger society for African Americans (Moore, 1991). The Church has always offered a sense of community and collective achievement, social support, coping strategies, and role models for African Americans (James & Johnson, 1996). Further, the Black Church was one of the earliest organizations to serve as a buffer for African Americans against the effects of racial discrimination and segregation (Harley, 2005). Churches were often the only place available to African Americans to voice their fears, anger, and sadness about living in a society that was racially oppressive and hostile towards them.

Further, church communities became a source of social support, second only to family.

Multi-level Context

Not only is the Black Church historically important to the African American experience, it endures because of its current relevance at the individual, leadership, and organizational levels. At the individual level, Black churches continue to have a powerful presence in the Black community (Harley, 2005) because they continue to meet the needs of African Americans and provide rewards for membership. Black churches provide intrinsic rewards that are linked to their mission (e.g. spiritual development or a closer relationship with God) and extrinsic rewards that are outside their core activities (e.g. social support, financial help, and social status) (Greenwald, 2007). Further, because the social, economic, and political adversities African Americans face in the United States are likely to persist, Black churches will continue to remain relevant for some time to come.

At the leadership level, Black churches are often characterized by the presence of a pastor who is a charismatic leader. This leadership style helps to motivate followers through an authority that is viewed as derived from a higher power (MacPhee, 2007). Pastors are also often transformational leaders who seek to meet the needs of individual members and align individual purpose with the organizations purpose (Greenwald, 2007). Pastors of Black churches, similar to pastors of other churches, often serve as counselors (Young, Griffith, & Williams, 2003) and are gatekeepers of social services for members (Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000). In Black churches the pastor is a central figure who sets the tone for congregational life and is intimately connected to members.

At the organizational level, Black churches serve as an important cultural resource for African Americans. Black churches align the subjective culture that individuals maintain about their African American values, providing a common place for African Americans to express and celebrate their beliefs. Churches also exemplify the objective culture of the Black community that refers to the significant cultural artifacts, rituals, and symbols (Greenwald, 2007). Black churches have explicit statements about the goals, values, and objectives of the community. They display symbols and representations of core African American values (e.g., the cross). Most importantly, Black churches maintain the narratives, histories, rituals, and ceremonies that have become foundational to the African American experience. Hymns (e.g. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"), practices (e.g. "shouting"), and Bible passages are valued cultural symbols in the Black community. The aspects of culture that the Black Church represents supersede religious and spiritual beliefs and are a part of the general African American experience.

The Black Church as a Community Resource

Black churches have long been a source of social support for African Americans, not only in terms of the spiritual wellbeing of members but also in the provision of biospsychosocial resources. Black churches provide education, health resources, food services, economic support, and counseling to members, and the community at large. Black churches help uplift the African American community and initiated schools, banks, insurance companies, and housing (Moore, 1991). Churches have nurtured political activities and young talent for music, drama, and artistic development (Moore, 1991). Because of the historic and current socioeconomic conditions many of their members experience, Black churches have had to go above and beyond what might be expected from a religious institution to meet the holistic needs of their community.

Not only is social service provision inherent to most Black churches, there has been an increase in formal research-based programs in churches. Church Based Health Promotion (CBHP) programs have emerged as a promising way to address disparate health issues among African Americans. Several reviews suggest the efficacy and effectiveness of CBHP interventions (Bopp & Fallon, 2011; Campbell et al., 2007; Hankerson & Weissman, 2012). The scope and target of church-based interventions vary greatly. Examples include mammography promotion (Markens, Fox, Taub, & Gilbert, 2002), cardiovascular health (Sternberg, Munschauer, Carrow, & Sternberg, 2007), HIV prevention (Williams, Palar, & Derose, 2011), and mental health promotion (Molock, Matlin, Barksdale, Puri, & Lyles, 2008). Many of these church-based programs specifically focus on African Americans because of their increased risk of disease and high religious involvement.

One example of a CBHP program that addresses mental health in a particular Black Church setting is Helping Alleviate Valley Experiences Now (HAVEN). HAVEN uses a gatekeeper, or lay helper, model to prevent suicide among African American adolescents who are thought to be at risk for suicide, (Molock, et al. 2008). The HAVEN model utilizes church congregation members as gatekeepers who identify and refer youths who show signs of risk for suicidal behaviors (e.g., depressed affect and substance use) to a mental health provider. Community education is incorporated into the program to increase congregants' awareness of risk and protective factors for suicide through a faith-based curriculum. The program also involves building alliances between the church and local mental health agencies to openly communicate about mental health needs and services (Molock et al., 2008). Although the HAVEN intervention provides important information on the development of a prevention model for African Americans, the program's effectiveness remains undocumented.

A second example of a CBHP program in a Black Church is a support group for African American families coping with mental illness (Pickett-

Schenk, 2002). The author describes a church-based family support group that includes 23 individuals who meet monthly in a large 6,000-member Black Church in Chicago. The monthly support group meetings were led by a mental health professional and family members of a mentally ill loved one. The purpose of the group was to increase members' knowledge of mental health symptoms, knowledge of service system, and improved morale. Although little information was provided by the author on the details of the curriculum or group structure she does report that post-test results showed a significant increase in knowledge and morale among group participants.

A third example of a mental health intervention done in collaboration with Black churches is the Calmer Life Project (Jameson et al., 2012) a partnership established between researchers and faith-based and social service organizations to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT. The Calmer Life program was designed to overcome barriers to anxiety treatment for older African Americans. The program was conducted in Black Churches and incorporated religion/spirituality and cognitive behavioral therapy into its curriculum. At the time of publication, the authors reported that the program was being conducted with preliminary success with low-income African Americans in the Houston area. However, results on program efficacy have yet to be published.

All three of these CBHP for African Americans report promising results and highlight the important role Black churches play in addressing mental health needs. However, these are individual case examples that do not involve entire denominations or any widespread program dissemination. This is an indication that CBHPs in Black churches continue to represent a new and innovative practice in need of more research. Further, a description of the church's ability or capacity to adopt and sustain these programs is not offered. Leader and organizational strengths and barriers to program implementation are largely ignored. Leaving this kind of organizational information underexplored limits the reach and applicability of church based interventions (Bopp & Fallon, 2011).

Examining Black Churches' Capacity

In the organizational literature, capacity is defined as possessing the skills, motivations, knowledge, and attitudes needed to implement change or innovation (Flaspohler, Duffy, Wandersman, Stillman, & Maras, 2008). The ultimate goal of studying capacity is to improve practice (Flaspohler et al, 2008), with the hope that improved practice will improve health. Capacity is often used interchangeably with other terms like *competence* and *readiness*; however, capacity is distinct in that it is multidimensional (focused on the individual, organizational, and community levels) and emphasizes accountability and sustainability of innovations (Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). Regarding com-

munity interventions, it is essential to study capacity because a mismatch between a new program's requirements and the capacity of an organization to meet those requirements can lead to implementation failure or poor sustainability (Miller & Shinn, 2005). As funds for community interventions continue to shrink, it is even more necessary to evaluate organizational capacity because it will affect intervention implementation, future funding allocations, and public health outcomes. Thus, the capacity of Black churches to respond to mental health needs and engage in mental health promotion interventions must be explored to improve fit between the intervention and the organization. In addition, exploring the capacity of Black churches will help identify organizational barriers and targets for capacity building.

Components of Organizational Capacity

In a literature review of capacity in prevention, Flaspohler and associates (2008) compared different elements of organizational capacity. Although the authors also described individual-level capacity, their description of organizational capacity is most applicable to an exploration of Black churches and their engagement in mental health promotion and thus will be the focal point here. Concerning organizational capacity to implement a new program or innovation, there are five essential domains: fit, support, buy-in, training and technical assistance, and evaluation capacity (Flaspohler et al, 2008). Exploring these five domains is essential to assessing the capacity of an organization to implement an innovation or new program.

Although Flaspohler and associates (2008) presented their findings on capacity within the context of professional service organizations, the five domains they described are applicable to an evaluation of Black churches. These domains provide a guide that suggests questions to ask when Black Church leaders consider engaging in health promotion activities. Does the intervention fit with the church's goals? Does the church have administrative support to implement the intervention? What technical abilities does the church have? Answers to these questions will help illuminate church resources for, and barriers to, successful implementation and sustainment of mental health promotion programs.

In addition to the five domains of organizational capacity for innovation, literature on CBHP has suggested that resources (e.g. finances, community linkages, space, and existing programs) are important to consider (Bopp & Fallon, 2011). Thus this article suggests that assessing organizational capacity, particularly among Black churches, requires a sixth domain that considers the resources available to Black Churches.

Table 1 is an adaptation of the conceptualization of capacity presented by Flaspohler and associates (2008) with the addition of a resource domain. This guide is not an exhaustive list of elements of capacity but should be

used as a starting point to identify organizational factors in Black churches that affect program implementation. It is recommended that the questions in this guide be incorporated into intervention development and community engagement even before a health promotion practice is introduced to a church community. Again, because capacity is an essential precursor of program success, it should be explored, and issues should be addressed to increase the likelihood of successful intervention outcomes.

Table 1: Guide to Assessing Black Church Capacity to Engage in Mental Health Promotion

Fit
• Does mental health promotion fit the church goals, norms, and practices? • Does mental health promotion fit with the church organizational needs? • Can the church adapt a CBHP program to suit their organizational needs? • Can the church select a program that is appropriate for them? • Can they select appropriate staff/volunteers to implement the program?
Support
• Does the church have strong administrative support? • Is there commitment from the church/denomination to address mental health issues? • Is there a commitment by the church/denomination to provide the necessary resources? • Are staff/volunteers supported in implementing a program? • Can the church help to sustain the program? • Is there a church climate that supports mental health promotion (stigma towards mental health, support for help seeking, skills and education level of members/clergy)?
Buy-in
• Do clergy/staff/volunteers/members agree on the mental health program values? • What type of decision making process is used to choose an appropriate intervention? • Are there a number of key supporters for the program in the church? • Is there a well connected leader in support of the program? (eg. pastor) • Does the mental health intervention, developers, or research team have credibility in the community? • Is there potential for program sustainability?
Training and Technical Assistance
• Does the church have the technical capacity to engage in mental health promotion? (access to information, materials, training, and technical assistance) • Do they have a need for training, before and during implementation, and to what extent? • Can they receive ongoing consultation and coaching?
Evaluation
• Does the church have systems and skills to evaluate the effects and benefits of the intervention? • Does the church have the ability to develop a monitoring system to track progress and challenges?

*Resources
• Does the church have connections with community mental health agencies and/or research institutions? • Does the church have the space and equipment needed to conduct program requirements? • Does the church have funds to support program activities? • Is there an existing health/mental health ministry in the church?

(Adapted from Organizational innovation-specific capacity (Flaspohler et al, 2008). *Added to the adapted guide.)

Building Organizational Capacity

Evaluating the capacity of Black churches as suggested in this article may expose several barriers and deficits in the church's ability to engage in mental health promotion. Fortunately, many of these barriers can be overcome through systematic capacity building efforts. Capacity building refers to attempts to change the ability of an organization or community to address health issues by creating or adapting structures, approaches, and values (Crisp, Swerissen, & Duckett, 2000). Further, capacity building can be seen as a means to an end (i.e., helping churches meet the needs of members) or as an end in itself (Ebbesen, Health, Naylor, & Anderson, 2004). The ultimate aim of capacity building projects is to improve community health practices in a sustainable way (Crisp et al., 2000).

Crisp and associates (2000) identified four approaches to building organizational capacity: (1) a top-down organizational approach (e.g. changing church policies or practices); (2) a bottom-up organizational approach (e.g. providing psycho-education to members); (3) a partnership approach (e.g. strengthening relationships between the church and social service agencies); and (4) a community organizing approach (e.g. a large scale community health initiative). Further, true capacity building requires more than one of these approaches (McLaughlin, Leone, Meisel, & Henderson, 1997). Once barriers are identified through an assessment of church organizational capacity, these capacity building approaches can be enacted to assist the church in developing skills and resources needed to meet community needs. Although this capacity building work may initially involve help from outside sources (e.g. academic institutions, researchers, or social service agencies), the goal should be for churches to enact change that is valuable to them and sustainable.

Conclusion and Implications

Without question the Black church has and continues to be one of the most important institutions in the African American community. Black churches have been central in helping African Americans overcome slavery,

segregation, discrimination, economic depravity, educational inequities, and other social injustices. Black churches have taken on the role of social service provider when government programs failed to meet the needs of African Americans. Although it can be argued that African Americans have better access to formal services now than ever before, the Black Church is still a preferred source of help for many individuals because it is trusted in the community. Thus, any conversation about reducing health disparities faced by African Americans is incomplete without considering the role of Black churches.

The social problem of interest in this article is disparities in mental health treatment and outcomes faced by African Americans. It has been argued that Black churches play a key role in influencing the mental health attitudes and behaviors of African Americans, although the nature of that relationship may be unclear. Further, the Black church has been described as a historic and enduring institution in the Black community that will continue to be relied upon to address mental health issues, whether they have the capacity to do so effectively or not. To harness the potential of this cultural resource and improve the mental health conditions of African Americans, more needs to be done to identify and address facilitators and barriers to church engagement in mental health programming. The guide for assessing organizational capacity presented here should be used as a strategy to pursue this goal.

One major implication of this work is that community interventionists and researchers now have a tool to help them engage in capacity building with Black churches. Although this guide is specific to mental health programming, it has relevance and adaptability to address various community health needs. Further, having a clear sense of challenges faced by Black churches in implementing health programs will guide the development of interventions to address these barriers. For example, if lack of technical capacity is common among Black churches, intervention developers would be wise to design community interventions that include components that will build technical capacity through equipment, ongoing training, and consultation. Likewise, if lack of support to implement the intervention is identified as a barrier for a congregation who desires to engage in mental health promotion, interventionists should attempt to provide addition staffing and administrative support in order to improve the chances of the program being successfully adopted. Continued failure to identify and address these various dimensions of capacity in church-based health programs will ultimately impact program success and mental health outcomes for many African Americans.

There are also macro and policy implications of increased understanding of organizational capacity. Since 2009 states such as California, Illinois, Nevada and South Carolina have cut more than $1.6 billion in general funds from their mental health budgets (National Alliance on Mental Illness,

2011). Additionally, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will increase access to health care for millions of individuals who otherwise may not have been able to receive care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). This means that there will be fewer resources available to help more people. This reduced availability of professional services may prompt African Americans in need of mental health help to continue to seek out informal service providers, such as churches. The burden on churches to meet mental health needs and encourage members to seek appropriate professional help may amplify. Thus, equipping Black churches to address this potential burden through capacity building will improve their ability to respond to mental health needs and ultimately improve public health. ❖

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The Black Church: Responding to the Drug-Related Mass Incarceration of Young Black Males: "If you had been here my Brother would not have died!"

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The mass incarceration of young Black males for drug-related offences is a social issue that has broad implications. Some scholars have described this as a new form of racism that needs to be addressed through the concerted effort of various institutions, including the Black Church. In this paper the authors will elucidate the past and current roles of the Black Church, discuss the utilization of the social work Theory of Empowerment and Black Church theology to address the disproportionality of drug-related mass incarceration of young Black males, focus on initiatives undertaken by the Black Church to address this issue and further, discuss the role of the Black Church in ex-drug offender reentry and reintegration. This paper will conclude with implications for the Black Church and incarcerated young Black males.

> "Lord, the one you love is sick. " When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death.... Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up....." Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died...." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!..." Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out! " The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go. " (John 11:3-4, 21, 35-36, 43-44, New King James Version).

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In the Biblical passage above the supernatural healing power of Christ is displayed when he raises a dead man, Lazarus, from the grave. Today, many Black men are representative of Lazarus in that they are dealing with mental, emotional, social, physical and/or spiritual sickness and are grappling with "dead situations" that thwart their human potential and threaten their very existence. Additionally, similarly to Lazarus, there is hope for Black men, and there are vehicles for restoration, one of which is the Black Church.

The Black Church has been defined by Lincoln & Mamiya (1990) as the Black controlled independent denominations, which make up the heart of Black Christians and is principally concerned with the expressions of spirituality and the religious practices of African-Americans. It also serves as a functional family for its congregants and community and serves a plethora of vital social and economic functions (Caldwell, Greene, & Billingsley, 1994). It continues to be the primary location of Black political activity and the vehicle through which Blacks can address the dominant social order and relate to their God through their cultural heritage. The therapeutic benefit of Black Church services has been documented whereby worship, prayer and other forums provide emotional release from the stress of daily living and therapeutic group experiences whereby members' experiences with being Black, in a society that is not always welcoming to minorities, can be validated (Guillory, 2010; McRae, Thompson & Cooper, 1999). It is host to numerous empowerment initiatives and activities and seeks to address social inequality in many areas. One of these areas of inequality is the disproportionate number of young Black males who are incarcerated for drug-related offenses.

Some scholars have described the mass incarceration of young Black males as a new form of racism that needs to be addressed through the concerted effort of numerous institutions among which is the Black Church. The importance of the Black Church to its community cannot be overstated in that it has been and continues to serve as a formidable vehicle for social change. Using the social work theory of empowerment and Black Church theology, the authors of this paper will highlight past and current roles of the Black Church to address the disproportionality of drug-related mass incarceration of young Black males and will discuss the role of the Black Church in ex-drug offender reentry and reintegration. The paper will conclude with implications for the Black Church and incarcerated young Black males.

Black Males and Drug Related Incarceration

The combined percentages of the people who identified themselves as Black during the past U.S. Census is about 14 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). It is important to note that, in most cases, an individual's response to the race question is based upon self-identification. We use the terms Black(s) and African American(s) interchangeably. Our use of Black is congruent

with all individuals who fall under the broad category of Black through self, cultural or systemic identification. For the purpose of this paper, young Black males are defined as self-identified Black individuals who are male in gender and are between the ages of 18 to 29 years. The limitation on the age is only for classification purposes and is not in any way suggestive that the incarceration of Black males below or above the age limit is of less concern. Age 18 is the official emancipation age from juvenile status in most states and under the 26th Amendment to the Constitution, regardless of the state laws, 18 is the age at which one is eligible to vote (Brown, & Pluta Brown, 2004; Hamilton, 2012). Typically, within this age group, the majority of young males finish high school and either further their education or begin to pursue a trade or career. It is also at this time that many young males develop intimate relationships to establish families, build networks of friends and career associates, and begin to establish the path towards upward economic mobility and community involvement. It is therefore important to examine and address any social issue, such as incarceration, that could interrupt these processes, especially when the social phenomenon is disproportional.

The onset of drug-related mass incarceration has been traced to the declaration of the war on drugs that the Nixon administration launched in 1971 as part of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 (Dufton, 2012; Irwin, 1973; Zakaria, 2012). President Nixon was famously quoted as declaring the consequences of drug abuse as public enemy number one. According to Mauer (2004) (as cited by Alexander, 2010) "the impact of the drug war has been astounding. In less than thirty years the U.S. penal population exploded from around 300,000 to more than 2 million, with drug convictions accounting for the majority of the increase" (p. 6). As a result Mold (2012) indicated that within the last 43 years over 45 million Americans at one time or another have been arrested for drug related offenses.

In the United States, men are incarcerated at a rate of 14 times higher than women and young Black males are at a disadvantage relative to other groups who are in jail or prison (Warren, Chirocos, & Bales, 2012). Warren, Chirocos, and Bales (2012) noted that in many cases the incarceration of young Black males was due to non-violent drug possession and drug sales/trafficking crimes. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the percentage of Black drug users in proportion to total drug users in the United States is about 12% but Blacks represent 38% of drug related arrests and 59% of drug offenders in state prisons (http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet). An estimated 500% increase in the rate of drug-related imprisonment for Black males was noted between 1994 and 2004 (Mauer, 2004; Mukku et al., 2012). As of 2009, Black males were incarcerated 6.7 times more often than white males (Mukku, Benson, Alam, Richie & Bailey, 2012). The precipitous rise in drug-related imprisonment was observed to disproportionally affect young Black males compared to their white counterparts from the early 1980s onward (Alexander, 2010).

The reasons for the problem of disproportionate Black male incarceration are many, highly systemic, and cyclical in nature. Sentencing disparity has been identified as one of the major reasons why Black males are disproportionally over-represented in drug-related incarceration compared to whites in the U.S. (Alexander, 2010; Blumstein, Cohen, Martin, & Tonry, 1983; Mitchell & Caudy, 2013; Wilkins, Newton, & Steer, 1991). Other reasons include drug laws and policies such as "federal crack cocaine laws," the "Three Strikes"/habitual offender policies, and injustices in the judicial system. In spite of a general recognition of racial disproportionality against Blacks in the United States' prison system, consensus regarding the reasons for this existence is scant. The majority of Blacks believe that racist practices by the police and courts are the most salient reason, but the majority of Whites give less credence to racial injustices as a major reason why Black men are disproportionately imprisoned (Unnever, 2008).

While the debate for reasons continues, it is evident that it is the young Black male whose plight will continue to be at stake and need urgent intervention. The effects and the characteristics of young Black males who are at risk of incarceration are evident. The literature suggests that Black inmates are more likely to have grown up in household headed by a single mother, have children and siblings, have never been married or completed high school, have low incomes with at least some of their annual income coming from illegal sources, and have not been employed full-time (Jackson, 1997). The disparity and disproportionality in the justice system that they experience results in their being denied educational opportunities and, by extension, social mobility, having post-prison challenges of reintegration into society, unemployment, disenfranchisement of voting rights, health disparities, being absent fathers, and in some instances being re-sentenced for crimes. Hence, their incarceration becomes cyclical and often generational. It is our contention that the mass incarceration of young Black males is a social justice issue that merits a social reform response and in this context we look to one of the most formidable historic institutions of change, the Black Church, to champion this cause.

The Black Church: Historical Overview

Africans brought to this country as slaves came with a culture rich in spiritual and religious traditions and practices. During that era, in some areas of the Southern states, Blacks and Whites sometimes attended church services together, but because of racist practices Blacks were often not allowed to fully participate in church services and activities that were dominated by Whites (Sawyer, 2001; Moore, 1991). Subsequently, in their quest for both autonomy from White authority and religious freedom, African-Americans began their own denominations and their own houses of worship.

The Black Church served a myriad of functions within the African-American community (Moore, 1994, Hill, 1997). It served as a coping and survival mechanism during slavery. Initially emerging as an "invisible institution," an informal network among the slaves began which was instrumental for abolitionist activity and the Underground Railroad (Frazier, 1963, Moore, 1991). The first known formal Black church was established between 1750 and 1773 and soon after others followed (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Moore, 1991). These churches provided social service functions and were responsible for the eventual formation of African-American seminaries, Black colleges and academies, insurance companies, banks, the NAACP, and the civil rights movement of the sixties (Lincoln & Mamiya 1990). By 1906 over 36,000 Black churches were in existence with a total membership of over 3.5 million (Birchett, 1992). Black churches have assumed the character of a 'family house,' a symbol of unity and identity. According to Roberts (1987), "the nature and mission of the church as an extended family made up of believers in Christ is the context for a viable Black ecclesiology" (p. 40). The church as an entity conceptualizes its affairs to include the total world of the community. The total world encompasses various aspects of life in Black communities including social, economic, political and cultural elements.

Presently, there are approximately 150,000 African American churches nationwide and roughly 87% of African-Americans indicate that they are affiliated with a religious group (The National Black Church Initiative, 2011; Sahgal & Smith, 2009; Billingsley, 1992). Not only has the number of African American churches substantially grown but the congregational size of many of these houses of worship has also burgeoned. Now known as mega-churches, because they boast memberships of 2,000 congregants or more, they are institutions that continue to be central to the African American community's spiritual, political, social and economic activity and the means by which Blacks can relate to their Divinity through their cultural heritage. Because of the magnitude of the number of people who attend them and their vast economic resources, African American mega-churches are in a strategic position to utilize their means to help alleviate a whole host of problems faced by the African American community. Briefly, there is a broad array of activities offered to the community by mega and non-mega churches such as self-help and a variety of support groups like those designed to benefit those who struggle with substance abuse issues and who have HIV and AIDS, lay health advisory networks, youth development and afterschool academic tutorial assistance, latchkey programs, mental health counseling services, fatherhood initiatives, marriage and family counseling, food and clothing outreach, and a variety of other services that provide a context for empowering the African American community. The African American church, whatever the size, is the only institution outside of the family where people of African descent have full autonomy. For that reason it can serve and should serve as a powerful social change agent.

The Black Church was also one of the first contexts in which social work practice took place (Garland, 1992). In fact, Johnson calls the church the "mother of social work" (1941, p. 404). The church was instrumental in the development of social work and serves as a place where social workers provide human services. Social workers who practice within the church work with individuals, systems, and organizations in sundry ways. The broad range of initiatives being undertaken within the milieu of the African American church provides a context for social workers and others to assist those who have many issues (Johnson & Staples, 2005).

Social Work Theory of Empowerment and Black Church Theology

The use of social work empowerment theory as a framework for social change is evidence-based, suggesting that effective social movements and interventions require empowerment-related processes and outcomes across multiple levels of the social system (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment is defined as "positive social psychological transformation, related to a sense of being able to (re)shape the social world, that takes place for members of subordinated groups who overturn (or at least challenge) existing relations of dominance" (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 708). Encapsulated in the definition is the idea that empowerment is a participatory process whereby individuals, organizations, and communities address issues of social injustice (Rappaport, 1987; Solomon, 1976). Empowerment has been postulated to be a major theory of community psychology (Rappaport, 1981, 1984, 1987) and social work (Itzhaky & York, 2002; Pinderhughes, 1989), specifically social work in African American communities (Solomon, 1976). It is frequently used as a guide for intervention in high-risk communities (Bentley, 2000; Minkler, Thompson, Bell, & Rose, 2001).

Empowerment theory proposes that power can be acquired through social interaction and as such it is infinite and has numerous sources (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Weick, 1982). In general terms, it is a process of making impact over conditions that matter to people who share interests, identities, or experiences (Fawcett, et al, 1995). Speer and Hughey (1995) asserted that it requires the interaction of both the individual and organization/community in a dialectical or reciprocal context for empowerment to generate the social power necessary for social change.

Black Church theology refers to a variety of Black theologies, but there are common principles that are central and that resonate through them. Borne out of a history of oppression and discrimination and a renewed understanding of the gospel, Black Church theology has a goal of constructing an authentic liberated society for people (Kunnie, 1994). At its core is the quest towards the liberation of the marginalized, with a focus

on the injustice done to Blacks. This theory of total liberation is manifested in linguistic and racial and cultural dimensions of Black people (Hopkins, 2000) and is manifested as an agent of change through individual empowerment and community mobilization (Harden, 2011).

Embedded in both the social work theory of empowerment and Black Church theology is the fundamental goal of creating positive social change to address issues of marginalization, injustice, and, to a larger degree, any issue that individuals or the community perceives as problematic. A point of congruence in both theories is that the source of power for change is generated through the people. Through the empowerment of the individual and mobilization of empowered individuals into an organized community around a common cause, power is generated to influence change. Finally, social work empowerment theory and Black Church theology involve participatory processes at individual and community levels. These processes involve multifaceted layers of interactions described as reciprocal in nature and require deliberate planning and actions to ensure effectiveness.

Empowerment Theory as a Strategy to Stem Mass Incarceration

The application of the social work empowerment theory to address the drug-related mass incarceration of young Black males is hinged on mobilizing and enhancing the capabilities of the Black Church towards educating young Black males and the African American community about mass incarceration in the U.S. Empowerment as conceptualized by Drury and Reicher (2009) implies that the Black Church should take a leadership role in challenging the disproportionality in the drug-related sentencing of Blacks. In addition, the empowerment theory as posited by Gutiérrez, DeLois, and GlenMaye, (1995) suggests that Black churches should deploy a strategy with young Black males within their congregations to increase their knowledge about the criminal justice system and the consequences of getting involved in drug-related offenses.

Furthermore, the Black Church can provide enlightenment about the power to young Black males and the Black community that results from positive personal, social, community, and systemic change. In this regard, empowerment encapsulates the Black Church's ability to guide in resource identification and distribution (Dodd & Gutierrez, 1990); development of self-esteem and feelings of personal worth (Gutiérrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye,1995); initiating behavioral change interventions (Zimmerman,1995); and inspiring citizen participation at the community level towards concerted drug-related prison deterrent initiatives.

Using Black Theology to Address Mass Incarceration of Young Black Males

According to Cone (1990), the quintessence of Black theology is:

> A theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from identification with oppressed Blacks of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light of the Black condition. It believes that the liberation of the Black community is God's liberation. (pp. 4-5.)

Contingent to this conceptualization of Black theology in relation to addressing the drug-related mass incarceration of young Black males is the responsibility of the Black Church to identify with the oppression of young Black males who are disproportionally incarcerated, analyze, advocate, and take leadership in the liberation of them. In addition to identifying with oppressed young Black males, the Black Church, according to Cone (1990), has a prophetic social justice mandate to help young Black males see the unassailable power of Christ to "break the chains of oppression" (p. 5). In this regard the Black Church needs to present a social gospel in such a manner that it not only speaks to the human condition and social problems that are the reality of many American young Black males but also provides answers to their plight as well.

Moreover, Black churches can utilize Black theology by providing liberating educational and behavioral change interventions that focus on preventing drug-related offenses that are responsible for the mass imprisonment of young Black males. Furthermore, Black churches through the liberation theology paradigm of Black theology should be more proactive in liberation initiatives or activities (Cone, 1990). This may include developing programs and services that assist in the reentry and reintegration of young Black parolees, and those on probation with a goal of decreasing their rates of recidivism.

Past and Present Attempts at Sentencing Reforms

In response to sentencing disparities, specific federal and congressional actions have been taken in the past to address this anomaly. First, President Reagan signed the Sentencing Reform Act (SRA) of 1984 to standardize judicial sentencing in the U.S. (see Wilkins, Newton, & Steer,1991). Consequently, members of Congress and the federal government responded with a more punitive and comprehensive legislation called the Anti-drug Abuse Act of 1986 (Alexander, 2010; Beaver, 2009). An unintended consequence of this legislation was that it paved the way for one of the most controversial, unfair, and infamous sentencing guidelines in the history of the U.S. war against drugs. Popularly known as the one-hundred-to-one (100:1) sentencing ratio, the ratio

implies that there is a huge disparity between sentencing for offenders who are charged with the possession of powder cocaine compared to crack cocaine.

The implication of this sentencing ratio disparity is that Blacks are more likely to be peddlers, in possession of, and indicted for crack cocaine, while whites are often associated with the distribution, and indictment for powder cocaine possession (Beaver, 2009). To address this sentencing disparity the Obama administration passed the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010. The fair sentencing act reduced the 100:1 sentencing ratio to 18:1. In addition, the new law also abolished the controversial and racially disadvantageous five-year mandatory minimum sentence for mostly Black drug offenders who were charged with possession of crack cocaine.

Charitable Choice and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Partnerships

Presidential executive orders to foster a tandem relationship between cabinet agencies of government and faith-based organizations towards proffering solutions to drug-related mass incarceration have been in place for the last decade. Starting with former President George W. Bush, the White House Office of Faith-Based Initiatives was established in 2001, and the office is now rebranded in President Obama's administration as the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DiIulio, 2009). Succinctly the charitable choice is specifically section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, and signed into law by President Clinton in August 1996 (Sherwood, 1998, 2000). The charitable choice provision as it is popularly labeled, offers faith-based social service organizations an equal playing field with secular social service agencies to compete for federal tax dollars towards provision of social services (See Sherwood, 1998, 2000; Cnaan and Boddie, 2002).

One of the many benefits of the charitable choice provision is the maintenance of the religious identity of the faith-based social service providers (Sherwood, 2000; Cnaan and Boddie, 2002). A major concern of the critics of the charitable choice provision is the potential of crossing the borderline of the constitutional paradigm of separation of church and state (Sherwood, 2000). However, the charitable choice provision curbs against proselytizing when clients utilize services provided by tax-funded FBOs program, or when FBOs collaborate with governments and secular social service agencies in the provision of social service initiatives to address the myriad of social problems (Sherwood, 1998, 2000; Cnaan and Boddie, 2002). An offshoot of this initiative is the collaboration between the Department of Justice's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DOJ CFBNP) (see http://www.ojp.gov/fbnp/about.htm). What follows is a discussion of some of the Black Church initiatives towards mitigating the mass incarceration of Blacks.

Evidences of Black Churches' Strategies to address the Drug-Related Incarceration

Black churches have been recognized as strategically positioned and influential institutions that can provide empowering socioeconomic and cultural assets to address the plethora of social vices confronting African Americans (Moore, 2011). Against this backdrop, Black churches have been involved for the last 42 years in intervening within the continuum of prevention and rehabilitation interventions for drug-related incarcerated Black males. While evidence abounds in literature on the various re-integration and reentry programs for Black males post-imprisonment, there is a great literature lacuna on the prevention spectrum (Durlauf & Nagin, 2011; Nagin, 1998).

Prevention Strategies

However, some momentum is building in the Black Church in the prevention sphere based on the work of Michelle Alexander (2010), and her book: *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness*. For instance, in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fredrick, Maryland, which is a predominantly White church with few Black congregants, sermons and congregation-wide book adoption are being used for "consciousness raising " of congregants to the sentencing disparity and disproportionality of Black male mass incarceration (Gregg, 2013).

Moreover, Newhouse (2011) reported that networks of Black churches working with the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference (a nonprofit group) are coordinating and incorporating into church bulletins fact sheets about mass incarcerations, scriptural quotations, and a new Jim Crow study guide that educates Black congregations on the need for a mass movement to stem the tide of mass incarceration among Blacks in the U.S. In an interview with Iva Carruthers, she stated that "mass incarceration is a moral and civil rights issue that the Black faith community cannot ignore "(Newhouse, 2011, para.4). Carruthers suggested that the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference coordinate with Black churches to educate the Black faith community about mass incarceration through such events as the Juneteenth, and Father's Day events, book clubs, youth town meetings, and a rally at the St. Sabina Catholic Church in Chicago (Newhouse, 2011). Next, the authors discuss reentry interventions that Black churches have adopted to help reintegrate Black males and reverse the high recidivism rate of recently released former Black male inmates.

Reentry and Anti-Recidivism Church Programs

Black churches have been very proactive in developing reentry programs that provide psychosocial and economic reintegration interventions

for paroled Black males. The justification for reentry and anti-recidivism interventions is well supported. The Pew Charitable Trust (Pew Center on the States, 2011) reports that 45.5 percent of those paroled in 1999 were rearrested within three years, while 43.3 percent of those released from prison in 2004 were re-institutionalized within three years. Examples of reentry and anti-recidivism programs in Black churches that show promise include the prison fellowship transition of prisoners (TOP) in Detroit, MI which uses a case management approach to help Black ex-offenders learn competencies such as family reunion, community and social institutional reintegration, and, perhaps most importantly, job search skills (O'Connor, Ryan, & Parikh, 1998). Another innovative program is the collaboration between Black churches and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)/Faith Partnerships in Washington D.C. (Spies, Hendricks & McGinnis, 2008). According to Spies and colleagues, this program utilizes a church-based mentoring program that pairs an ex-offender (a mentee) with a church volunteer (a mentor) who assists the parolee with support such as friendship, clothing, transitional housing, substance abuse aftercare, independent living skills, and employment skill development (Spies, Hendricks, & McGinnis, 2008).

Implications for the Black Church and Incarcerated Young Black Males

This paper underscores the premise that the Black Church occupies a unique position of power and influence in the African American community and as such serves as a beacon for social and political reform (Brown, et al., 2006). In order to address the mass incarceration of young Black males due directly or indirectly to drug-related issues, considerable changes in current social and political positions of many Black churches are required.

One suggestion is to work through the various national men's ministries that are currently in place within the church. For instance, Promise Keepers, Men of Integrity, the National Coalition of Ministries to Men (NCMM), or the Iron Men Ministry, are all organizations of men formed to address issues that affect the family. Currently, chemical dependency is an issue that plagues many Black families (Pope, Wallhagen, & Davis 2010).

Therefore, a suggested common focus of these men's ministries would entail educating congregations about chemical dependency and arming them with the facts on the disproportionate number of young Black males who are in the criminal justice system either directly or indirectly due to substance abuse-related issues. For example, churches could develop and facilitate weekly group therapy sessions for its members led by substance abuse professionals. In addition, churches could sponsor family therapy sessions, as substance abuse affects the entire family. Likewise, the church could develop a curriculum on substance abuse education for the youth ministries with a focus on prevention.

Another major effect of substance abuse is the legal ramifications. In order to address the disproportionality issues that lead to criminal records, African American churches could work with the court system to hold expungement clinics. These clinics are a coalition of volunteers such as attorneys, judges, law students, county officials, and other agencies who work with offenders to get their criminal records expunged at no charge to the offender. These programs are currently active across the country and help to increase the chances for offenders to obtain employment.

Another step would be to solicit the support of national Black Church organizations. For instance, the Congress of National Black Churches has over 20 million members (The White House, n.d), the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. has over 7.5 million members (World Council of Churches, 2013), and the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) has approximately 34,000 associate members of Black and Latino churches across the U.S. (National Black Church Initiative, 2013). These organizations address various issues that improve the communities of their constituents and thus improve the lives of community residents.

There are a few ways for these organizations to have greater impact. For example, community revitalization initiatives are taking place across the country. African American churches could solicit support from government and corporate entities to bring business and housing to their neighborhoods and thus providing employment opportunities and adequate housing for residents. An example of this alliance could be found in the Woodlawn community in Chicago Illinois. The City of Chicago secured a $30.5 million grant to revitalize the Woodlawn community. This grant was awarded from the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH). This grant, coupled with the revitalization sponsored by local churches, has made Woodlawn a model community.

This suggested alliance of Black Church organizations is similar to the development of the coalition between the Congress of Racial Equality, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the National Urban League, which combined for the 1963 March on Washington for jobs and freedom (Jones, 2010). Likewise, this approach is analogous to other grassroots movements that have led to widespread social and policy changes. Examples of these movements include the Women's Suffrage Movement that led to societal change for the status of women (Beck, Dorsey, & Stutters, 2003), and the prohibition of alcohol, a movement that banned the sale and use of alcohol (Rumbarger, 1989). The Montgomery Bus Boycott gave birth to the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s that led to massive changes in the rights of African Americans across the U.S. (Tarrow, 1994). The farm workers movement led by Cesar Chavez improved conditions

for farm workers in the U.S. (Young, 1972), and more recently, grassroots participation in the reform of healthcare ultimately led to "Obamacare."

Each of these movements has roots in empowerment theory, thus empowering people to enact social change (Rappaport, 1987; Solomon, 1976). More important, most grassroots movements are led by people who want to initiate changes in issues that negatively affect certain groups of people or society as a whole. Unfair treatment of young Black males by the judicial system that enforces unjust policies for drug related offenses is a cause that would benefit from a substantial revision.

The Office of the National Drug Control Policy was charged with producing an annual drug control strategy. This strategy, "outlines Administration efforts to reduce illicit drug use, manufacturing and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences" (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2013). We assert that some of these laws designed to address drug-related crimes unjustly punish young Black males. One such policy is the mandatory drug sentencing laws instituted during the 1980s during the war on drugs campaign. This law enables the judicial system to incarcerate offenders to prescribed terms for certain drug-related offenses. The mandatory minimum sentencing laws and the "Three Strikes Law" unjustly affects Blacks, oftentimes for minor drug offences. Consequently, these laws have been the focus of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) because they disproportionally affect minorities (www.aclu.org/criminal-law-reform/drug-sentencing-and-penalties). Perhaps a grassroots movement led by Black ministers fighting unjust drug policy that has the support of the ACLU could prove as successful as the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which were led by Black ministers and supported by the ACLU.

Moreover, we suggest that increasing male membership in the Black Church is essential for preventing an increase in unjust incarcerations of young Black males. For instance, NBCI has an initiative now underway that has a goal of recruiting ten million Black men across the country to join a church. They hope to accomplish this goal by understanding the spiritual, sociological, and psychological factors that keep men out of church. An initiative like this one can be replicated by local churches across the nation. In a study of 2,358 young Black males, researchers found that church attendance is a protective factor against criminal activity, including drug use and drug dealing (Johnson, Lareson, DeLi, & Jang, 2000). Similarly, Merrill, Folsom, and Christopherson (2005) revealed that family involvement in church (as measured by attendance) also serves as a protective factor against adolescent substance use. The common thread that connects the fabric of social and policy change is education about the current issues that affect the lives of Black people. The largest gathering of Black people takes place throughout the country every Sunday in church. There are over 150,000 Black churches in the U.S. and 87% of all African Americans are affiliated

with religious organizations (The National Black Church Initiative, 2013; Sahgal & Smith, 2009; Billingsley, 1992). During this captive time, pastors can dedicate some of the time on educating the congregation on the cause and effects of chemical dependency and what the church can do to address this major social problem.

Conclusion

The Black Church continues to fulfill a major role in the lives of Black people and as such has an enormous responsibility for improving their lives by advocating for and helping to make social and policy changes. Its work in effecting change in the current judicial and legislative policies on illegal drug-related activity can help to eliminate the disparity that currently exists in the judicial system as it relates to the inordinate number of young Black males who are interned for drug related offences. The experience of incarceration often has a deleterious effect on these young men who, while imprisoned, often suffer physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, isolation, and anxiety and depression brought on by feelings of hopelessness and grief (Perry, Alexander, Moore, & Robinson (2011). Black pastors and church leaders often have almost unquestioned authority within their congregations and are therefore uniquely positioned to use the pulpit and other church related forums as vehicles for education, transformation and social reform.

The problems within the Black community are many, and the urgency for solutions to the issues that beset young Black males is great. Just as Christ turned Lazarus' situation from one of death to life, the Black Church is perhaps the primary vehicle through which Divine intervention can come to also raise young Black males, especially those who have been incarcerated for drug-related offences, from deadly to life sustaining situations. Reentry and reintegration programs can prove invaluable by giving these males the tools necessary to build new and restore broken interpersonal relationships, obtain the necessary skills to provide for themselves and significant others, and feel a sense of life purpose and connection to their community. Providing services aimed at assisting these young men also increases the likelihood that they will develop into responsible men who can become heads of households, role models, pillars within the community and who will themselves be in a position to help the Black Church carry on its unquestionable significance within its community and the at-large society. ❖

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Lessons Learned: Conducting Culturally Competent Research and Providing Interventions with Black Churches

Kesslyn Brade Stennis, Kathy Purnell, Emory Perkins, & Helen Fischle

Social workers have been challenged to understand, practice, and research from a perspective that demonstrates an appropriate level of cultural competence. This conceptual article provides guidance for those seeking to conduct culturally competent research in Black Churches. The content shared in this article is based on the authors' collective 15 years of experience conducting research and trainings in Black Churches on interpersonal violence, women's empowerment, effective practices surrounding gentrification, use of narratives, and the impact of HIV/AIDS-related knowledge on risk-taking behaviors. This conceptual article discusses cultural competence in social work, the history of research in Black Churches, challenges that the authors experienced while conducting research in the Black Church, and the lessons learned regarding how to conduct effective culturally competent research in the Black Church. It is believed that this information will promote efforts to conduct culturally competent research in Black congregations and subsequently lead to providing effective interventions and social reforms that positively impact diverse populations.

THROUGHOUT ITS EXISTENCE, THE BLACK CHURCH HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT provider of emotional, religious, spiritual and social support for people of African descent. Although the Black Church has a history of providing information, intervention, and advocacy, particularly for those within the African American community (Adksion-Bradley et al. 2005; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2001; Martin & Martin, 2002; Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000; Thomas, Quinn, Billingsley, & Caldwell, 1994), there seems to be scant

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information on the Black Church within the social work body of literature. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical and conceptual literature related to conducting research in the Black Church. If present, the research could provide insight into how to include and practice social work within African American communities and African American communities of faith in a culturally competent manner.

This conceptual article provides guidance for those seeking to conduct culturally competent research in Black Churches. The content shared in this article is based on the authors' collective 15 years of experience conducting research and trainings in Black Churches on interpersonal violence, women's empowerment, effective practices surrounding gentrification, use of narratives, and the impact of HIV/AIDS-related knowledge on risk-taking behaviors. This conceptual article discusses cultural competence in social work, the history of research in Black Churches, challenges that we have experienced while conducting research in Black churches, and the lessons learned regarding how to conduct effective culturally competent research in the Black Church. We believe that this information will promote efforts to conduct culturally competent research with Black congregations and subsequently lead to providing effective interventions and social reforms that positively impact diverse populations.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a contemporary concept that has been supported by various professions for a number of years. Within social work, professional helpers have been challenged by national social work organizations to understand, practice, and research from a perspective that demonstrates an appropriate level of cultural competence with diverse populations and institutions. According to the National Association of Social Workers, cultural competence requires learning new behaviors and techniques that respect, affirm, and value the "dignity and worth of diverse individuals, groups, families, and communities while protecting and preserving the dignity of each" (National Association of Social Workers, 2001, p. 11). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2011) adds that cultural competence includes promoting "social workers' knowledge, values, and skills for the ethical and effective practice that takes into account the diverse expressions of religion and spirituality among clients and their communities" (http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/CurriculumResources/50777.aspx). Even smaller national and international social work organizations recognize the importance of cultural competence among social workers. While the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) has published a statement on cultural competence (NABSW, 2013), the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) has recently published an article in its peer-reviewed journal that supports the

importance of culturally competent social workers (Brade Stennis, et. al, 2015). The ultimate goal of this inter-organizational support for cultural competence is to mandate that social workers operate in a manner that shows interest, respect for and sensitivity regarding the unique attributes that exist within every group.

While there is a thrust in the social work profession towards understanding, practicing, and researching in a culturally competent manner (NASW 2001; CSWE, 2011; NABSW, 2013), the literature which connects cultural competence, social work practice, research and the Black Church is sparse. Although there is no guarantee that the provision of such literature or research would ensure heightened cultural competence as it relates to the Black Church, this lack of connection in the literature is staggering, particularly since the Black Church is one of the oldest and most stable institutions in Black communities. Furthermore, the dearth of literature that connects these topics is astonishing since the Black Church has been and continues to provide the foundation for many, and provides one context for understanding, practicing with and researching African American people and African American communities.

The Black Church

The strengths and contributions of the Black Church and Black Church leaders have been noted in seminal works by W. E. B. DuBois (1903), Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph Nicholson (1969), E. Franklin Frazier (1963) and Nannie Helen Burroughs (1950), as well as in publications by more contemporary scholars including C. Eric Lincoln & Lawrence Mamiya (1990), Andrew Billingsley (1999), Albert Raboteau (2001), Carla Brailey (2007), Cheryl Sanders (1996), and Cheryl Gilkes (2001). These scholars note that the Black Church has historically served as a repository of wealth for its congregants, community and the global society (DuBois, 1903; Frazier, 1963; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). With its roots reaching back beyond the middle passage, the Black Church has been the refuge for many who have faced emotional, economic, social, civic, psychological, physical, and spiritual oppression (Martin & Martin, 2002; Schiele, 2000). While financial resources have not always been plentiful and the Black Church has often been forced to "make bricks without straw," when coupled with human resources the Black Church has accomplished much. It has produced institutions that have spawned reformation and social movements, begun social services initiatives, educated members of the community and provided a safe haven from external forces (Frazier & Lincoln, 1974; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Taylor, Thornton & Chatters, 1987).

The legacy, strength, resolve, and resilience of the Black Church as a social institution that facilitates change on micro, mezzo, and macro system levels continues today, particularly on behalf of those who are oppressed

and suffer (Billingsley, 1999; Brailey, 2007). As a microcosm of the larger Black community, Black Church members have significant strength and resilience despite facing some of the same challenges that exist in the global society: intimate partner violence (Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009), racism (Barber, 2011), HIV/AIDS (Khosravani, M, Poudeh, R., Parks-Yancy, R., 2008; Perkins, 2006, elder care (Caldwell, Chatters, Billingsley, & Taylor, 1995), addiction and substance abuse (Stahler, Kirby, & Kerwin, 2007), prison and prison re-entry (Goode, Lewis, & Trulear, 2011), at-risk-youth (Cook, 2000), health disparities (Isaac, Rowland, & Blackwell, 2007) and mental health (Molock, S., Barksdale, C. Marlin, S., Puri, R., Cammack, N., Spann, M., 2007). While committed to its international legacy of service, leadership, advocacy, and community uplift, the institution of the Black Church and its congregants face similar issues as other historic institutions, including but not limited to, relevance (Gilkes, 1998), gentrification (Sanders and Brade Stennis, 2014), economic hardship (Day, 2012; Pattillo, 2013), and political mobilization (Brown & Brown, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 1996), putting the sustentation of the church at risk.

The Black Church and Research

Because of the importance of spirituality and the role that the Black Church has played in the lives of many African Americans, some researchers, including the authors, have recognized that the Black Church is perhaps the best place to capture the perspectives and experiences of African Americans. The Black Church has served as the context for numerous research initiatives aimed at helping to contextualize and operationalize phenomena in the African American community. The willingness of African American churchgoers to provide data surrounding issues that impact African Americans and African American communities has been noted in numerous research studies. Within the last ten years, Black Church leaders and congregants have participated in research that considered domestic violence (Brade & Bent-Goodley, 2009), HIV/AIDS (Perkins, 2006), community empowerment (Barnes, 2010), healthy eating and physical activity (Kegler, Escoffery, Alcantara, Hinman, Addison & Glanz, 2010), suicidology (Molock, Barksdale, Matlin, Puri, Cammack & Spann, 2007), and a vast array of other social factors that impact well-being.

While research conducted in the Black community and Black Church has provided a level of insight into systems, institutions/organizations, groups, families, and individuals (Frazier, 1963; Gilkes, 1980; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), there remain a number of challenges associated with conducting research within this sub-culture. One challenge includes the member's sense of being misunderstood by persons who are not members of the group and who perceive the Black community and Black Church as a monolithic group rather than as a multifarious group with distinctions and diversity (McAddo,

2006). A second challenge in conducting research in Black communities and Black churches is distrust that members of the community may have of the researcher and the research process as a result of unethical studies like the well-known Tuskegee Experiment (Freimuth, et al., 2001).

These factors and others make it critically important to engage in culturally competent research practices and methodologies that are sensitive to factors including cultural history, spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and overt and covert innuendos associated with this population. Furthermore, it is important to continue engaging in research on the Black Church that utilizes specific culturally considerate techniques that minimize distrust and provide a sense of empowerment and contribution for participants as well as the researcher. Unfortunately, while there is a need to continue to engage the Black Church in research studies, and while it is especially important to use sensitive research techniques, there is a dearth of literature that provides guidance regarding how to conduct culturally competent research that engages the Black Church and influences practice.

This conceptual article will seek to fill the gap regarding cultural competence and research in Black Churches. The purpose of the article is to promote the proliferation of culturally competent research in the Black Church by providing an overview of our individual research projects, sharing some of the barriers and challenges associated with our collective research, presenting some recommendations surrounding effective research practices with Black Churches, and making implications for researchers. We will present reflections from our collective 15 years of experience conducting research in Black Churches on a number of issues, including interpersonal violence, HIV/AIDS knowledge, effective practices surrounding gentrification, and use of narratives and women's empowerment. We believe this information will not only promote efforts to conduct culturally competent research in Black congregations, but also subsequently provide effective interventions for working with this unique population.

Summary of Research Projects

In order to provide a context for our observations and recommendations for conducting culturally competent research in Black Churches, the information that follows will give an overview of the studies from which the recommendations surfaced. Over the past 15 years, each of us has served as the primary investigator or co-investigator on projects that considered issues in African American communities. Because we recognized the strengths, history, and diversity within the Black Church, the research intentionally engaged members of Black Churches that were based in the southeastern and east coast regions of the United States. In each of the research projects, established guidelines were followed and written approval to conduct the research was granted by the university, church leadership and the partici-

pants. Collectively, there were over 335 participants in all of the studies that took place from 1998-2013, and an additional 200 that participated in subsequent trainings during that period of time.

Our earliest projects with Black Churches sought to explore Black Church leaders' understanding and experiences related to domestic violence. Influenced by two grants funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health, this work led to the development of and training using the S.T.A.R.T. © model for culturally sensitive domestic violence education, prevention and intervention (Brade Stennis, et. al., 2015), and helped us understand the perceptions and experiences of African American clergy surrounding domestic violence (Brade, 2009). We learned that a considerable number of African American clergy have encountered incidents of intimate partner violence as victims or perpetrators, as well as in their roles as clergy and/or family member. In addition, we understood that members of this sub-culture believed that (1) domestic violence is difficult to conceptualize, (2) gender impacts perceptions about domestic violence and gender roles, (3) theological paradoxes are numerous related to domestic violence, and (4) additional culturally sensitive interventions and training models are needed. As a result of this work, numerous culturally sensitive domestic violence trainings have subsequently taken place within and with members of Black Churches.

One member of our writing team conducted a study that considered the impact of HIV/AIDS knowledge on risk-taking behaviors for African American women (Perkins, 2006). With the support of the executive director of a local agency as well as the pastor of the mega Black Church from which the participants were recruited, the women completed an informed consent form and were given a survey instrument to ascertain the participants' knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Contrary to the hypothesis, findings showed that HIV positive women and negative women were equally knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS and that HIV/AIDS knowledge had no direct impact on risk-taking behaviors for this sub-culture.

Finally, one member of our team conducted research that considered the impact of population shifts and gentrification on Black Churches (Sanders & Brade Stennis, 2014). Members from seven Black Churches located in one east coast, metropolitan city participated in the study via individual interviews and focus groups. Findings suggest that Black Churches are facing considerable challenges regarding economic viability, transportation, historical preservation, effective outreach, parking, and declining membership that are perceived to be related to population shifts and gentrification. Nonetheless, Black Churches continue to demonstrate an amazing amount of faith, resilience, and commitment to survive and thrive. The development of a culturally diverse Advisory Board was established to consider theological and practical approaches to address this concern from a culturally aware paradigm.

Although proud of our individual and collective work which was intended to advance research on matters that impact the Black Church and the larger Black community, each of us had our own takeaway about conducting research involving this sub-culture within Black society. A collective retrospective look at the conglomerate research process revealed that there were lessons learned about conducting research and trainings that involved the Black Church. While the lessons may be applicable to other groups or may be insightful for conducting research within the context of other cultures, these lessons surfaced in the form of challenges and barriers that informed our recommendations for conducting culturally competent research with Black Churches.

Challenges and Barriers

Over the course of 15 years of collecting data within the Black Church and with Black Church members, we have experienced a number of challenges and barriers. These challenges and barriers that impacted the research process are communication, cultural insensitivity, theology and branding, gender, position of the pastor, and logistics.

Communication

Among the first barriers were those related to communicating with Black Church leaders to receive research-related consent and guidance. Due to the pastors' busy schedules, researchers often found it difficult to locate them to schedule research-related meetings. Additionally, many of the Black Churches in the studies were small and had limited staff, so in some cases there were numerous un-returned phone calls or low to no response to mass-mailed invitations.

This communication challenge tended to impact the time-line for several of the research projects. Research start dates and completion dates were compromised. We should have taken into consideration that some of the Black clergy were dual-vocational and had limited time for matters that may not have been on their list of immediate priorities, such as our research agendas. Additionally, we should have considered the time that was required for face-to-face communication with the clergy versus relying on feedback from mass mailing. Being aware of the value of oral communication and personal relationship building with people of African descent, we should have committed more time in the research time-line for engagement through direct communication. Communication was much more effective when personal visits and follow-up phone calls were made, despite the fact that it compromised the research timeline.

Cultural Insensitivity

A second category of challenge involved cultural insensitivity, mainly by us, the researchers. Despite our identification with the participants either as people of faith or as people sharing the same racial and/or ethnic background, there still tended to be challenges associated with culture.

For example, because of the our positive perspective regarding research and positive relationship with the churches, we may not have fully appreciated the distrust for and apprehension about research that is deeply embedded in the experience of people of faith and people of color who were invited to participate. Because of this insensitivity, we did not always take the appropriate time to cultivate the research environment and build a level of trust, which was necessary to facilitate a more fluid data collection process.

Other culturally insensitive actions that impacted research success included not fully recognizing the strength of the respected elder who formally and/or informally validates the research, not fully embracing the power of the oral tradition that is used to share stories and increase participation, not contextualizing the research in nomenclature that recognizes the connection between faith and daily life, and not utilizing or creating shared experiences as a platform to gather data (i.e. community celebratory gatherings, after-church meals, pre-existing group meetings, etc.). Because of these culturally insensitive positions, the amount of time needed to build trust and gather data was significantly extended. They may have also impacted the number of people who felt comfortable participating in specific studies.

Theology and Branding

We also noticed a challenge associated with theology and image. Cognizant of their congregants' apprehensions about research and aware of the impact of perception on church operations, some pastors were hesitant to host a setting that allowed data to be collected on topics that were still taboo in the Black Church. While the clergy may have been aware that cases of people with HIV/AIDS and people living in domestic violence situations existed in their congregations, they feared that hosting a research team that studied these and other issues might cause some to question the church's theological position on issues like homosexuality, gender-based roles, and the meaning of family. Protective of the church's brand, in some cases, the pastor or the administrative board of the church did not want the church to be associated with certain topics or theological questions that could damage its public and internal image. Although committed to discussing and capturing data on these sensitive issues, we, especially those in Southern states, found this to be a significant barrier to

receiving consent, validation from the designated leader, and high levels of participation from congregants. A number of recommendations in the following segment evolved from this particular challenge.

Gender and Position of Pastor

Another barrier was one associated with gender. Because gender, race, and ethnicity are among the most prominent considerations when discussing culture and cultural competence, it was interesting that gender surfaced as a point of relevance in our research. Some of us perceived that the gender of the pastor impacted the research agenda. Most of the pastors in the referenced studies were African American men who were viewed as being a part of "the ole-boy network". Consequently, they may not have been aware of or as invested in the research topics that may have been perceived as women's issues including intimate partner violence and the impact of HIV/AIDS knowledge on Black women's risk-taking behavior. Despite the fact that most of today's Black congregations are predominantly comprised of women, that many functions of the church are conducted by women who serve in various supportive roles, and that many women within their congregations are impacted by the issues that were being researched, male pastors still seemed to somewhat disconnected from the research. However, male clergy were more easily accessible and participatory in the research regarding population shifts and gentrification. Conversely, fewer female clergy seemed to be as strongly connected to and participatory in research related to gentrification and population shifts, but were more engaged in research involving HIV/AIDS and domestic violence.

We recognize that this disparity in interest may not be solely based on the gender of the pastor. It may also be attributed to other factors, including the pastor's personal experience levels with research topics, the pastor's preferred approach when addressing issues (i.e. micro, mezzo or macro approach), the pastor's perspective regarding addressing the most immediate concerns of the church which may or may not include specific issues, or the pastor's assessment of how the research aligned with his/her vision for the church. While these factors may have influenced aspects of the research, we found it interesting that the gender of the pastor aligned with his/her direct involvement and support of specific research topics. Furthermore, we believed that this gender factor should be noted as a challenge that was experienced when conducting Black Church research, and that culturally competent research related strategies could consider ethnic culture as well as the gender cultures.

Logistics

Perhaps not isolated to challenges associated with conducting research within Black Churches alone, our experience showed that the implementation of the research relied more heavily on informal networks and traditions versus formal policies, protocol, and administrative organization like scheduling spaces, confirming times, and providing incentives. There were times when policies and protocol required one set of decisions to be made while personal relationships and oral communications recommended a different set of decisions. This conflict between policy and procedures versus personal network and traditions led to logistical challenges including the recruitment of participants, reservation of meeting spaces, scheduling of events, and even the types of incentives that would be provided. In smaller, less frequented churches, these logistical issues were more easily addressed, but in larger churches that had a full complement of scheduled activities, these logistical issues were more pronounced and took more time to solidify. For example, although announcements placed in the bulletin by the church's administrative assistant provided one set of gathering instructions that were consistent with pre-approved protocol, messages disseminated from the pastor may have conveyed different instructions. All of these logistical challenges potentially impacted the implementation of research project with this already apprehensive cultural group. Such challenges speak to the need to consider formal policies in addition to cultural norms.

Collectively, these challenges presented barriers that impacted a number of participants in the studies, time-line of the studies, participation in study-related training, and ultimately the degree of information that is transmitted into the atmosphere which would positively impact the Black Church and communities of color.

Recommendations

In an effort to encourage others to conduct culturally competent research on and with the Black Church, we have developed the following recommendations that evolved from the previously mentioned challenges and barriers. These recommendations consider the historical account and experience of the Black Church and respond to the challenges that have been presented. While the recommendations evolved from our experiences with Black Churches, they may also be applicable when seeking to conduct culturally competent research with other populations.

Demonstrate Sincerity

Because of the history of cruelty and oppression that many members of Black Churches have experienced as a result of their faith and/or ethnic

identity, there is a heightened need for researchers to have and demonstrate a serious level of sincere interest in the community. The research must be conducted not merely for the purpose of gathering data and highlighting perceived inadequacies of the population. Rather, it should be gathered by and with people who have a genuine interest in the well-being of the Black Church and its members. The researcher must have a clear understanding of how the group's history may make the members hesitant to be "test subjects," the researcher must recognize how historical and contemporary practices regarding race and faith have led to the church's perceived necessity of self-protection, and the researcher must convey a sense of shared investment and mutual interest in the promulgation of the Black Church and its agenda to continue a legacy of service.

This sincerity and sensitivity can be demonstrated in a number of ways. Being introspective about one's level of personal interest and investment in the population is the initial step that a researcher using the Black Church as the context for research should do. Secondly, the researchers should adequately study the history of the church and make note of specific items including its mission, previous experience with research, strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

Once a church or churches have been selected for the study and after church leadership has formally agreed to participate, a researcher should publically address the church if given the opportunity by the leadership. The public statement should laud the positive contributions that the Black Church and that specific church have made, acknowledge the challenges that they have faced, and present some ways that collaboration on the proposed research could address some of the challenges and benefit the church, the community, and the profession. This statement may help the congregation feel that the research is purposeful and can advance the church's mission.

One final way to demonstrate sincere interest in the church is to be visible at "non-research" times and to send acknowledgement of appreciation after the research has been conducted. Acknowledgement of appreciation can be expressed in a thank you note, small gift for individual participants, or a gift for the church. These acts can validate the researcher's level of sincere interest in the well-being of the participating church.

Build Relationships

Engagement is the first step in developing any effective personal or working relationships. It is especially important when conducting research in the Black Church that is relational in nature, especially if the researcher has no affiliation with the congregation. Many people who attend various Black Churches attend for the spiritual nourishment and for the personal interactions with others. A researcher must recognize this factor and build relationships accordingly.

The first steps should entail recognizing the formal and informal leaders of the institution. While the pastor may be the formal leader of the church and the ideal person to engage in discussions regarding research, his or her personal, spiritual, or administrative agenda may not allow opportunity for additional responsibilities and discussions. Furthermore, he or she may have a formal structure in place that assigns certain responsibilities to other leaders, committees, and members of the church. The researcher should make a concerted effort to know the pastor's agenda, positions on certain theological, applied, and gender-based topics, and the power structure of the church prior to following the designated protocol for engaging the proper person in a discussion about the proposed research. While much of this information may be apparent on the church's website and printed material, other information may be gathered by visiting the church, listening to some of the pastor's previous sermons, speaking informally with members and studying the theology and structure of the church's denomination.

The researcher should also be aware that there are a number of informal leaders at the church who have a level of access to leadership and the power of influence in the church. These informal leaders sway perceptions and activities in the church and can be an asset or hindrance to any proposed research project. The researcher should be aware of who these persons of influence are and their experience and perspectives on theological and applied topics as well. Developing a sincere relationship with the church's administrative staff and long-standing members may prove to be critical in obtaining this information. Such persons can be the researcher's ally, help him or her move beyond the formal gatekeeping system, and influence the pastor and other congregants to support the proposed research, even when it may not be a priority for the pastor. Along with following the outlined system to engage the pastor in a research-related discussion, the researcher should also follow the informal system and engage the informal leaders in a discussion about the proposed research. This dual approach may strengthen the possibility that the proposed research, steeped in a sincere interest for the well-being of the church, may rise to a high level of importance and involvement from the church.

Connect Historical Context and Culturally Appropriate Nomenclature

While alluded to earlier, it is absolutely necessary for the researcher to understand the impact of unethical research on people of color and faith. This history with unethical research is embedded in the experiential framework of many African Americans and, consequently, many African Americans feel an obligation to protect the race from future obstructive and destructive people, including researchers. This sense of self-protection may also be true for clergy who feel wedded to certain theological positions and gender-based church norms to maintain a patriarchal structure.

The researcher must be aware of the challenges associated with the self-protective nature of historically oppressed and wounded people, and confront it by including language that is sensitive to the experiences and beliefs of those members of the Black Church who may potentially participate in the study. The language used should be simple and direct. It should demonstrate knowledge and interest in the community, an awareness of unethical research previously conducted, and an appreciation for current beliefs. Researchers should use language that is generally accepted within the cultural group and is considered acceptable to use by people who are not members of the cultural group. For example, if conducting research in Black Christian churches, it may be important to demonstrate and interject spiritual and religious concepts found in the biblical scriptures, gospel music, and testimonies. The use of this language that is generally understood within Black Churches, including words like pastor versus priest, demonstrates an awareness of and appreciation for the Black Church culture and may ease the discomfort of many regarding research in Black communities.

Build upon Pre-Existing Cultural Practices

In addition to including culturally sensitive and appropriate language that demonstrates an awareness of the culture, we suggest that it is also prudent to build upon pre-existing norms within the Black Church culture. As with any culture, there are customs and norms that have existed and are evolving. These cultural practices provide points of connection for members of the cultural community and give the research greater opportunity to gather data. Some of the norms in the Black Church include embracing the oral tradition through testimony, preaching, informal conversations, and music; reflecting upon experiences through collective learning (i.e. Bible study and church school) and over group meals (i.e., dinner after church); celebrating leadership and groups on special designated days and through financial gifts; and advocating for the marginalized and oppressed through community service projects and volunteer efforts.

In preparing to conduct a study, we recommend that the researchers recognize the dynamic cultural practices within each faith tradition and each individual Black Church, and use them in formulating a methodological approach. Building upon pre-existing practices may allow the researcher to eliminate some logistical concerns by using normal gatherings as times and spaces for data collection. In addition, building upon pre-existing cultural practices will not only demonstrate a respect for the cultural norms, it may also provide an opportunity to gain a culturally-sensitive perspective by recognizing and even participating in the norms which may subsequently frame how the data is analyzed and presented to the larger community of scholars.

In several of our research projects, we scheduled focus groups immediately after or during post-worship church meals. In other cases, data

was collected in association with designated days like Women's Day and Bible Study days. Structuring our methodology around noted pre-existing practices allowed us to gain a different perspective of the church, participate in the norms, and ensured that more people participated in the research.

Be Cognizant of Time

It is said that "patience is a virtue." This adage is especially true when conducting culturally sensitive research in the Black Church. The process may seem to move much more slowly than anticipated due to several factors, including limited staff to return calls and respond to letters, the pastor's agenda which may not fit with that of the researcher, the formal and informal processes which may contradict one another, the importance of relationship building with formal and informal leaders, the level of comfort and interest of the participants regarding research subject which impacts data collection, and the tendency for programs to begin after the designated start period, which may require a change in scheduled presentations to a different day and/or time. All of these factors will substantially impact the researcher's timeline, necessitating that the researcher practice patience and prudence when planning research.

We recommend that any researcher who is interested in studying the Black Church develop a time frame that includes a degree of flexibility. In the methodological development, consider including more than the anticipated time for cultivating relationships, experiencing the culture, and explaining the details of the study. Also, researchers are encouraged to use their time wisely. Understand that the proposed research project is generally not critical to the mission of the church; therefore, a researcher should use any time that is permitted to make concise presentations which includes allowing time to read and complete necessary forms. Being concise should be the researcher's position unless additional time is granted by the leadership to expand on the details of the study. This awareness of time, merged with a persistent nature that is necessary for any researcher to advance a research agenda, will prove beneficial to the researcher and will yield a higher level of comfort for the participants and a greater response rate for the researcher.

Implications for Social Workers

There are a number of implications for social work practice, policy, research, and education that result from this reflection on research within Black Churches. In regard to social work practice, there remains a clear need for effective culturally competent, evidence-based practice with communities of faith such as the Black Church. This practice should evolve from research that is collected in a methodologically sound and culturally

sensitive manner. For example, the research with African American clergy and the development of the S.T.A.R.T. Model © that evolved from work with the DHSS and NIH grants has been implemented in practice by domestic violence educators. The model focused on being culturally sensitive, and has been implemented in a manner that positively impacts clients and those who are seeking further domestic violence education. Perhaps this process is one to be modeled by others conducting research and practicing in the Black Church.

This article also has implications for policy and social work education. It is imperative for social workers to recognize and teach that data gathered in a culturally competent manner has the potential to provide even more detailed and accurate information which can then be used to guide policy development. Additionally, this information would allow policy makers to more adequately support the allocation of funds designated to address specific issues and impact certain practices related to intervention and prevention. For example, if information from the culturally-sensitive research conducted with Black Churches on gentrification was forwarded to policy makers, perhaps the perspectives of Black Church congregants regarding their church's communities could impact the development of culturally sensitive policies that shift the trajectory of urban communities. With this consideration, it is imperative that social work educators focus on the loop that connects culturally competent research with social work policy and practice.

Finally, consistent with the need for continued emphasis on cultural competence by national organizations, the organizations may want to consider finding a way to measure levels of cultural competence by those within its organization, particularly for those responsible for transferring information regarding cultural competence to others. We recognize that this consideration may be difficult to implement; however, we also believe that this is an important consideration if we are honestly committed to practicing and promulgating the concepts of cultural competence and its link to evidence-based practice, particularly in specific communities like the Black Church.

Conclusion

While the Black Church is not monolithic, there are some similarities we have noted that surfaced in our individual research projects conducted over the past 15 years. In order to increase the possibility that effective and culturally sensitive practices may be implemented in the Black Church and in communities of color where many Black Churches exist, it is imperative that data from this population are gathered in a manner that demonstrates awareness and sensitivity to cultural dynamics. It is our hope that the challenges, barriers, and recommendations presented will further promote culturally competent research that focuses on the Black Church and social work. ❖

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Black Church Members' Perspectives on the Role of the Black Church in the Rehabilitative Process of Juvenile Sex Offenders

Victoria M. Venable

A developing area of research involves understanding the influence of ecological and cultural factors that support the rehabilitation of juvenile sexual offenders. The Black church provides an ideal starting point in this line of research because of the historical position the church has within the African American community. In this exploratory study, content analysis was used to review the written responses of a purposive sample of 167 Black church members from one congregation to identify what role the Black church should play in helping juvenile sex offenders and their families. The results indicate that, overall, church members believe the Black church should provide support. In addition, participants indicated that there is a strong need in the church for further education, training and collaboration with professionals and other authority figures. Church members also held parents and the home environment responsible for the offending behaviors. Considerations for church policy development and implications for social work practice are discussed.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System indicates that offenders under the age of 18 are responsible for approximately one of every five to six sexual assaults (Snyder, 2008). In 2010, youth under 18 were found to have committed 15% of rapes and 17.8% of other sexual offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). Juvenile sexual aggression appears to be a major problem in many communities throughout the United States. Individuals who live in those communities are requiring stricter legislation and policies in schools and neighborhoods to help keep vulnerable individuals safe. Schools and

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playgrounds are protected, but few have considered what types of protection are needed within the walls of churches.

The church has played a major role in helping African American families deal with life stressors and crises (Berg, Choi, Kaur, Nollen & Ahluwalia, 2009; Obasi & Leong, 2009). As a result of the historical position the church has held within the African American community, religious representatives are often the first individuals notified about personal crises, such as sexual offending behaviors committed by a church member. Due to significant issues with mistrust for systems like the criminal justice, child welfare, and the police, African Americans are less likely to seek formal assistance to address sexual aggression committed by or against a family member (Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2010). The pastor or minister is likely to be the first non-family member who is notified about the situation. This is likely due to the fact that emotional and spiritual support for African Americans is gleaned from the church. Some churches may also offer non-spiritual supportive resources like legal advising, child care, and educational services to parishioners and community members (Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000).

In a contemporary climate of high-profile sexual victimization and child molestation cases involving church members and leadership, the church's role as a support may have come to be seen as less reliable than sometimes assumed. Sexual misconduct within religious institutions like the Roman Catholic Church has been widely publicized (Burkett & Bruni, 1993), but sexual misconduct in the African American church has only recently gained attention due to high profile cases such as the scandal involving Bishop Eddie Long's mega-church in Atlanta, GA. The church's willingness to address the needs of members who display sexually aggressive behaviors may have been impacted due to the increased visibility of these issues.

How are African American church members responding to allegations of sexual abuse within the church? What do they think about the offenders? Without the support and council of the church, where can juvenile sex offenders and their families go for resources and support? The answers to these questions can inform church policies about how to respond to sexual abuse in the church. The implications of this exploratory research could also help develop training for pastors and educational efforts for congregations regarding this issue.

The Role of the Black Church in African American Help-Seeking Behaviors

African Americans are tied to religious institutions as a result of historical and social forces that impact their identity within society. The church has functioned as a stalwart force pushing against slavery and Jim Crow laws since the early church was formed. Historically, African American communities' strongest leaders were religious representatives who were

typically more educated than the other church members (Adkinson-Bradley, Johnson, Sanders, Duncan, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). These ministers, like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others, were able to garner relatively more tolerance from Whites in authority and therefore position African American issues in a prominent spotlight. Due to the strong historical role that the African American church has held within the community, there is a naturally enduring relationship between the families and individuals who make up the African American community. Billingsley and Caldwell (1991) found that 84% of African American adults identify as being religious and almost 70% of these adults disclosed that they are members of a church body. In addition, survey research has found that 9 out of 10 Black Americans indicate that the Black church has a positive influence on their lives (Taylor et al., 2000). Members of the various African American churches were historically able to get their civil, legal, and personal needs met through the institution's resources.

African Americans tend to rely heavily on their pastors or church members to address many emotional and personal needs (Hardy, 2012; Perdue, Johnson, Singley, & Jackson, 2006). There is long standing evidence in the literature that supports this assertion. In 1981, Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka found that 39% of Americans who are in crisis address their concerns with a member of their affiliated religious institution. For African Americans, it is likely much more attractive to go to their local pastor, minister, elder, or deacon rather than a traditional mental health worker. These findings were confirmed recently in a study by Hardy (2014) which found that African American Christians were likely to turn to pastoral counselors on issues relating to marriage and bereavement. Diala et al. (2000) notes factors that impact service utilization for various racial groups include financial capability and fear of stigmatizing diagnoses. There are also attitudes and perceptions that lead to cultural mistrust for potential clients of color. Cultural mistrust has been found to be a significant barrier to engagement with mental health services (Willimas, Yu, & Jackson, 1997). Specifically, Nickerson, Helms, and Terrell (1994) conducted a study using 105 Black college students and found that greater levels of mistrust for White counselors was associated with lower levels of service utilization. These results support Terrell and Terrell's (1981) theory of cultural mistrust that posits that Black people have developed a deep-rooted suspicion for Whites, especially those in authority because of an extensive history of racial mistreatment (Nickerson, Helms, & Terrell, 1994).

Formalized mental health and community-based services are not utilized by African Americans to the same extent as informal services that may be offered through the church (Berkel, Armstrong, & Cokley, 2004; Conner, Koeske, & Brown, 2009; Giger, Appel, Davidhizar, & Davis, 2008). Structured support groups and counseling appear to be associated with higher levels of stigmatization for African Americans in crisis which

means that they are more likely to turn first to other informal and familiar supports, like the church (Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2010; Thomas et al., 1994). Well-developed trusting relationships can make utilizing clergy over formalized services more attractive. The literature indicates that African Americans who sought out clergy first were less likely to follow-up with formalized services (Taylor et al., 2000). Individuals who utilized primarily this source of assistance, typically informal, were also found to have greater satisfaction with the services as compared to others who turned to other sources when experiencing emotional problems, death or illness (Neighbors, Musick, & Williams, 1998).

The African American church often functions as a safe-haven and tool for coping with life stressors for African Americans. Members rely on the collective identity of the African American church experience represented in the music and worship to derive a sense of peace and empowerment (Adkinson-Bradley et al., 2005). It is also suggested that church members are given opportunities to organize and exercise democratic powers in a spiritual setting which further empowers the individual (Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998). Collective prayer and spiritual support are believed to be important factors for African American church members and are likely related to the significance of the congregational church body to the individual member (Allen, Davey, & Davey, 2010). An assumption could be made that African American families of juvenile sex offenders might expect to turn to the church for the types of support that many Black families need during times of crisis or difficulty.

The Juvenile Sex Offender

The juvenile sex offender population is heterogeneous and complex. These youth come from all backgrounds, racial/ethnic groups, and socioeconomic classes. Juvenile sexual offenders are typically defined as youth between the ages of 12 and17, who have come to the attention of the authorities for allegedly engaging in abusive and/or prohibited sexual behaviors, ultimately leading to adjudication by the court system (Bumby, Darling, & Talbot, 2009). Although the legal definitions for criminal sexual behaviors vary depending upon a state's legal code, the kinds of offenses committed by these youth typically involve hands-on offending behaviors that could include forcible sexual contact or statutory rape. Hands-off offenses like indecent exposure or making explicit sexual comments are also committed by these youth.

Much of the research concerning juvenile sex offenders has failed to focus on the systems and environments in which these youth function, instead focusing on the impact of treatment on sexual aggression and long-term recidivism outcomes (Gretton, McBride, Hare, O'Shaughnessy, & Kumka, 2001; Kemper & Kistner, 2007; Letourneau et al., 2009 , Miner,

2002; Parks & Bard, 2006; Reitzel & Carbonell, 2006; Seabloom, Seabloom, Seabloom, Barron, & Hendrickson, 2003; Waite, Keller, McGarvey, Wieckowski, Pinkerton, & Brown, 2005). Additional research has focused on providing descriptive information about the population, their offenses, and precipitant factors (Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, & Kaplan, 1987; DiGiorgio-Miller, 2007; Zakireh, Ronis, & Knight, 2008).

Offending behaviors within this population are quite diverse. Some youth choose to offend on young children and some on pubescent-peer aged victims or adults (Oxnam & Vess, 2008). Whether or not aggression or physical harm was utilized to commit the offense is a characteristic that can be used to differentiate between groups of juvenile sex offenders (Hunter, Figueredo, Malamuth, & Becker, 2003). One commonality is that the victim is often known to the offender, either as a relative, family friend, or associate (Greenfeld, 1997; Lieb, Quinsey, & Berliner, 1998; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This is true for both adult and adolescent sex offenders. The familiarity helps to reduce resistance and the likelihood that the victim will disclose the abuse. The close, intimate relationships that church members often share illustrate an ideal context for sexually abusive behaviors to occur and possibly go unreported.

Understanding how members of the Black church respond to the issue of juvenile sexual aggression can be helpful when attempting to gain insight into how perpetrators of abuse are treated in the Black church environment. The literature to date has not considered how race and religious affiliation impact a person's attitude toward juvenile sex offenders, their treatment amenability, and their families. Social attitudes towards juvenile sex offenders continue to be overwhelmingly negative among the general population (Valiant, Furac, & Antonowicz, 1994; Wnuck, Chapman, & Jeglic, 2006). Many high-profile legislative and media efforts drive negative social reactivity. Some of this negative sentiment stems from the fact that the public sees these youth as very similar to adult sex offenders (Sahlstrom & Jeglic, 2008). Research has found that the public feels that adult sex offenders are a negative, high risk criminal population (Quinn, Forsyth, & Mullen-Quinn, 2004). This causes a form of social stigmatization that leads to loss of social supports, employment, housing, and assaultive attacks by others (Tewksbury, 2005). For juvenile sex offenders, this association often contributes to beliefs that these youth have high recidivism rates and an inherent deviant sex nature. The social stigma associated with being a juvenile sex offender or being their relative, especially for African Americans, could increase the need for support and assistance from the church. For instance, church members' choices regarding sexual aggression among youth in the church could largely impact whether abusive behaviors are ever openly acknowledged and how the behaviors are addressed by the family.

The purpose of this research project was to understand what role a group of Black church members felt the church should play in addressing

the needs of juvenile sex offenders and their families. Specifically, church members were asked about their views on juvenile sex offenders and if the church is an appropriate setting to assist the families of these youth.

Research Design and Methodology

The results of this study were gathered as a part of a larger mixed methods research project. A purposive or targeted sampling approach was used in this study (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). A large African American church in the Midwest was selected for inclusion in the study. The church was a part of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The participants for this study were male and female African American church members who were at least 18 years of age.

The Seventh-day Adventist church has a large national membership of over one million congregants. The church is highly organized and has a highly developed structure of programs and services available for members. The majority of research involving Black churches has primarily focused on several major denominations: Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal (Holt & McClure, 2006). Since the Adventist church has been historically under-represented and excluded from religious studies focusing on African Americans, it was ideal to investigate this denomination in order to bring new contributions and unique insights to the literature.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study and the desire to employ a culturally sensitive research approach, this study targeted a relatively small geographic area. This allowed the researcher to be more available to the church leaders and have more personal contact for follow-up questions. The church was contacted through phone calls to the pastor. Once church leadership agreed to participate in the study, the church directory was used to identify adult members of the church and mail surveys to their homes.

In this study, conceptual content analysis was used to analyze the data provided from the open-ended questions that were included in the larger survey packets. Conceptual content analysis is a form of content analysis that focuses on word counts and the presence of themes or patterns within the text (Berg, 2001). Both the latent and manifest content of the data were analyzed in this study. According to Berg (2001), the manifest content reflects the elements of the data that are actually capable of being coded. This would include the actual counts of the amount of times a word or phrase appears in a text. The latent content focuses on more subtle, abstract data. Analyzing the latent content requires the researcher to interpret underlying meanings drawn from the messages of the participants. In this study the manifest content was used to determine frequencies for words. Analysis of this data was done following the eight coding steps for conceptual content analysis outlined by Carley (1990) and Palmquist (2011).

Findings

Ultimately 167 individuals agreed to participate and filled out a survey that included several open-ended questions regarding the etiology of juvenile sex offending behaviors and the role of the Black church in rehabilitating these youth. The sample was primarily comprised of women (72.6%; n=114). Race and ethnicity were divided into four different groups. The largest group, 62.9% (n=105), identified as African American/Non-Hispanic Black. There were 22.8% (n=38) of participants who indicated that they were African/African Nationals and 12% (n=20) indicated that they identified as West Indian or of Caribbean heritage. The questionnaire gave examples such as Jamaican, Haitian, or Trinidadian. The smallest group of participants, 2.4% (n=4), identified as Hispanic Black. Table 1 provides information on the participants' demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Church Members

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Church Members				
Variable Name	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
Age				
18-49	14	9	46	29
50-93	28	18	65	41
Ethnicity				
African/ African National	13	8	24	15
African-American/Non-Hispanic Black	22	14	75	47
West Indian	6	4	13	8
Hispanic Black	2	1	2	1
Education				
Less than bachelors	16	14	57	50
Bachelors and higher	26	23	56	49
Previous Childhood Experience with a JSO				
No	29	19	77	50
Yes	14	9	33	22
Years Attended Church				
0-20 years	5	3	23	16
21-40 years	17	12	33	23
41- 60 years	11	8	42	29
61- 80 years	3	2	10	7
81 and above	0	0	1	0.7

The Role of the Black Church

The results of the content analysis using data from the open-ended questions are included in Table 2. The responses were separated by gender and based upon whether or not the participant indicated that they had a prior experience with a juvenile sex offender.

Table 2: Content Analysis of Open Ended Questions

			Counts				
Category	**Subcategory**		**Males**	**Females**	**Total**	**Males with prior experience**	**Females with prior experience**
Attitudes Towards the JSO	Beliefs about who these youth really are	positive words (i.e. adolescent, child victim, person, individual)	1	22	23	0	0
			13	35	48	1	3
			7	9	16	1	0
			1	9	10	0	5
			3	1	4	0	4
		Total	25 (25%)	76 (75%)	**101**	2(2%)	12 (12%)
		negative words (i.e. juvenile, offender, sex offender)	9	18	27	6	8
			19	21	40	5	7
		Total	28(42%)	39(58%)	**67**	11(16%)	15(22%)
	The origin of offending	positive (i.e. media, tv, television, internet, movies, pornography, society, "need role models", "lack of guidance" sin, devil, satan, peer pressure, choice of friends, fitting in with others, abuse (sexual, physical)	12	24	36	5	5
			5	1	6	3	0
			1	1	2	1	0
			4	12	16	0	11
			0	8	8	0	0
			15	11	26	5	7
			20	28	48	6	9
		Total	57(40%)	85(59%)	**142**	14(15%)	23(25%)
		negative (i.e. parent's fault, absent father, home environment, "lack of support from parents", mother, home, single parent, brain, mental, hormones, "something they've seen before," poor impulse control, impulsive)	39	42	81	32	32
			1	1	2	1	0
			0	1	1	0	0
			3	3	6	2	0
			2	0	2	0	0
		Total	45(49%)	47(51%)	**92**	35(52%)	32(47%)

Table 2 Continued: Content Analysis of Open Ended Questions

			Counts				
Category	**Subcategory**		**Males**	**Females**	**Total**	**Males with prior experience**	**Females with prior experience**
The Church's Role		positive (i.e. help, support (listen, role model, advocate, prayer, bible, treatment, nonjudgmental, safe, money, education, resources, Pastor)	19	18	37	5	17
			16	28	44	5	13
			4	25	29	1	5
			1	7	8	0	0
			13	46	59	5	12
			0	2	2	0	0
			9	10	19	0	9
			9	6	15	1	4
			8	7	15	2	3
			2	7	9	2	1
			2	6	8	0	1
			3	7	10	3	2
			11	8	19	2	7
		Total	97(35%)	177(65%)	**274**	26(9%)	74(27%)
		negative (i.e. nothing we can do, "don't know," "outside the church," "keep a distance," guarded, watched)	0	0	0	0	0
			0	1	1	0	0
			0	2	2	0	0
			1	1	2	0	0
		Total	1(20%)	4(80%)	**5**	0	0

In response to the question about the role of the Black church, the vast majority (96.8%, n=307) of words that respondents used reflected positive ideas about programming within the church. Respondents used the following words most often: "help" (n=37), "treatment" (n=59), "support" (n=44), and "pray" (n=29). Words that reflect a desire for training, education and collaboration with professionals were also used regularly (11%, n=29).

Related to the role of the church, women used more positive words (n=177, 65%) than men. In addition, women who had previous experience with a juvenile sex offender provided more positive words (n= 74, 27%) regarding how the church should engage these youth and their families than men in this study. In addition, neither women nor men who had historical interactions with a juvenile sex offender provided any negative words that described this relationship.

In analyzing the latent content regarding responses to the church's role, respondents overwhelmingly provided content that reflected support for some form of programming in the church to help these youth and their families. Statements that illustrate these sentiments are provided because it is suggested that when analyzing latent content, there should be corroboration by independent evidence documented by at least three examples of the interpretation (Berg, 2001). The following three participants indicated:

> Black churches should be a place where resources are provided, that is the church should direct people to resources.

> I think the black church should lead juvenile sex offenders and their families to professionals that have a Christian perspective.

> …Involvement and programs where children are shown and given normal loving relationship that have nothing to do with sex. A loving and caring church family does wonders for a child.

In spite of the positive findings regarding church involvement, there was a (n=5, 1%) presence of words that were coded as negative to describe church members' concern about openly including these youth into their church community. When looking at the latent content of these types of responses, it appears that the respondents felt fear and anxiety toward knowingly allowing individuals with these types of problem behaviors into the church. Examples of the latent data include:

> I do have concerns about privacy and people who have problems and other members are unaware. For example, if you send your child to the bathroom or a program and your child is left unattended and a juvenile offender attacks or offends your child it probably could have been prevented

> but often times you don't know members or their history and you have to be careful even in the church. I would not want a juvenile offender alone with my kids.

> I think the parent should keep her child's illness out of the church, take him to a doctor or some medical person who knows how to deal with children for professional help.

> All juvenile sex offenders should be guarded or watched on church property or any property for the matter at all times. The majority of treatment should be the responsibility of the government system as they can provide treatment in jail for them.

The Etiology of Offending

Next, analysis was done on participants' responses to the question about why these youth offend. Analysis of the manifest content indicates that positive words were used 60% (n=101) of the time when church members were asked to describe these youth. The youth were largely categorized as being an adolescent or a child instead of as an offender who requires harsh punishments.

Women were found to use more positive words (n=76, 75%) than men. Of interest, both women (n=15, 22%) and men (n=11, 16%) who had previous experience with a juvenile sex offender used more negative words then positive words when referring to juvenile sex offenders in their responses. These findings do not support the results of the previously discussed quantitative analysis, which indicated that prior experience encourages positive attitudes toward these youth.

Analysis of the manifest content indicates that the church members used words that represented positive associations of etiology that either reflected the youth or the family system in 60% (n=142) of the responses. The frequencies were highest in this category among women (n=85, 59%). The words used most frequently fell within the categories of "media," "peers," "sin," "peer pressure," and "abuse." Interestingly, the negative words used most often involved parents and the home environment (n=81, 88%). Individuals with prior experience (n=67, 64%) used more negative words then those who did not have historical interactions**.** Examples from the participants' responses are as follows:

> Environment how and where the adolescent has been raised, family values are the values being enforced or taught in the home, what is the adolescent doing their spare time.

> The environment that the adolescent was reared in was unstable, insecure. The lack of a strong relationship with a higher power and the lack of accountability. The child witnessed abuse.
>
> Environmental input: tv, movies, video games, examples from adults in the family or acquaintances. Lack of proper parental guidance. Too many children left alone without supervision.

Discussion

In summary, the results of the analyses to answer the research questions of this study indicate that church members from a primarily African American congregation have positive attitudes towards juvenile sex offenders. The results of the content analysis indicate that church members believe that the church should play a role in the rehabilitation of juvenile sex offenders.

A Place for Prayer and Education

Church members in this exploratory study strongly supported the idea that the Black church should have a prominent role in the rehabilitative process of juvenile sex offenders. The responses indicated that this support could either be provided by the church or as a result of referral efforts made by the church. Church members reported that it would be helpful to collaborate with professionals to assist families in linking with outside, formalized services. Church members also felt that any services that may be provided within the church (i.e., counseling services rendered by pastoral staff) should only be done so after education and training were provided. In addition, church members reported feeling that if these services were to be effective there had to be significant efforts to ensure confidentiality was upheld and privacy was maintained. There were only minimal concerns expressed by church members about allowing youth with sexually aggressive behaviors into the church. These findings would seem to support the assertion that individuals who might have known a youth from this population in the past would be likely to have positive attitudes toward him, and therefore would assist the youth in obtaining an intervention.

Shame and Blame

Church members in this study used more positive words than negative words when describing the juvenile sex offender. Church members categorized using terms that appeared to emphasize the humanity of the

individual versus the deviance of the behavior. Participants most often used words like "adolescent" or "child." This would indicate that church members still recognized these youth as people and would seem to support their positive attitudinal perspectives. Additionally, such words also suggest that the church members identified the juvenile sex offender as being separate from the adult sex offender population.

Church members seem to feel the etiology for the youth's sexually aggressive behaviors was more likely a result of home life and parenting issues than society and peer pressure. This would suggest that although church members do not have overwhelmingly negative feelings toward these youth, they do feel that it is a lack of appropriate upbringing and parenting that contributed to the aggressive behaviors. Although attitudes toward the etiology of offending was not specifically the focus of this study, it is possible that these church members are more critical of the parents of juvenile sex offenders than the actual youth. These types of attitudes could contribute to a lack of support provided to parents. Parents would possibly be less likely to rely on the church for support or to disclose the problem behaviors. These findings would suggest that, although church members have primarily positive attitudes toward these youth, there is still some level of blame held against parent(s) for development of the sexually aggressive behaviors.

The reaction of the church members in this study could possibly be an example of courtesy stigma, or secondary stigma. Courtesy stigma is experienced by individuals who are associated with someone stigmatized due to lineage, affiliation, or association. This phenomenon is primarily experienced by the parents, siblings, or spouses of individuals with a variety of conditions or characteristics. Most of the research on courtesy stigma is related to psychiatric disorders, like schizophrenia (Corrigan & Miller, 2004; Ostman & Kjellin, 2002; Struening et al., 2001). There has also been research on this construct with issues such as ADHD, HIV, mental retardation, disruptive behaviors, and substance abuse (Birenbaum, 1992; Corrigan, Watson, & Miller, 2006; Koro-Ljungerg & Bussing, 2009; Mason, Berger, Ferrans, Sultzman, & Fendrich, 2010). There appear to be three major themes reported by families experiencing courtesy stigma: shame, blame, and contamination. These themes are comprised of a variety of concepts, like prejudice and discrimination, which occur due to a set of widely endorsed stereotypes in society (Corrigan & Miller, 2004). Although additional research will need to be conducted in order to further explore courtesy stigma within this area, the data from this exploratory study appear to support some preliminary thematic development.

The most apparent theme in this study was blame. Blame is often a result of believing that the parent is responsible for the child's choices and that the child's issues are a result of poor parenting or a parent's inherent flaws. In research that looks at courtesy stigma related to mental illness and substance abuse, family members report being held responsible for their

family member developing the disorder and being incapable of keeping their family member from relapsing (Corrigan, Watson, & Miller, 2006; Fernandez & Arcia, 2004; Norvilitis, Scime, & Lee, 2002). These forms of blame have been distinguished as offset responsibility (blaming the family member for the person relapsing) and onset responsibility (family member blamed for person developing the problematic behaviors) (Weiner, 1995).

Limitations

As with any study, there are several limitations that may have impacted this research. First, there is the fact that members of only one church were selected for inclusion in this study. This group was likely homogenous on several of the variables. Ideally, additional churches or sampling of African Americans who do and do not attend church would likely introduce more variance within the sample and encourage richer findings. The sampling method also limits the generalizability of these results. The findings can only describe what the specific participants' beliefs are about the African American church and juvenile sex offenders. Asking participants to mail back the surveys to collect data also poses some methodological limitations. It is likely that only the most compliant church members actually took the time to fill out the lengthy packet and return it to the researcher. There is a chance that this type of church member is more likely to have positive attitudes than those who did not choose to participate in the study. It is also acknowledged that there are inherent errors or biases associated with self-report instruments. There was also a disproportionate number of female versus male participants in this study who indicated that they identified as African American. Although the study focused on surveying Black people, there was a significant under-representation of participants who represent other sub-groups that are part of the African diaspora.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study highlight several important issues related to social work practice. First, practitioners must be willing to identify external systems, like the Black church, and integrate them into treatment approaches with juvenile sex offenders when appropriate. This would include creating relationships with Black churches so that members can become more aware of what resources are available in the formalized systems of care.

One way to encourage relationship development would involve opportunities for social workers to provide training and education to the church community. The participants in this study indicated that the Black church should play a major role, but that appropriate training and assistance was needed. Social workers should work with churches to provide informational sessions about sexual abuse and some of the risk factors associated with

the manifestation of these behaviors. In addition, practitioners could utilize church sites as community meeting locations where question-and-answer forums are held to develop a stronger community.

Another pathway to developing relationships involves creating a bi-directional exchange of information between social work practitioners and the churches. Social workers should work to obtain information from church members relevant to developing culturally competent treatment strategies for African American clients. If cultural competence is going to be achieved, a social worker's ability to internalize the client's unique experience and create adapted models of practice is crucial. Although there is a significant gap in the literature that focuses on culturally competent practice with juvenile sex offenders, there is some indication that culturally adaptive models of practice could be developed by looking to treatment approaches used with minority clients who have other problem behaviors like substance abuse.

A second important implication for social work practice involves creating a dialogue with clients about the role of religion and spirituality as a form of coping. As a profession, social work has openly accepted the relationship between the individual and the environment from a theoretical perspective. Unfortunately, this acknowledgment has often stopped in practice at the doors of religion and spirituality. While social work practitioners have largely been found to identify with some form of spiritual or religious orientation, most of that identity manifests on a personal level and does not become integrated into work with clients (Sheridan, 2004). It cannot be denied that there are crucial ethical concerns that arise when attempting to incorporate religious expressions into practice with clients. What is most important is for social workers to recognize that discussions and activities related to spirituality and religion should not come from the practitioner's value system but that of the client. In fact there are ethical concerns that arise when social workers cannot or will not create a dialogue that validates a client's religious or spiritual experience. Inevitably, this inability leads to significant problems with cultural incompetence.

Social workers who are sensitive to the potential supports that are available within communities and informal networks can strengthen relationships with clients and enhance the change process. In addition, social workers exemplify a respect for human relationships when they recognize that there are strengths within the many systems that make up our social environment. Religious and spiritual institutions likely provide contributions that are as significant as supports from secular arenas.

Canda and Furman (2010) discuss the relationship between social work ethics and core values as they relate to religion and spirituality. These authors take each of the six core values and relate the principles encompassed within each of them to spiritually sensitive social work practice. Most related to the discussion in this study are the values of Service, Dignity and Worth of the Person, and Importance of Human Relationships.

According to Canda and Furman (2010), service is related to spiritually sensitive practice as social workers who are committed to helping those who are in need should be willing to make sure any religious and spiritual supports identified by clients are respectfully included in the helping process. The value of dignity and worth of the person is relevant to this discussion because it encourages social workers to use respect for clients as whole beings. Many clients utilize their religious or spiritual practices to cope with life stressors and as a source of empowerment. Canda and Furman suggest that a social worker cannot uphold this value without acknowledging the totality of the client, which includes recognizing the potential influence of religion and spirituality on the client's life.

The aversion to incorporating religious or spiritual factors into social work interventions may also contribute to poor relationships with churches and religious entities that often make up a significant portion of a client's social system. Social work practitioners must become more comfortable creating a dialogue with the religious and spiritual components of clients' lives. If this does not occur, then clients may feel less spiritual or religious validation and therefore would be less likely to establish trust and engage in services (Kvarfordt & Sheridan, 2007).

Social work educational curriculum must also be willing to incorporate content that discusses skill development around incorporating religion and spirituality into practice. This is especially true if a social worker is going to be effective in treating an African American juvenile sex offender and his family. ❖

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Troubled Waters: The Black Church in Mississippi, A Single Subject Case Study

Jerry Watson & Desiree Stepteau-Watson

Using rapid ethnographic methodology, the study focused on the history and current responses of a Black Missionary Baptist church in northwest Mississippi to the myriad of social problems facing the African American community in both rural and urban settings. The aim of the study was to uncover and document the history and the role of the church in the implementation of social services and outreach ministries that promote the overall improvement of quality of life and wellness of it's members and the community. The results of this study suggest that the church's social service/outreach ministries are designed, developed, and implemented in ways that purposefully and positively improve and enhance the quality of life church members and residents of North Mississippi and the surrounding areas.

THE SOUTH WAS THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE FIRST AFRICAN CHURCHES. Prior to the Civil War, in the South, permission by slaveowners to allow preaching to slaves relied primarily on the spoken and unspoken agreement that the preached message would not include denunciation of slavery. It was mandatory that preachers not threaten the institution of slavery by inciting slaves to revolt with messages of freedom and liberation. Successful ministers to enslaved Blacks were compelled to be sensitive to the requirements and concerns of slaveholders. Slaveowners allowed religious services only if there was no threat that preaching and subsequent conversion posed no threat to their security, human property, and way of life. If the slaveowners believed preaching endangerd the slave system, religious services were disallowed (Pinn & Pinn, 2002).

Williams & Dixie (2003) detailed the beginnings of the Black Baptist movement during the American Revolutionary era. Throughout this pe-

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riod, the colonialists were fighting to rid themselves of British rule while simultaneously the emergence and rise of evangelisitic churches served as a backdrop for the continuing efforts to eradicate slavery. These critical occurrences provided a vehicle for Blacks to fight for their freedom and the fuel to take control of their religious life by building their own institutions.

Williams & Dixie (2003) describe the early beginnings of the Black baptist church:

> Two significant architects of the independent black church were George Liele and David George, both former slaves and self-educated ministers. Liele, born into slavery in Virginia in 1750, was one of the first blacks to be ordained a Baptist preacher in the United States. Unlike many slaveholders, Liele's owner, Henry Sharp, supported his interest in the ministry. Ordained by the Buckhead Creek Baptist Church in Burke County, Georgia, Liele was commissioned to preach the gospel to slaves on nearby plantations. He eventually gained his freedom and in 1777 helped to establish the first African Baptist Church outside Savannah, one of the first black Baptist churches in the United States. (pp. 24-25)

The emotional connection experienced when the slaves attended Baptist services stemmed from its similarity to their cultural roots. This strong emotional appeal of the worship services, coupled with the spontaneity of religious expression and the Baptists' limited concern for memorizing religious instruction found welcoming ears in the African American audience. More importantly, despite the threat of negative repercussions, some of the preaching by Baptist evangelists was attractive because it sometimes rebuked slavery for preventing humans from fulfilling the will of God. In fact, some Baptists could be found openly in oposition to slavery as an ungodly system of persecution. In some of these religious services, the equality of all persons, whether rich or poor, black or white, was preached. For the enslaved Africans as well as the poor whites, the Baptist church promised and communicated full humanity and democracy, often in disagreement with the unbelievers' world (Pinn, 1998).

Historically and in recent years, African American churches have played a significant role in social reform and human and social development activities. Lincoln (1974) concluded that African American churches have spearheaded or played a significant leadership role in every social change movement within the African American community. Historically, black churches have served as institutional hubs within their communities. As recently as the 1900s, researchers recognized the critical role Black churches filled in tackling the multitude of obstacles facing the African American population (DuBois, 1903; Mays and Nicholson 1933; Thompson 1974; Fulton, 2011).

From its inception, the black church served as a social service and reform institution for its congregants and for the African American community. This spirit of social reform is a lasting characteristic of the seven major historically Black denominations. The Black Church, as an institution, was instrumental in the development of mutual aid societies, schools and colleges, orphanages, homes for wayward or delinquent children, and homes for the elderly. The Black Church is truly a "nation within a nation," as was described by E. Franklin Frazier in The Negro Church in America (1964).

In the seminal work, *Mighty Like A River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (1999), Andrew Billingsley describes how many Black churches have answered the call to pursue both personal and collective social salvation by increased engagement in social outreach activities or minitstries. Billingsley (1999) examined churches across the United States, including studies of 71 churches on the Eastern seaboard, 315 black churces in five states in the Northeast, 320 black churches in five states of the Borth Central region, 80 black churches in Denver, 150 churches in Atlanta, and 100 churches in three rural counties in South Carolina. Billingsley concluded that on the basis of the data collected, there is a widespread acceptance among black churches of the duality of their purpose and mission and a great many urban churches are subsequently engaged in community outreach initiatives and projects. Despite the far reaching scope of this study, Mississippi was not included in addressing the question, "How widespread is this outreach by the black church?"

Admittedly, the story of the Black church and social reform in Mississippi is much greater than this humble undertaking of exploratory and descriptive scientific narrative. This study is but the first brush stroke of a magnificient portrait to be painted over the years to come. However, it is a story that beckons to be told as many of the stories coming out of Mississippi only portray the dark and negative side of life in Mississippi.

While there is a growing body of literature to support that the Black Church has historically been the center of the African American community, the Black church is often stereotyped by "the preacher, the music, and the frenzy," as described by W.E.B. DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Historically, it is well documented that the Black church as an institution played a central role in the development of social institutions within the African American community. Numerous researchers and scholars contend that the factors that made black churches institutional centers continue to operate and serve to sustain black churches' pivotal role within their communities (Billingsley, 1999; Chaves & Higgins, 1992; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Among other things, they maintain that the Black churches remain important establishments that confront and challenge African-American issues by delivering social services. Despite the growing research and literature that can be found on the more general topic area of the Black Church and related sub-topics, very little has been written about the contributions

of the Black Baptist church in Mississippi. This study will be instrumental and hopefully inspirational for future researchers to delve specifically and more deeply into the area of the Black Baptist church in Mississippi. Given the dark past associated with Mississippi, the Black Baptist church offers a light in the tunnel not at the end of the tunnel.

The Brown Missionary Baptist Church in Mississippi

Brown Baptist is Born and Grows

In the early 1830s, Rose Hill Baptist church, the first Black Baptist Church in Mississippi was established in Natchez. Some 50 years later, in 1882, the Brown Baptist church was founded by the late Reverend Harry Body and a group of ex-slaves in Southaven, Mississippi. Like many churches of its kind, in the beginning, the "camp style" services were held in a bush harbor. The bush harbor represented a safe hiding place where worship services could be conducted freely without interruption or fear of reprisal from any outsiders. The first women and men of the church played a key role in creating a spiritually and materially strong foundation for Brown and sustained it with prayers, commitment, hard work, dedication, and charity. They erected a log cabin on this site, a monumental task for former slaves less than twenty years from the shackles and bondage of chattel slavery. Pastor Body and his dedicated team of officers, mothers, missionaries, and members erected their first frame structure on the corner of Swinnea and Stateline Road in Southaven, Mississippi, where the church still remains (Musgrove, 2002). The women of the church, the first church mothers, played a significant role in its growth. They contributed to the building of the first frame church and passed on a legacy of love, labor, and loyalty.

During the 1970s the church experienced significant growth and expanded to a multi-purpose facility with the capacity to acoomodate over 500 people. Tragedy struck Brown Baptist in November 1987, when the building was destroyed by fire. Neighboring churches made their sancturaries available to Brown Baptist worshippers for services for almost two years. In January 1989, Reverend Bartholomew Orr became the eighth pastor of Brown Baptist. The new building was completed and dedicated in May 1989. From this humble beginning has risen a church that its current leader, Reverend Orr, proclaims as "a church with a vision to do God's will, a voice to proclaim God's word, and a determination to do God's work " (Brown Missionary Baptist Church Grand Opening Services, 2006). Currently, somewhere around 4,000 people attend (3) services each week at Brown Missionary Baptist Church (Jones, 2011).

Context: Quality of Life for African Americans in Mississippi

The 2010 U.S. Census reports that Mississippi is 37 percent black, while non-Hispanic whites are 58% of the population. The state claims the largest number of African American elected officials. The sad truth is that the blackest state is also the poorest. Based on the 2010 census data, Mississippi ranks among all states in the number of people living below the poverty line. The records prove that Mississippi is dead last in median household income, fourth in per capita federal assistance, and first in the percentage of its Medicaid program that is funded by federal matching funds, in this case, 76%. Mississippi is at the top of the list in negative indicators and the bottom of positive indicators (U. S. Census, 2010).

According to the American Human Development Project's *A Portrait of Mississippi: Mississippi Human Development Report* (Burd-Sharps, Lewis, & Martins, 2009), several stunning highlights describing the quality of life in Mississippi reveal the shocking truth about life in Mississippi for the entire population in general and life for African Americans in particular. Mississippians have the highest rate of child poverty (31.9 percent), highest rate of infant mortality (10.3 percent), lowest median household income ($35,078), highest teen birth rate (71.9 per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19), highest overall rate of STDs, and the leader in gun deaths in the United States.

Moreover, *A Portrait of Mississippi* (Burd-Sharps, Lewis, & Martins, 2009), tells Mississippi's story of life for African Americans today. African Americans living in Mississippi on average are worse off than most African Americans in other states, ranking next to last, just in front of Louisiana. Taking a step back in time, a black male born today in Mississippi can expect a shorter life span than the average American in 1960. A black woman working in Mississippi currently earns less than the typical American in 1960. When compared internationally, the overall infant mortality rate for nonwhites in Mississippi exceeds 18 per 1,000 births, about the same as Libya and Thailand. The median earnings of African American men are $20,368, and are about the same as those of the typical American in 1970.

Alarmingly, these kinds of disparities in quality of life persist in Mississippi (Burd-Sharps, Lewis, & Martins, 2009, p. 18):

> In Mississippi, on average, whites can expect to outlive African Americans by almost four years, and whites' average personal earnings are more than $10,000 higher per year. Whites are 43 percent less likely to have dropped out of high school than their African American counterparts. Summarizing these three indicators into one composite picture reveals that whites in Mississippi today have a human development level comparable to that of the aver-

> age American circa 1997. African Americans in the state, on average, experience the level of access to choices and opportunities of the average American in 1974. It can be said that whites in the state are a full ten years behind the typical American while African Americans are thirty-three years behind.

Billingsley (1999) reminds us that if we are to comprehend the sources, assets, and resources of the continued success of African American people and their communities, we must consider the churches. Churches like Brown Missionary Baptist are agents of social reform and provide the social support along with the spirituality that keep people going. The current state of affairs for African Americans in Mississippi represent a punishing and unrelenting crisis causing the African American community to turn to their churches and ministers for comfort, support leadership, and direction. Brown Missionary Baptist church has responded and continues to answer the clarion call.

Brown Baptist Church in Mississippi: A Single Case Study

The Rationale and Purpose of the Study

This study provides basic descriptive information about a remarkably active church in North Mississippi in order to answer the question: Is Brown Missionary Baptist Church participating in social refrom, outreach, and social service efforts? The purpose of this study is to describe the social reform, outreach and social service efforts of Brown Baptist church in Southaven, Mississippi. Our aim is to identify social service programs and/or ministries found in this single subject case study that promote the overall and holistic improvement of the quality of life and wellness of Brown's members and the residents of the greater community served by Brown Baptist church.

A review of the literature indicated that very few studies focus on the social reform, social service, and/or oureach ministry roles and activities of the Black Baptist church in Mississippi. Consequently and more specifically, little is understood about the work of these congregations and their struggle to address the social issues burdening the African American community. Additionally, in our experience as social work professors and community social work practitioners in northern Mississippi and surrounding areas, including Memphis and Arkansas, we met several Brown Baptist members who were committed social servants. They appeared to go beyond being enthusisatic believers, but were also committed servant leaders reaching

inside and outside the church by utilizing the human and financial resources and assets of the church. Their dedication was manifested in their actions. Looking closer, we were initially impressed by Brown Baptist's outreach into rural Mississippi, and, simultaneously the heart of the inner city, urban ghettos of Memphis, and rural cities and towns in Tennessee and Arkansas. This research provides an opportunity to explore and describe brown Missionary Baptist church and its use of fatih to improve the social well being of church members and community members alike.

Research Design

The research approach was a single-subject case study using rapid ethnographic methodology. The study focused on the historical and current responses of Brown Baptist Church in Southaven, Mississippi, to the myriad of social problems facing the African American community in both rural and urban settings across three states (Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas). Although these were complex and complicated issues and social responses, the research team possessed neither the time nor the financial resources for long-term research. Consequently, we decided to use rapid ethnographic methodology.

Utilizing rapid ethnographic methodology, known synonomously as rapid assessment methodology, was considered the most effective approach for our purposes (Beebe, 1995, 2001; Hilderband, 1979; Handwereker, 2001). Rapid ethnography is a well-thought-out compressed form of study design that uses an amalgamation of elicitation techniques, archival or document reviews, observations, focus groups, and/or key informant interviews (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Our approach and multiple data collection methods increased our immediate productivity and afforded us the opportunity to validate and verify information through triangulation while completing the project expeditiously.

Data Collection

Accordingly, the rapid ethnographic approach included the following:

1. Introductory and background literature review of the Black Baptist church and its origins;
2. Open-ended interviews (un-structured) to quickly build the relationships and trust needed to go further into the information gathering process;
3. Semi-structured key informant interviews (church leaders, members, and informal church historians) that provided another source of data to collect information about the church history and social service ministries;

4. Brief informal interviews to engage Brown Baptist members to build relationships and establish a presence in the church in order to pave the way to gather information while helping the leaders and congregants understand and appreciate the research being conducted; and
5. A review of church documents and related materials describing the church history and social services outreach programs and activities to further enrich the research team's knowledge and understanding of the social programs and outreach efforts at Brown Baptist.

We initially developed a Survey-Interview Protocol focusing on a range of topic areas including social support/outreach ministries and church history. The survey-interview protocol was designed by the researchers and contained 25 open-ended questions. The outline grouped questions together to allow respondents to provide information regarding Brown Missionary Baptist Church. The study questionnaire included questions about the role of the church in improving the lives of church members and community residents. Other questions asked respondents about the role of social initiatives in helping the church achieve its overall mission, as well as questions about the role of Brown Missionary Baptist Church on impacting larger social systems.

In an effort to honor and respect the rights of the study participants, at the beginning of the surveys and interviews we provided an introduction to the purpose of the project. Guidelines and policies for the approval of the data collection strategies including the survey-interviews as specified by the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human subjects in Research were adhered to and closely followed. An application along with related documentation to conduct the study were submitted to the IRB for review and approval was granted.

Subjects were notified that the study was approved by the IRB and were informed about their confidentiality rights and access to information. Immediately after launching the project, we realized that we needed to make revisions, adjustments, and course corrections to the administration of the survey-interviews. In order to quickly establish relationships with key informants that would facilitate our efforts to collect the information regarding church history and social services/outreach, we would have to alter our approach and pursue a more informal route. As a result, we spent more time on the front end getting to know the members and leaders. We explained who we were and the value and purpose of the study. Historical documents were made available to the researchers by the lead deacon and an elder administrative person. The data collection was conducted over a one month period of time.

Study Participants

Study particpants were selected for their perspectives, expertise, and knowledge related to the area under investigation (Handwereker, 2001). A total of 12 African American Brown Baptist church members were recruited through seven visits to the church, passing out study announcements, and talking directly with members to determine their level of interest in participating in the study, their knowledge of church history, and their awareness of social service/outreach ministries. All of the study particpants were adults between the ages of 30 and 75. Participants included one deacon, an administrative support person, one choir member, an usher, a security person, two physicians, and five bench members. Length of time as members of Brown Missionary Baptist Church ranged from 2-30 years, offering varied views about the church ministries. The survey-interviews were conducted at the church in a safe, confidential, comfortable, and familiar environment to the study participants.

Results

The researchers were provided with materials related to the history of the church, including brochures, fliers, church anniversary promotional booklets, and copies of unpublished church documents. Additional historical documentation was retrieved from internet sites (Governor's proclamation) and newspaper articles. The survey interviews yielded the following results (see Tables 1 and 2). The investigators grouped the 21 social services/outreach ministries into six categories or impact areas: 1) Education; 2) Health and wellness; 3) Economic development; 4) Children, youth, and family services; 5) Social support services; and 6) Community outreach services.

Table 1: Brown Missionary Baptist Outreach Ministry Descriptions

Ministry	Description
1. ACTS Career Center	A career connection site for members and non-members. Provides information about job openings and hiring processes. Assists with resume building, interview skills and internet access. Computer training classes are also offered. ACTS changes lives through job readiness and employment preparation.
2. Business Network	Helps entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs build and maintain professional developmental networks.
3. Care Ministry	Offers assistance to church and community members in crisis situations.

Ministry	Description
4. Charting the Path Health Care.	An asset-based mapping approach to educate and empower members and community residents about health and wellness resources in the community.
5. Christian Leadership High School	A college preparatory Christian leadership school located in Southaven, MS, on the campus of Brown Missionary Baptist.. Challenges students to meet a rigorous body of knowledge with openness, enthusiasm, and a willingness to solve problems. Teaches mastery of subjects and leadership development through execution of creative projects.
6. Connecting Families	An eight-week intensive family support program that seeks to maintain intra-family relationships and strengthen community ties. Services are available for members and non-members.
7. Cradle Love Ministry	The Cradle Love ministry helps pregnant and parenting women access needed health care. Baby supplies are also provided.
8. Excellence in Education	Monitors student academic progress and administers the church scholarship program.
9. Financial Awareness Ministry	Encourages and promotes financial wisdom among members and non-members by teaching basic individual and family financial literacy.
10. Health Awareness	Provides advocacy, information, and motivates to members and non-members. Offers health awareness, blood drives, and community health fairs.
11. Health Insurance Marketplace	Provides health insurance education, applications, forms, technical assistance, and outreach services and resources regarding health insurance.
12. Heartland Hands	Provide emergency food assistance to residents of Desoto County.
13. Lupus Support Group	Offers semi-structured group support to those facing the challenges of fighting Lupus.
14. Military Ministry	Provides support to military veterans and their families by facilitating counseling, advocacy, and referral services.
15. Quilting Class	Strengthens multi-generational connections by teaching cultural arts.
16. Senior Ministry	Provides education, advocacy, and support to seniors 55 and older to address issues that face elders such as transportation, health care, and housing.
17. Small is the new Big	Small semi-structured group meetings to support adults with relationship issues.
18. Spiritual Counseling	Pastoral counseling services to individuals, couples, and families.

Ministry	Description
19. Warm Coats from Warm Hearts	Collects and donates coats to persons in need.
20. Women's Ministry	Provides support to women in addressing issues that are of concern to women.
21. Youth Initiative	A mentoring program for youth in grades 6-12.

Table 2: Social Services/Outreach Ministries and Impact Areas, Brown Missionary Baptist Church, Southaven, Mississippi (2013)

Social Services/ Outreach Ministries	Impact Areas					
	Education	Health & Wellness	Economic Development	Children, Youth, & Families	Social Support	Community Outreach
ACTS Career	X				X	X
Business Network	X		X		X	X
Care Ministry		X		X		X
Charting the Path Health Care	X	X			X	X
Christian Leadership High School	X		X	X	X	
Connecting Families	X	X		X	X	X
Cradle Love Ministry		X				X
Excellence in Education	X					X
Financial Awareness Ministry		X		X		X
Health Awareness Ministry	X	X		X		X
Health Insurance Marketplace		X				X
Heartland Hand				X		X
Lupus Support Group		X			X	
Military Ministry	X		X			X
Quilting Class		X		X	X	X
Senior Ministry		X		X	X	X
Small is the New Big					X	X
Spiritual Counseling		X			X	X
Warm Coats from Warm Hearts	X		X	X		X
Women's Ministry		X			X	X
Youth Initiative	X		X	X		X

Remarkably, 19 of the 21 or 90% of the social service/outreach ministries were categorized as community outreach efforts. Moreover, 12 of the 21 or 57% of the social service/outreach ministries were categorized as health and wellness initiatives. Surprisingly, only four or 19% of the social service/outreach ministries were categorized as economic development efforts. Overall, we found that the social services/outreach ministries were identified across two to five categories with a mean of 3 categories, a median of 3 categories, and a mode of 2 and 4 categories.

Community outreach services included the health and wellness projects. In response to the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), Brown launched the Health Insurance Marketplace. Volunteers were trained by the health Awareness Ministry to assist in the process of finding health coverage that fits the budgetary constraint of applicants while meeting their healthcare needs. Applicants can also determine their eligibility for free or low cost health insurance coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program.

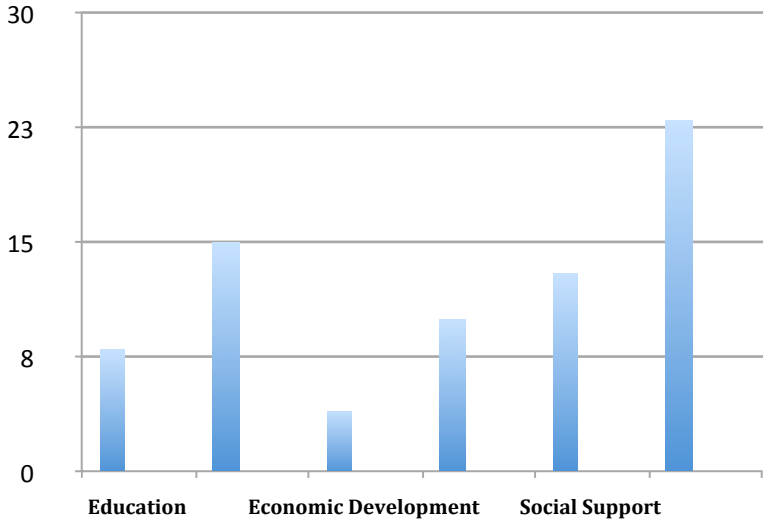
As we mentioned earlier, Mississippians face health problems in larger numbers than many other states. Health and wellness programs are relatively new, surfacing in the last 10 to 20 years. Given the severity and widespread penetration of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, the proliferation of wellness promotion activities are right on time. We identified 15 ministries categorized as health and wellness. Health, and wellness ministries span the landscape from Lupus support groups to the Care ministry. The Care Ministry engages, conducts assessments, and follow-up with the much needed counseling, care, and support for sick and "shut-in" members. To further promote wellness, Brown Baptist also boasts one the largest Zumba classes in the region with well over 100 participants attending classes three times each week. Social services/outreach ministries in the category of health and wellness are purposefully designed and developed to target the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of its members at all ages, beginning with children and continuing through youth, adults, and senior citizens.

There is a strong focus on economic development at Brown Missionary Baptist Church. Programs offered include employment assistance for adults, job search, employment programs for youth, and entrepreneurship targeting small business owners. In our current economic climate, summer employment opportunities for youth are rare. Brown Baptist has a summer employment program targeting youth between the ages of 15 and 19 years old. In order to be eligible for participation in the program youth must have completed new member orientation classes, attend an interest meeting, and present report cards and high school or college transcripts. The ACTS Career Center promotes community economic development by creating a platform for local vendors to present, promote, and sell their goods and services while linking with other businesspersons. Through business showcases and shopping events at the church, members, friends, and families can observe and network with entrepreneurs in action. Brown's economic

development efforts support and promote employment for youth and adults while nurturing and incubating local vendors in their entrepreneurship endeavors (see Figure 1).

In addition to traditional social services, and economic development programs, Brown also offers youth education. Extraordinarily, Brown Missionary Church operates a high school. The Christian Leadership High School (CLHS) is the gem of Brown's education ministries. Located on the campus of Brown, CLHS is a college preparatory school challenging students to master a rigorous body of knowledge while developing servant leadership skills. Using creative projects, integrating technology and social media responsibly and biblically, CLHS students are expected to become lifelong learners, acquiring the knowledge and skills to write and speak effectively while assertively utilizing their God-given talents and values. CLHS partners with parents with the understanding that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:1-4).

Figure 1: Number of Social Services/Outreach Ministries by Impact Areas



Discussion

This study provides descriptive information about a North Mississippi church that offers an array of community, social, and educational services that seek to improve access to basic needs for community residents. The importance of these initiatives cannot be overstated, especially when we consider that 22.7 percent of the population lives below the poverty level

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Mississippi ranks poorly on a number of measures, including economic, health, and education. Brown Missionary Baptist Church has sought to respond to community needs through mission to offer relief to the needy. The community outreach impact area is nearly one-third or 32% of the social services/outreach ministries at Brown Missionary Baptist, extending the reach of the church far beyond its immediate geographic area of Mississippi into Tennessee and Arkansas to members and non-members alike. Health and wellness ministries, programs, and activities account for more than one-fifth of the social services/outreach efforts.

Addressing the social welfare needs of the African American community has long been a focus of the black church. Brown Missionary Baptist Church is an exemplary model of how the church can play an important role in improving community life. From its brush harbor beginnings until now, it is clear that Brown Missionary Church exemplifies how a church can move beyond charitable works, to comprehensive, coordinated service provision.

The descriptive results represent the collective responses of all the interviewees and a summary of the history of Brown Missionary Baptist church found in an assortment of documents. In Northwest Mississippi, Brown Baptist exists as a vibrant and active congregation under the capable and conscientious pastoral leadership of Bartholomew Orr. The synergies created by the church's social service/outreach ministries are designed, developed, and implemented in ways that purposefully and positively improve and enhance the quality of life church members and residents of North Mississippi and the surrounding region. Brown Baptist has expanded to over 40 enriched ministries, a foreign missions team, a church in Ghana, West Africa, and a diverse membership (Who we are, n.d.). This descriptive study is but a humble beginning. There is a strong and realistic need for additional research in the area of social reform, social services, and outreach ministries among Black churches in Mississippi.

Limitations and Strengths

This single-subject case study was limited to the Brown Missionary Baptist church in Southaven, Mississippi, thereby restricting the ability of the investigators to generalize findings or results to other Baptist churches across Mississippi or elsewhere. Another noteworthy limitation was the church's lack of systematic document and archival methods. From all appearances there is no formal historical initiative in place. Furthermore, the time limitations to complete the study were inhibiting, as well as the investigators' lack of financial resources to support the implementation of focus groups. And finally, we were able to have a brief conversation with the pastor, but due to his responsibilities and scheduling, an in-depth interview with them could not be conducted.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this research demonstrate the far-reaching capabilities of an African American church. The study lends credence to the benefits of social welfare involvement and the significant impact on community life that faith-based institutions can have.❖

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Capturing the Spirit: Validation of the Attitudes toward Religious Help-Seeking Scale (ATRHSS) among African-American Christians

Kimberly Hardy

While some instruments may be developed for a discrete research study, others could have significant utility as a tool for researchers and practitioners if they are found to be both culturally and psychometrically reliable measures. The persistence of religion as a central component of daily life for many African-Americans provides a rich opportunity for researchers to develop tools that can be used broadly by clinicians and clergy. Research expediency and cultural neutrality cannot be the hallmarks of measurement instrument design. If the goal of research is to gain awareness of existing viewpoints and desired outcomes among a particular population, it is important to tailor that tool to collect the views and outcomes to the population under study. The results of this study show that the ATRHSS is a reliable measure that can accomplish this goal.

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHERS ARE INCREASINGLY INCLUDING VARIABLES related to religion and spirituality in their research. Inclusion of these variables requires access to data collection tools that are valid and reliable measures of the religious or spiritual phenomena being investigated. Like all aspects of social work practice, attention in social work research must be given to concepts of cultural diversity in the development of these tools. There are, perhaps, few areas of greater cultural diversity than religion where beliefs are separated across theological, denominational, cultural, and racial lines. The Pew Research Center (2015) identified more than 12 different religious traditions in its religious landscape survey. The study disaggregated all religious denominations, traditions, and families to

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provide a comprehensive, representative national sample resulting in the identification of 24 unique denominations just among Protestants which was further divided into three Protestant traditions: evangelical, mainline, and historically Black (Pew Research Center, 2015).

The diversity among Protestants alone suggests that a broad research instrument is not likely to be sufficient for meaningful data collection or the development of corresponding interventions. During the creation of measurement tools, it is necessary to understand the idiosyncrasies of culture, language, and history represented in the various religious groups so that the items correspond to the authentic religious experiences of the intended audiences. For example, according to the Pew Research Center (2015), "churches in the historically black Protestant tradition have been shaped uniquely by the experiences of slavery and segregation, which puts their religious beliefs and practices in a special context" (pg. 22). Despite significant declines in the country's religious population, especially among Protestants, African-Americans remain the most religious racial group in the country (Pew Research Center, 2015). Context determines content so it is vitally important that data collection instruments related to religion or spirituality for African-Americans be developed with their unique historical context in mind (Hardy, 2014).

While the intention of creating a comprehensive instrument for use across a range of religious communities is understandable, there are weaknesses in so doing, such as the use of reductionist language for complex issues, inclusion of imprecise religious terminology, or failure to integrate concepts specific to religious heritage (Davis, Hook, Worthington, Jr., Van Tongeren, Gartner, & Jennings, II, 2010; Hardy, 2011; Lukwago, Kreuter, Bucholtz, Holt, & Clark, 2001; Masters, Carey, Maisto, Caldwell, Wolfe, Hackney, France, & Himawan, 2009; Rubin & Babbie, 2008; and Slater, Hall, & Edwards, 2001). Any of these weaknesses can lead to inaccurate responses or unanswered items rendering the instrument contextually unhelpful even if it is psychometrically sound.

Unfortunately, a review of the social work literature evidences the frequency with which surveys and questionnaires are not informed by any religious group's history, beliefs, language, culture, or practices. The articles in this special issue of *Social Work & Christianity*, however, demonstrate the importance of understanding the lived experiences of African-Americans through social, cultural, and religious lenses. The authors all used concepts and variables that were intended to capture African-Americans' experiences of social issues through a specific cultural and religious framework. The richness that fills their pages is due, in large measure, to their decision to empirically capture the spirit of the communities they studied in a manner that was authentic to their personal experiences.

There is precedent for utilizing measures designed to demographically contextualize research results, especially regarding attitudes toward help-

seeking. Nickerson, Helms, and Terrell (1994) found that African-American students with higher levels of mistrust toward white counselors were less likely to utilize college counseling centers. Tata and Leong (1994) found that, among other variables, level of acculturation played a significant role in the attitudes of Chinese Americans toward seeking psychological help. Mackenzie, Gekoski, & Knox (2006) explored the relationship between age and gender in their study on the underutilization of mental health services for older adults and men. Soorkia, Snelgar, & Swami (2011) also explored attitudes toward help-seeking among South Asian college students with variables related to Asian culture, values, and ethnic identity. Each of these studies, and many others, were intentional in addressing the impact of race, ethnicity, and cultural beliefs/norms on their attitudes toward seeking help in times of distress and each of them found these variables to be significant predictors of those attitudes. Each of these studies also had to utilize multiple instruments so that all of the phenomena being investigated could be captured comprehensively in the absence of an existing scale to capture it holistically. Finally, while each of them utilized the Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help scale (ATSPPH) (Fischer & Turner, 1970), none of these studies focused specifically on the impact of religion or spirituality. Instead they reduced it to a demographic variable if it was present at all. Instruments focused on specific racial or ethnic groups had to be amended if the scale was not normed on the population being studied (Soorkia, Snelgar, & Swami, 2011).

Regarding religion and spirituality more specifically, Scott, Agresti, and Fitchett (1998) studied the psychometric properties of the Spiritual Well-Being Scale with psychiatric patients. While 19% of their sample identified as African-American, none of them identified as members of the historically Black Church. Additionally, the scale was not designed to ascertain the impact of one's spirituality on the preference for and likely use of particular care providers—religious or non-religious. One scale to capture the holistic nature of these phenomena is warranted.

The Attitudes Toward Religious Help-Seeking Scale (ATRHSS) was designed specifically to measure the intersectionality of race, religion, and stigma associated with African-American Christians' help-seeking. Because of the absence of tools such as the ATRHSS, researchers are often left to combine multiple instruments that capture some aspect of each phenomenon being studied. This requires that researchers make inferences about associations across scores on the various measures (Hardy, 2011). Completing multiple instruments is also time-consuming and tedious for respondents, especially if the instruments seem, in their estimation, to measure disparate phenomena. Consequently, shorter instruments are typically more useful (Weinbach & Grinnell, 2001).

Purpose: Factor Structure and Internal Consistency of The Attitudes Toward Religious Help-Seeking Scale (ATRHSS)

The purpose of this paper is to report on the factor structure and internal consistency of a scale designed to measure African-American Christians' attitudes toward religious and non-religious help-seeking for serious personal or mental health issues. A reliable scale to measure African-Americans attitudes toward help-seeking has the benefit of being rooted in the cultural understanding of religion for African-Americans as well as being psychometrically sound. Existing scales have varied widely in their measurement of attitudes toward non-religious help-seeking with some instruments including few items, if any, to capture some element of race or faith – religiosity or spirituality (Elhai, Schweinle, & Anderson, 2008; Fischer & Turner, 1970).

Methods

Instrument

The ATRHSS is a three-section instrument designed to measure the attitudes of African-Americans regarding religious and non-religious help-seeking for serious personal problems. Part II of the survey explores respondents' preferred source of help during times of crisis related to a list of issues/problems (for further discussion and findings see Hardy, 2014). Part III of the survey gathers demographic data related to age, gender, type and frequency of religious activity, and denominational affiliation. The focus of this paper is the psychometric properties of Part I of the survey, Religious Help-Seeking. Respondents are given a set of statements related to various aspects of the religious help-seeking relationship. A Likert-style set of responses are provided ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4) with higher overall scores indicating a stronger preference for religious help-seeking from one's pastor.

Psychometric Tests

Several psychometric tests were performed to determine the internal consistency (reliability) and factor structure (principal components analysis) of the ATRHSS. If a scale has internal consistency it means that the items that comprise the scale are accurately measuring the concepts it was designed to measure (Pallant, 2006). While there are several ways to determine scale reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used for the ATRHSS. Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which, by convention, should be 0.7 or above (Pallant, 2006), is commonly used in social science research to determine instrument reliability.

The ATRHSS was also subjected to a factor analysis, a statistical procedure which reduces redundancy among items on a measure by using correlations to determine which items are grouped together on discrete components (Weinbach & Grinnell, 2001). Factor analysis and principal components analysis are similar statistical tests and produce similar results, but the latter is preferable during scale development and was used for the ATRHSS (Pallant, 2006).

Participants

The ATRHSS was administered twice and subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) and internal validity testing each time. For both administrations of the instrument, potential respondents had to be African-American members of any Christian denomination and over 18 years of age. The first sample (n=116) completed the survey electronically. The majority of the respondents were women (68%) between the ages of 26 and 33 years old (45.5%). Thirty percent of the sample completed an undergraduate degree, 44.5% completed a graduate degree, and 16.4% completed a post-graduate degree. They were active members of their churches, having reported attending Sunday services three or more times each month (35%) and Bible Study either once per month (37.3%) or three or more times per month (35.5%). Twenty-five percent identified as Baptists.

The second administration took place during Sunday services at eight churches in a socioeconomically diverse, predominantly African-American county in Maryland. Respondents completed paper/pencil surveys that were distributed with self-sealing envelopes that they deposited into locked metal boxes after the service was over. The second sample was much larger (n=616). Women still represented the majority of the respondents at 72% (n=431) while men were 28% (n=168). The respondents were much older in the second administration with 75% being 41 or older (n=416) and 11.5% being between 34-40 years old (n=64). Forty percent of the respondents completed an undergraduate degree (n=177), 23% completed a graduate degree (n=105), and 5% completed a post-graduate degree. Eighty-six percent of the respondents attended weekly services three or more times each month (n=494) and of the 62% (n=361) who indicated that they attended Bible Study, 60% attended three or more times each month (n=235). The overwhelming majority of the respondents identified as Baptists (84%; n=476) or Methodists (7%; n=41), which is consistent with the denominational affiliation of African-Americans in the Pew Research Center (2015) study.

Findings

Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the ATRHSS was obtained after each administration of the survey to determine the internal reliability. The first administration produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72, which exceeded the .7 typically required by convention to determine instrument reliability (Hardy, 2011; Pallant, 2006), thus indicating good internal reliability for the measure. The instrument was subjected to a principal components analysis (PCA) (the results of which are discussed in the next section) and used in a replication study to retest the instrument. The reliability of the scale decreased after the second administration, producing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .59 on the 15-item measure, likely due to variance across the samples. The Corrected Item-Total Correlation scores were low for three of the items, which were then removed. Two of the removed items suggested respondent discomfort with having a pastoral counselor who was either significantly younger (no. 6) or significantly older (no. 10) than they were. The third item (no. 12) suggested a preference for anonymous pastoral counseling akin to a crisis hotline. Removing these low-scoring items resulted in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73 on the revised 12-item measure, indicating good internal reliability.

Principal Components Analysis

Following the first administration of the ATRHSS, a factor analysis was conducted using a PCA extraction in SPSS Version 21. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were performed to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The KMO was 0.719, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.6, and the Bartlett's Test was statistically significant ($p = .000$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hardy, 2011; Pallant, 2006). The factor analysis uncovered five components with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 that explained 25%, 13%, 8%, 8%, and 7% of the variance respectively, but an examination of the corresponding scree plot indicated a clear break after the third component (Hardy, 2011). Table 1 illustrates the results of a parallel analysis that randomly generated a data matrix of the same size (15 variables x 116 respondents), reducing the data to only two components with Eigenvalues over 1.0 (Hardy, 2011).

Table 1: Comparison of Eigenvalues from Factor Analysis and Criterion Values via Parallel Analysis – First Administration

Component number	Actual Eigenvalue from PCA	Criterion value from parallel analysis	Decision
1	3.700	1.666	Accept
2	2.003	1.502	Accept
3	1.194	1.389	Reject
4	1.163	1.289	Reject
5	1.077	1.193	Reject

A Varimax and Oblimin rotation of the variables helps to simply the factor structure of an instrument by identifying which variables contribute the most to the variance in the scale from highest to lowest. With this information, interpretation of the factors comprising the instrument and their most relevant variables can be determined. Both rotations were performed, but only the results of the Varimax rotation are reported because the Oblimin rotation's correlation matrix revealed no strong correlations (those over .3) among the variables (Hardy, 2011). The highest factor loadings from the Varimax rotation across the two-factor simple structure of the instrument (for first administration factor loadings, see Hardy, 2011) were used to interpret the latent variables of the two components. Component 1, interpreted to reveal the latent variable, Significance of Faith, had a factor loading of 0.760 and explained 28% of the variance. Component 2 was interpreted as revealing the latent variable Pastoral Disapproval with a factor loading of 0.777, explaining 28% of the variance. Jointly the two components explained 44% of the variance.

The same set of psychometric tests was conducted on the ATRHSS after its second administration. Once again the KMO exceeded the recommended value at 0.765 and Bartlett's Test was statistically significant (p = .000), indicating suitability for factor analysis. The PCA extraction revealed three components with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 that corresponded to the break on the scree plot. The three components explained 28.6%, 15.1%, and 8.6% of the variance respectively and 52.5% of the variance combined. A parallel analysis was conducted (12 variables x 616 respondents) to generate a correlation matrix of the same size that produced two components with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Table 2), both of which were retained. The two retained components explained 23.2% and 20.5% of the variance respectively and 43.8% combined.

Table 2: Comparison of Eigenvalues from Factor Analysis and Criterion Values via Parallel Analysis – Second Administration

Component number	Actual Eigenvalue from PCA	Criterion value from parallel analysis	Decision
1	3.436	1.234	Accept
2	1.824	1.174	Accept
3	1.041	1.128	Reject

A Varimax rotation revealed the presence of a simple structure with the variables showing strong loadings on two factors (Table 3). Based on the highest factor loadings, the latent variable interpretation was retained from the first administration, suggesting that the instrument is reliably measuring the same constructs despite demographic differences across the two samples.

Table 3: Varimax Rotated Loadings of All Variables – Second Administration

Survey Item	Pastoral Disapproval	Significance of Faith
1. I would not use PC because he/she might think I don't trust God to handle my problems.	.831	
2. I would not use PC because he/she may think I'm weak.	.825	
3. I would not use PC because the pastor is so close to God that I would feel judged/condemned.	.712	
4. Some issues are too personal to discuss in Pastoral Counseling.	.579	
5. I would not use PC because I do not think he/she is trained to handle certain issues.	.486	.400
6. A primary reason I would use PC is because my pastor is African-American.	-.401	
7. My pastor is the first person I would reach out to for help with a serious personal problem.		.695
8. I would prefer pastoral counseling for a serious personal problem rather than a therapist.		.666
9. I have considered using pastoral counseling for a serious personal problem before.		.598
10. A primary reason I would use pastoral counseling is because the pastor would understand how my faith/religion impacts my issues.		.593
11. I would use pastoral counseling if I could be guaranteed that my information would remain confidential.		.585
12. I would not use pastoral counseling because I do not trust that my issues would remain confidential.	.408	.491

Discussion and Implications

The psychometric properties of the ATRHSS remained consistently strong across two administrations with two samples of African-American Christians who were socioeconomically different yet equally fervent in their religious beliefs and activities. It is evident from the results of this study that religion remains significant for African-Americans and has an impact on non-religious areas of their lives, including decisions regarding help-seeking during times of crisis. Of particular note was the respondents' concern about their pastor's views of the need to seek help outside of pastoral counseling. African-American pastors are often referred to in the social work literature as gatekeepers for members of their congregation across several health domains, especially mental health (Hardy, 2014; Martin & Martin, 2002; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin & Lincoln, 2000).

The results of this analysis can help social workers and clergy alike understand the depth of African-American Christians' fear of pastoral judgement. Taken together across both administrations, it is also clear that age and socioeconomic status may be valuable within-group differences worth exploring as the factor loadings suggest that pastoral condemnation may be less of a concern for younger members of this community than their older counterparts. Additionally, higher scores on the ATRHSS indicate a stronger preference for religious help-seeking. This knowledge can foster the creation of collaborative relationships between clinical social workers and African-American pastors. Including the ATRHSS in the initial intake and assessment process with African-American clients can not only demonstrate worker culture awareness, but also create a space in the therapeutic relationship for discussion of religious values that may impact the helping relationship and facilitate inclusion of religious practices into the treatment plan.

While the ATRHSS is a reliable measure, it has not yet been subjected to some of the more intense testing to determine validity. Future researchers should seek to determine the specific construct and criterion validity of the measurement.

Having a psychometrically and culturally reliable tool to gather information about any population toward answering any research question is an invaluable resource for social workers. The ATRHSS can now fill a gap in the research and practice literature, replacing the need for multiple measures to capture the relationship between religion and help-seeking for African-Americans. More important, however, is the ability to capture this information in a way that preferences cultural aspects of the religious relationship. ❖

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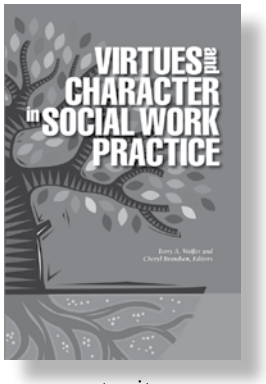
Keywords: Black Church, African American Christians, reliability, scale development

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM NACSW

NACSW invites you to check out our newest book, *Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice* (2015), edited by Terry A. Wolfer and Cheryl Brandsen.



Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

This book is for social work practitioners who, as social change agents, spend much of their time examining social structures and advocating for policies and programs to advance justice and increase opportunity.

A re-publication of the combined Summer and Fall, 2014 special issue of *Social Work and Christianity* (NACSW's quarterly journal), *Virtue and Character in Social Work Practice* brings to light questions about professional identity, relationships, and the ability to thrive and sustain social change through the understanding and development of a virtue framework. This framework combines philosophy, theology, and pedagogical practices to offer a holistic approach to professional development and explores the virtues of charity, faith, generosity, gratitude, and justice in social work practice.

Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice addresses:

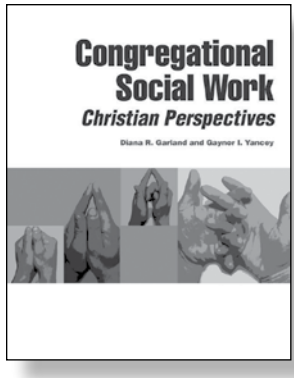
- What **character traits** and **virtues** ought Christians in social work seek to nurture in their lives and work?
- What sorts of **dispositions**, **commitments**, and **practices** should the social work profession seek to instill in social workers?
- What **resources** do Christian educators and trainers draw from to shape a vision for the type of social workers they hope to cultivate?
- What is the **role of the church** in the character and virtue formation of Christians in social work?

The purpose of this book is to explore how to form Christians in social work who love justice, who care deeply about people and their flourishing, who settle for nothing less than doing their work competently, and whose core posture toward their work is one of integrity.

Virtue and Character in Social Work Practice (IBSN # 978-0-9715318-9-5) is 153 pages long, and is now available at NACSW's on-line bookstore for $23.75 - or only $19.00 for NACSW members (plus shipping).

Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives

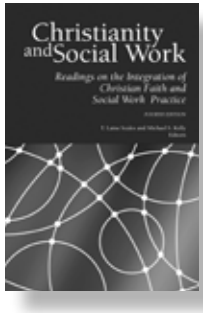
Diana Garland and Gaynor Yancey. (2014). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $39.95 U.S., $31.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



Congregational Social Work offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *Congregational Social Work* shares illuminating stories and experiences from social workers engaged in powerful and effective work within and in support of congregations throughout the US.

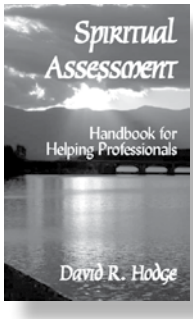
Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith & Social Work Practice (Fourth Edition)

T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly (Editors). (2012). Botsford, CT: NACSW $55.00 U.S., $42.99 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



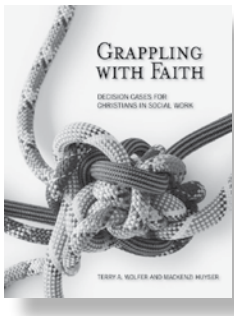
At over 400 pages and with 20 chapters, this revised fourth edition of *Christianity and Social Work* includes six new chapters in response to requests by readers of previous editions. We have included new chapters on issues of sexual orientation, Evidence-based Practice (EBP) as well as an enhanced section on the role of Christianity in social welfare history. It is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, and who desire to develop faithfully Christian approaches to helping. The book is organized so that it can be used as a textbook or supplemental text in a social work class, or as a training or reference materials for practitioners. Readings address a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals
David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW $20.00 U.S. ($16.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



A growing consensus exists among helping professionals, accrediting organizations and clients regarding the importance of spiritual assessment. David Hodge's *Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals*, describes five complementary spiritual assessment instruments, along with an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The aim of this book is to familiarize readers with a repertoire of spiritual assessment tools to enable practitioners to select the most appropriate assessment instrument in given client/practitioner settings. By developing an assessment "toolbox" containing a variety of spiritual assessment tools, practitioners will become better equipped to provide services that address the individual needs of each of their clients.

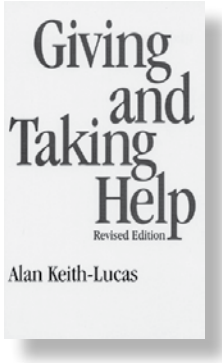
Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work
Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzi Huyser (2010) $23.75 ($18.99 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found in a wide variety of areas of social work practice, provoking active decision making and helping develop readers' critical thinking skills. Each case provides a clear focal point for initiating stimulating, in-depth discussions for use in social work classroom or training settings. These discussions require that students use their knowledge of social work theory and research, their skills of analysis and problem solving, and their common sense and collective wisdom to identify and analyze problems, evaluate possible solutions, and decide what to do in these complex and difficult situations.

Giving and Taking Help (Revised Edition)

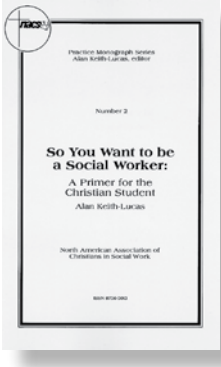
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1994). Botsford CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $20.75 U.S. ($16.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



Alan Keith-Lucas' *Giving and Taking Help*, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. *Giving and taking help* is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and taking of help. It reflects on perennial issues and themes yet is grounded in highly practice-based and pragmatic realities. It respects both the potential and limitations of social science in understanding the nature of persons and the helping process. It does not shy away from confronting issues of values, ethics, and world views. It is at the same time profoundly personal yet reaching the theoretical and generalizable. It has a point of view.

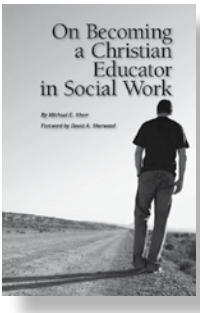
So You Want to be a Social Worker: A Primer for the Christian Student

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1985). Botsford, CT: NACSW. Social Work Practice Monograph Series. $11.50 U.S. ($9.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



So You Want to Be a Social Worker has proven itself to be an invaluable resource for both students and practitioners who are concerned about the responsible integration of their Christian faith and competent, ethical professional practice. It is a thoughtful, clear, and brief distillation of practice wisdom and responsible guidelines regarding perennial questions that arise, such as the nature of our roles, our ethical and spiritual responsibilities, the fallacy of "imposition of values," the problem of sin, and the need for both courage and humility.

On Becoming a Christian Educator in Social Work
Michael Sherr (2010) $21.75 ($17.50 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.



On Becoming a Christian Educator is a compelling invitation for social workers of faith in higher education to explore what it means to be a Christian in social work education. By highlighting seven core commitments of Christian social work educators, it offers strategies for social work educators to connect their personal faith journeys to effective teaching practices with their students. Frank B. Raymond, Dean Emeritus at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina suggests that "Professor Sherr's book should be on the bookshelf of every social work educator who wants to integrate the Christian faith with classroom teaching. Christian social work educators can learn much from Professor Sherr's spiritual and vocational journey as they continue their own journeys and seek to integrate faith, learning and practice in their classrooms."

Hearts Strangely Warmed: Reflections on Biblical Passages Relevant to Social Work
Lawrence E. Ressler (Editor). (1994). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $9.25 U.S. ($7.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Hearts Strangely Warmed: Reflections on Biblical Passages Relevant to Social Work is a collection of devotional readings or reflective essays on 42 scriptures pertinent to social work. The passages demonstrate the ways the Bible can be a source of hope, inspiration, and conviction to social workers.

The Poor You Have With You Always: Concepts of Aid to the Poor in the Western World from Biblical Times to the Present
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1989). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $20.75 U.S. ($16.50 for NACSW members). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

ENCOUNTERS WITH CHILDREN: STORIES THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND AND HELP THEM

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1991). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $11.50 U.S. ($9.00 for NACSW members). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

To Order Publications:

To order a copy of any of the above publications, please send a check for the price plus 10% shipping and handling. (A 20% discount for members or for purchases of at least 10 copies is available.) Checks should be made payable to NACSW; P.O. Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121. Email: info@nacsw.org 203.270.8780.

Social Work & Christianity
2016 Graduate Student Paper Award: Call for Proposals

NACSW is pleased to announce its 2016 Graduate Student Paper Award, with the winning paper to be published in *Social Work & Christianity* and the author to receive an Award Honorarium of $500.

The purpose of this Award is to encourage and recognize excellence in scholarly work by a graduate student on issues related to the integration of Christian faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns that have relevance to Christianity.

We are issuing a call for proposals from current MSW and Ph.D. students regarding projects for which they would like to submit papers in consideration for this Award.

Proposals must be submitted by January 31, 2016. The Student Paper Award Committee of the editorial board will review proposals and authors of proposals that show significant promise of meeting the award criteria will be encouraged to submit completed manuscripts by July 31, 2016. Completed manuscripts will be anonymously reviewed by the Student Paper Award Committee and the Award decision and notification will by made by September 15, 2016. The winning paper will be published in the Spring 2017 issue of *Social Work & Christianity* and the Award formally presented at the following NACSW Annual Convention. Strong papers that do not win the award will be considered for possible publication in subsequent regular issues of the journal.

Proposals should provide a concise overview of project and its relationship to the ethical integration of Christian faith and competent professional social work practice and scholarship. They should include a clear explanation of the proposed topic or research question, the methodology used to address the question, and the intended contribution to social work scholarship and practice. Proposals should be no longer than 400-600 words and should be submitted by email attachment to David Sherwood, Editor, *Social Work & Christianity*, david@sherwoodstreet.com.

Criteria by which submitted papers will be evaluated are:

1. **Topic**: Does the paper have relevance for the integration of Christian faith and professional social work practice or other professional concerns related to Christian faith?
2. **Significance**: Does this paper address an important issue? What is the potential contribution of this paper to the profession?
3. **Innovation**: Does the paper employ novel concepts, approaches or methods? Is it original and innovative? Do findings or conclusions challenge existing paradigms or help develop new methodologies?
4. **Approach**: Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the purposes of the paper? Does the author discuss the paper's limitations?
5. **Implications for social work practice and/or education**: Are the implications adequately articulated? Do the findings or conclusions have broad applicability?
6. **Writing**: Is the writing style concise? Are concepts, methods, and findings clearly explained? Does the submitted version of the paper suggest that the student carefully reviewed the paper (e.g., no grammatical, spelling, typographical errors) and had feedback from others to improve it?

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CALL FOR PAPERS
Religious and Spiritually-Oriented Interventions with Veteran and Military Populations

Special Issue of *Social Work & Christianity:*

Guest Editors: Dexter Freeman, DSW; Lanny Endicott, D. Min., MSSW; and Laurel Shaler, PhD, LCSW

Paquette (2008) described the relentless and unyielding atrocities of war that soldiers of today and yesterday are continuously enslaved to when she said, "The soldiers also bear witness to their dehumanizing behavior of not only killing the enemy but also innocent civilians…The inability to forget what they experienced and what they did in the name of war is the private hell many veterans live with for the rest of their lives" (p.143). Some refer to the battle-wounds that soldiers return with as wounds to the soul as well as wounds to the body. A plethora of studies have been performed over the past decade and have confirmed the effectiveness and significance of spirituality and religion in the healing process of soldiers and veterans who may be seeking to cope with wounds to their body and soul. This special issue invites practitioners, researchers, and educators to submit papers with an emphasis on demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating religious and spiritually-focused interventions with military populations. This special issue of *Social Work & Christianity* seeks to build upon the current knowledge and interest related to acknowledging the role of religion and spirituality in social work practice with soldiers and veterans. This issue is especially focused on the demonstration of spiritually-focused evidence based practices that have shown to be effective in alleviating the negative effects of the trauma that soldiers and veterans have experienced. In addition, this issue will focus on research that supports the integration of religion and spirituality in the treatment of veterans and military populations.

The intended audience for this special issue will be social work practitioners, researchers, and educators although it is understood that the depth and breadth of the papers selected will be designed to benefit any social work professional or behavioral health provider that may be interested in integrating spirituality and religion in their work with a veteran population. Interested authors may submit empirical studies, program evaluations, program descriptions that demonstrate the integration of religion and spirituality into evidence based treatment, and similar manuscripts for publication consideration.

About the Journal

Social Work and Christianity (*SWC*) is a refereed journal published by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) in order to contribute to the growth of social workers in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice.

For this special issue, the editors welcome articles, book reviews, and letters that deal with issues related to the integration religion and spirituality into social work practice with veterans and military populations.

Instructions for Authors

Please submit abstracts and full manuscripts in Microsoft Word by **November 30, 2015** to dexter.r.freeman. civ @mail.mil . Manuscripts should be written according to the guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition). The editors will review manuscript abstracts for suitability for inclusion in the special issue. Pending the outcome of the review, the editors will inform the author(s) of the status of their manuscript submission and all approved manuscripts will receive a full review according to the manuscript submission guidelines of SWC which can be found at: http://www.nacsw.org/SWCSubmission.htm.

Inquiries may be sent to Dexter Freeman (dexter.r.freeman.civ@mail.mil), Lanny Endicott (lendicott@oru.edu), or Laurel Shaler (doctorlaurelshaler@gmail.com).

Reference Paquette, M. (2008). The aftermath of war: Spiritual distress. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 44*(3), 143-145.

North American Association of
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Change Service Requested

North American Association of Christians in Social Work

NACSW's mission is to equip its members to integrate Christian faith and professional social work practice.

Its goals include:

- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.

NACSW
North American Association of Christians in Social Work