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The role and relevancy of the black church in today's society

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THE ROLE AND RELEVANCY OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN TODAY'S
SOCIETY

by

Anthony Fitzgerald Harris

Bachelors of Science in Human Services
University of Phoenix (Las Vegas Campus)
2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Social Work Degree
School of Social Work
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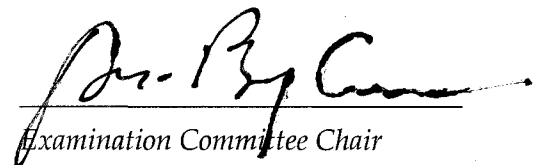
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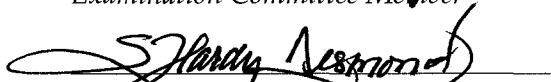
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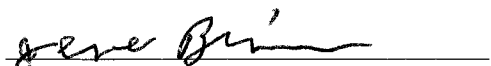
Masters of Social Work


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ABSTRACT

**THE ROLE AND RELEVANCY OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN TODAY'S
SOCIETY**

by

Anthony F. Harris

Dr. An-Pyng Sun, Examination Committee Chair
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The purpose of this study is to gather information about the role and the relevancy of the black church in regards to social issues in today's society. The significance of the study reflects many attitudes of the African-American community. It gives greater insight on the questions surrounding the differing roles of the black church. This study also gives some insight to churches on what the participants say makes the church relevant to them. With this information, churches can become more aware and capable of meeting the needs of the people in the community.

The methods used were an in-depth qualitative interview process consisting of exploratory insights from the participants into what they believed the role and relevancy of the black church is today. Taped interviews, written interviews, note-taking, and open-ended guiding questions were also used. The

sample size of 25 people and five local pastors included people in eight churches located in the Las Vegas area. The people interviewed were African-American males and females age 18 and above, with various education levels, family structures, and backgrounds. Churches were visited that have been established in the black community and black churches outside the general targeted area of the thesis, which is the historical Westside of Las Vegas, Nevada.

The findings revealed that many of the interviewees concluded that the black church in today's society continues to be relevant. What differed was the definition of what the roles of the church were. The findings revealed that several themes and (subthemes) emerged and explored consisting of *independence* (self-sufficiency and education), *the family* (African-American men, single-parents, and youth), *health issues* (HIV/AIDS and obesity), and *traditional vs. contemporary means* (technology, megachurches, and outreach techniques). For certain themes and subthemes, the participants' held opposing views as to what the role of the black church should be and what the role of the black church is in the black community. Differences concerning how to address self-sufficiency, the HIV/AIDS problem, and outreach techniques. The results showed that the black church is so diverse that it does not have just one role but many roles. It can be summed up this way: Church is for everyone, but there are different churches for everyone.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Social work has always been a part of the African-American community. When I was growing up as a little boy at the Vegas View Church Of God In Christ, it was realized that the black church was similar to social work. And just as there are many areas of social work to work in, the black church addressed all of those areas in different ways. Social work can be defined as a profession that promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2000). Although there was not a formal definition of social work for the church to ascribe to, they unofficially served as social workers. There may not have been much education or formal training for some of the leaders or members of the church but it did not stop the people from exercising the inherent gift of taking care of one another.

I could remember growing up and my parents opening up their home to anyone who needed a place to stay until they could get on their feet. When people needed food to eat, the black church was the feeding program. When there was trouble in someone's home with the children, the black church would serve as disciplinarians and help parents raise their children by being surrogate parents. They were called "godparents." Children were not allowed to call adults by their first names. This was a sign of respect among the people, which was what every adult expected to get. The only way they could call an adult by their first name is if it had an "uncle" or "aunt" in front of the name.

The black church served as the moral agent of the community. If the church taught it, it was for the betterment of everyone. Everybody looked out for everyone else. If a child were doing something that they weren't supposed to do, the adult who caught the child had permission to impose discipline. The adult would then turn around and tell your parents what you did and you would end up getting disciplined all over again. When you needed counseling because you were having problems with substance abuse or marital problems or any other kind of problem, the main source of counseling was the pastor. The black church was social work.

The mission of Social Work continues to be a major part of the black church. The black church uses the word ministry to describe the social work that is done but social work and ministry holds the same idea. The word ministry or minister comes from the Greek word Diakoneo, which means "to be a servant, attendant,

to serve, wait upon, minister” (Vines, 2000). So, social work or ministry has always been a part of the church.

Recently, however, there has been a shift in the overall makeup of the African-American church. The church is evolving and changing very rapidly. Within recent years, the black church has been scrutinized regarding its effectiveness in the black community. According to the Las Vegas Perspective (2005), 8.7% of the population in Clark County is African-American, and, according to according to the Las Vegas Community Profile (2005), the population of African-Americans in Las Vegas is 10.1%. Today, according to the Sprint Yellow Pages (January-June 2005), there are over 850 churches and ministries in the Las Vegas Valley. Of those churches, over 110 churches are African-American, according to Churchesinlasvegas.com (2005). Of those churches, there are over 75 black churches and ministries that are found in the area codes of 89101 and 89106 (Ward 5), between Bonanza Road, Martin Luther King Blvd., Carey Avenue, and Englestad/D Street. Ward 5 (area codes 89101 and 89106), however, remain one of the least educated (Table 1) and one of the most economically poor communities in the city. This statistic becomes magnified when you take into account that the median household income of Clark County residents is \$47, 097 (Table 3) (Table 2).

So, the question remains, “Has the black church lost its relevancy and what is the role of the black church in today’s society?”

The trend of change has increased in the Black church and has, consequently, changed the traditional role of the Black church in today’s society.

Many churches are moving away from the historically traditional black denominations, which are the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW), and the Church Of God In Christ (COGIC) (Lincoln, Mamiya, 1990). More people are developing more nondenominational churches to move away from the traditional church. There are, however, many of the traditional African-American denominational churches who have decided not to leave the denomination but rather to make changes from the inside. This has proven to be effective in many areas of the African-American community as there have been improvements made on the whole to improve the black church and the black community.

The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of issues concerning the black church and the black community from the perspective of church pastors and church members as it pertains to social issues in the African-American community. It also seeks to gather information about what roles, or importance, the black church still plays in today's society with both members of the church and non-church members of the community. Has it become outdated relative to the needs of the black community and not just for church members and no longer holds any relevance in the community, more specifically, the African-American community?

interviewed. What differed were the methods or the definitions of the roles of the church. This study is significant because it gives insight of churches on the subjects of what makes the church relevant to them. With this information, churches can become more proficient in meeting the needs of the people.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Background

The African-American church has always been a strong foundation in the African-American community and it is argued to be the lifeline of that same community. Since its beginning, the black church has always played a significant and relevant role in the formation and development of Black attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and community. Its presence has bolstered the overall pride in African-Americans. During the time of slavery, it was the glue that kept black people together. It epitomized emancipation among the slaves in the South as well as the free Negroes in the North. Black freedom was a goal of these congregations as they not only viewed the preaching of the Gospel as an important aspect of the church but they also believed in the human liberation of black people. They believed that it was their duty to defend, protect, extend, and expand black freedom (Fulop, 1997). Black people did not have the privilege to choose if they were going to fight for freedom or not like the white abolitionists did. African-American churches took it upon themselves to fight for the freedom, social, and spiritual well-being of all the people. This outlook on personal duty can explain why the African-American church and the African-American

community possess this special bond. For all intents and purposes, they were one-and-the-same.

Actually, during the first century of slavery, Black people refused to accept Christianity as their religion. They related it too much to the white man and considered it to be a reminder of the oppression that they were in. There was still too much of the African religious experience in them to totally surrender it. Slaves would invoke isolated songs, rhythms, movements, and beliefs in the curative powers of roots and in the efficacy of a world of spirits and ancestors that did survive well into the nineteenth century (Maffly-Kipp, 2000). These were creative ways that the African could combine the traditions of the Mother Land with the traditional teachings of the European style of Christian worship. Soon, religious “awakenings” would take place where slaves would then convert to Christianity (Maffly-Kipp, 2000). After they worked within their own culture to reform the “white man’s religion”, was when Christianity was accepted as a viable religion for black people (Paris, 1985).

The mission of the black church during that time period has always been to amend the relationship between black and white America and to have America prove their Christian talk with Christian practice. Black churches would utilize the same principles as their white counterparts, which were (1) to use the biblical idea of the parenthood of God and the kinship of all people, and (2) the constitutional idea that all men were created equal and created by God with undeniable human rights (Paris, 1985). The church provided for the slave an atmosphere of dignity and worth that was not provided for them by the white

man. The focus was placed upon the individual congregant being loved and valued in the eyesight of God. They compared the suffering of Jesus to the suffering that they were encountering and this belief was perpetuated by the black church. So, this was a social work function for the black church even before there was a social work profession. One of the roles of social work is “to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW Code of Ethics, 1999). This is what the black church has historically done for its people.

“Social Work” in the Early Church

Since its inception, the act of social work has always been a part of the Christian Church. Christian historians account the beginning of the church at approximately A.D. 33 shortly after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ that led up to the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks, which observed the fiftieth day after the Passover. It was celebrated by “Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). When the Holy Spirit fell upon those gathered, they soon began to spread the Gospel throughout the region they were in, and eventually throughout the world.

During this time, however, there were needs of the people that the founders of the early church sought to meet. They first began by creating a community of the believers through fellowship with each other. The people wanted to give to those who were less fortunate and who did not have what was needed to survive. So

the people who had possessions sold their possessions and goods. The money that was raised was distributed among those who were in need. They shared their food with other believers who did not have food and ate with each other. As a matter of fact, the people who had the possessions did not consider anything which they possessed was exclusively their own, but everything they had was in common and for the use of all. The leaders of the church were the ones who were responsible of distributing the goods to those who were in need. As the population of the church began to grow, so did the needs of the people, who were the native Jews and the foreign Jews. Consequently, there were grumblings among the people that their needs were being overlooked and not being met during the daily distribution of goods.

The apostolic leaders of the church found themselves in a dilemma. They understood that the population and the needs of the people were increasing but they also knew that they could not neglect their duties in the church. They decided to create a system and appoint people over the distribution of the goods to help the people get their physical and social needs met while they, the church leaders, continued meeting the spiritual needs of the people. They appointed seven devoted men who were filled with the Holy Spirit, who had integrity, were ethical, and of good character, who would wait on the needs of the people while they continued to preach. This was the creation of the first deacons in the church. So, as the early church began to grow, the population began to grow, and the needs of the people began to grow, the church created a system of

“social work” that would help serve the spiritual, soulful, and physical needs of the people (Acts 2: 41-47; 4: 32-37; Holy Bible, King James Version).

The Black Pastor

The Pastor was and continues to be a very important position in the Black church. The pastor held a high place of respect. He was the final authority when it came to decisions that had to be made. He was not called by his first name and was definitely revered within the Church. The African-American pastor was the mouthpiece of the African-American community. He represented the needs of the people and was the one who would hear from God for them. Historically, the black pastor is viewed as the tribal leader. He is the chieftain who has the final say. He is viewed as father to those whom he leads. To appreciate the black pastors' elevated position among the people that they lead and how they developed bona fide contributions with the same people on matters of public interest, one must understand that the black pastor plays a dual role. In other words, black preachers are socially bilingual (Barna, 2004). They have become leaders of individuals whom they've never met, support for congregants whom they do not lead and influential for people that they do not know. One statistic states that to 63% of African-Americans polled said that the pastors of black churches are the most important leaders in the African-American community (Barna, 1996).

It was not necessarily necessary for a pastor to have higher education in order to pastor the black church. The relevancy of education for a pastor,

however, is becoming more evident as the times continue to change. Today, pastors, who are pastoring effective churches, are learning different strategies to bolster their leadership qualities. Barna and Jackson (2004) named nine strategies:

- The Pastor as an Agent of Change- The pastor is acutely and chronically aware that he is the primary agent of change in his church, and, therefore, must establish himself as an example of a godly model.
- Communication That Inspires- Because of the condition of the people throughout the week, the church is the place to come to get inspired and encouraged to face the next week. The black pastor becomes aware that honing speaking skills will increase his chances of becoming more effective.
- Leadership in a Team Context- Effective leaders has learned how to delegate authority and give a platform to qualified leaders.
- Refusal to Micromanage the Ministry- Micromanaging the church leaders pinches the church from progressing.
- Investment in Developing Effective Followers- Effective leaders are learning how to develop people into becoming good followers.
- Impact Through Collaboration- Leaders collaborate with each other as a gesture of helping reach the common good of the whole.
- The Significance of Longevity- Effective leaders realize the importance of sticking through with their vision. Black people have seemed to grow patience with these pastors.

- Always Leading, Always Growing- Black pastors are becoming more and more comfortable with innovations to gain more knowledge and information, which makes them more effective.
- Building the Adaptable Model- Effective leaders know how to build a firm foundation for growth without compromising its doctrinal philosophy when growth comes.

The black pastor has always been a major participant in the black church.

Their presence in the community has continued to make the church a relevant source in the black community.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This thesis study was approved by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in regulatory statues 45CFR46.110. The protocol has been submitted through the expedited review process and has been approved (See Appendix A, Page 41).

The methods used was an in-depth qualitative interview process comprised of critical insights, taped interviews, written interviews, and guiding questions. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The participants were recruited through going to churches, interviews of members in the black community, and a personal network of relationships.

The in-depth interview method was the most effective as it gave the opportunity to hear more details from the subjects involved. It also gave the opportunity to get up-close-and personal, which helped to get a better feel from the participants as nonverbal signs and communication were able to be read. Guided questions, a tape recorder, and a questionnaire to gather the information was also used. There was a sample size of 25 and five pastors, which included people in churches and in the community located in the Las Vegas area, predominantly in the 89101 and 89106 zip codes. There were two pastors and 10 participants interviewed who worshipped outside of these areas. The

remaining three pastors and 15 participants were found in the general vicinity of the area codes 89101 and 89106 (Ward 5). The pastors were male who ranged from age 35-60. There were twelve (12) males and thirteen (13) females interviewed. All of the participants lived in, worshipped in, or continue to live in and/or worship in these areas. The five pastors and 25 participants were African-American males and females age 18 and above. The participants interviewed had various education levels (8-high school graduates, 4-bachelor degreed graduates, and 13-higher education graduates), family structures (4-traditional families with father, mother, and children, 7-single parent families), and backgrounds (12-participants who were born and raised in the black church, 6-those who were not born in church but now attend the black church, 7-those who left the church).

Churches were also visited that have been established in the black community and black churches outside the general area of the black community, which is the historical Westside of Las Vegas, Nevada. Each participant was given an Informed Consent form (See Appendix B), which gave the participants the option to have the interview recorded or for them to participate but not be recorded. Ten of the participants chose not to be recorded.

Research Questions

Besides gathering historical and background information, four topical questions were used to collect the necessary information. These topical questions included:

1. What do you believe is the role and relevancy of the Black church in today's society?
2. Is the Black church relevant to you today? Why or why not?
3. Is the Black church of today a place that you would look to help you fulfill your needs? Why or why not?
4. What do you believe the Black church can do to be improved?

These questions were supplemented with follow-up questions probing significant elements shared primarily by the participants.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

During the course of the study, various subthemes were identified and themes organized (See Appendix D, Figure 1). These were themes that seemed to be of the most concern to those who participated. These themes concerned independence (self-sufficiency and education), the family (African-American men, single parents, and the youth), health issues (HIV/AIDS, obesity), traditional vs. contemporary means of reaching the people (technology, outreach techniques, and megachurches). Contemporary is defined as pastors and churches that use modern-day techniques and beliefs to minister to the people. Traditional is defined as pastors and churches who continue to minister to the people using traditional church beliefs and methods.

Independence

Self-Sufficiency

One theme that emerged concerned independence in the black community and teaching people how to become self-sufficient above remaining dependent upon any “system” to assist them in improving their lives (i.e., welfare). There is a segment of the African-American community that is adopting an attitude that is

discouraging dependency on a system or on people and encouraging independency. Many church leaders in the Black church is also following this principle. One pastor, Reverend A., who pastors a Black church of approximately 450 members and who considers himself to be a contemporary pastor, said:

Give them a fish they can eat for a day. Teach them to fish; they can eat for a lifetime.

He elaborated by saying:

One of the roles of the Black church in today's society is to get God's image in the man or woman. One of the roles of the church is to be a place where the African-American can understand the idea of who they are in God. By teaching this, people could walk in their God-given authority, and, consequently, not live beneath our privileges. We can be the head and not the tail. We can be the first and not the last. This can happen by teaching people who they are in God. Due to the proliferation of the idea of racism and sexism in the African-American community, we have lost our identity of who we really are in the eyesight of God. This lack of knowledge shows in our behavior towards each other in the community and in society as a whole.

There is a belief that the church is responsible for teaching the people of the community values through the Word of God that will re-enforce the teaching of self-reliance and independence. Kyle, a 33-year-old single graduate student, said:

The ultimate role of the Black church is to teach people that there is a Supreme Being called God. It is also responsible for teaching people values according to the Bible to help them to live. That role has not changed. We must give values to the people. We must reinforce the Word not only with our words, but we must reinforce it with our lifestyles. This will help encourage people that they can live independently and still serve God."

Another pastor, Reverend B., who pastors a church of approximately 1000 members and who also considers himself a contemporary pastor, said:

One of the roles of the Black church is to educate the people how to become self-sufficient. The church should teach independence. Independence brings choices. This is what a wise leader should do. The black church is lacking this.

There is also a sector of the community, however, that continues to need the concrete services offered by the church. They continue to need the African-American Church to help them. They prefer these concrete services to be made available to them by the churches until they are ready to learn how to fish.

Latrice, a single mother of five boys who has a high school diploma, maintains:

The Black church should help people meet their needs. They should also hit the streets to ask the people what they need, and then help them by providing those needs for them.

Sheila, also a single mother of four, said:

We as single mothers just need more help with our needs. It's easy to be told to go to school and get an education, which is great, but I can't just stop working. I have to feed my children. The church being available to help me meet my basic needs would be great. It would help a lot more if the church had more than sermons to give.

Education

Higher education is also becoming a crucial topic for the African-American community and the African-American Church to invest in. Mia, a twenty-something graduate student said:

The church should be responsible for encouraging people to go to school and educate themselves. This can only be positive for the Black community.

Eddie, a graduate student in his mid-thirties, took higher education a step further. He also believed that higher education should extend towards all of the

leaders of the church, which would make them more effective in leading the community. He said:

Higher education should be a prerequisite with our church leaders before they can become church leaders. There is a void of leadership in the Black church. We are not training our leaders for leadership and that is what we must do to help our communities become more effective. Train black people for leadership.

The Family

Black churches are also seeing the need to build up and restore the black family, which will in turn help build up the Black community. African-American men, single parents, and youth were the main issues that came up. Pastor A said:

If we can restore the family, we can restore the community. If we restore the community, we can restore the neighborhoods. If we restore the neighborhoods, we can restore the city. And if we can restore the city, we can restore the nation. But it all goes back to restoring the family.

African-American Men

A major issue within the African-American community and the Black church is to reestablish the father back into the role of the family. Teenage pregnancies and single mother household have crippled the African-American community and black leaders and pastors have recognized the need to restore the family unit, which will in turn strengthen the community. Pastor C, who pastors a church of approximately 200 and considers himself a traditional pastor moving towards the middle-of-the-road, said:

The community has broken down because of the breakdown of the family. This restoring of the family will begin with the restoring of men back into their rightful place of leadership. Once a man can see the value

in himself, he can then see the value in his mate. He can then see the value in his offspring.

The black church has seen the value of going after the African-American man to get him back into a place of leadership in his family. They are realizing that it is becoming a necessity to devise ways to get men interested in coming to church and to develop an attitude that would be conducive to the build up of men. One statistic states that, overall, women of all races are more likely than are men of all races to attend church on a given Sunday (47% to 39%, respectively) (Barna, 2004), and that all women are more likely than all men to be “searching for meaning and purpose in life” (38% to 33%, respectively), (Barna, 2001).

Kyle said:

The Black church is too feminized and this is what men see. They feel like they don't have a place in the church and just won't come. But we need to get black men back into the church.

Eddie was concerned that the Black man is being more and more drawn to the religion of Islam. More specifically the Nation of Islam, which is a more militant form of Islam that moves away from orthodox Islam. He said:

We are losing our Black men to Islam and that within 5 years, Islam will be the number one religion in America. We need to go get our Black men.

The detriment of the Black family has been recognized by black churches. They have begun acknowledging that their role is to help in restoring the family. It has “dropped the ball” in certain areas of the community, the family being one of them. So, this too, has been a topic of discussion within the Black church.

Single-Parents

The role of the church in dealing with single-parent households was also a

revealed topic. Especially for single mothers who struggle with raising their children and who may not have a good male role model for them to follow.

Latrice (previously mentioned), said:

It's important for my sons to see positive male figures. I, as a single parent, need help in raising my sons and I believe that the best role models for them to have are in the church.

Sonya, another single parent of three sons and two daughters, said:

I'm happy when men take some time with my children. I want them to see how a real man is supposed to behave and I want my daughters to know how to be treated like a woman by a real man. I wish the church would be more active in being a mentor to them. I want them to be around good men.

In a twist, Deac, a thirty-five year-old single father of one teenage daughter, shares the same sentiments as single mothers but he wants to see more women in the church take some time with his daughter and teach her some things that he believes that he can't. He said:

I would like to see more women teach my daughter more things about becoming a woman of integrity. She has so many pressures in this life and I act just like a protective father. When I was growing up the mothers of the church would take the girls and teach them how to live pure lives. They would teach them how to become ladies and women. I, as a single father, need that help with her.

Youth

Another dominant theme was the role of the Black church concerning young people. This special group of people has been deemed Generation X by many in society. The Black church realizes the importance of bringing the youth and their children to church. The belief is that the odds increase that when children become adults, they will remember what they were taught in church and become better human beings. Cherise, a single graduate student, recalls her childhood

growing up in the church. She affirms:

The church was the place that I learned how to conduct myself. I had to learn how to sit down and behave myself when I was a child in church. I later got involved with the different ministries in the church and it helped me. It continues to help me in my adult life.

There are some that have not had pleasant memories of church as they grew up as a child. They realized later, however, how even those experiences shaped some of their ideas of what the role of the church is in today's society. Lisa, who is also a graduate student, realized that some of her feminist attitudes resulted in her encounters with the traditional black church. She said:

In the traditional church, they don't allow the women to hold leadership positions and are very restrictive in their dress codes.

She recalled incidences as a child in the church that she now believes helped shape her ideas today. She spoke of her witnessing the black church not allowing women to be leaders of the church. She believes that these experiences have made her a better leader. She said:

My experience with the chauvinism in the church has helped me to develop an attitude of dependence, which helps me to become a better leader. I don't take a lot of mess from people.

The scripture in the Holy Bible that is commonly used by parents is Proverbs 22:6 which states, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (p. 845, KJV)." Andi, who was born and raised in the church, believes that this scripture holds true. She said:

I'm glad that my parents brought me up in the church. Many of the things that they taught me in church as a child I did not want to hear. But I can see now that what they taught me back then stays with me today. So much so, that I raise my own children the same way believing that when they get older, what I taught them will stay with them and they will be

more equipped to make better decisions when they grow up.

Dee, who is now a minister and who was also brought up in the church, said:

Raising children as God instructs parents to do is so important to who they will be as adults. I was raised in the church and when I became a young adult I strayed away from the church and wanted to go do my own thing. But even when I was out there doing wrong I could always hear that little voice in my head reminding me of how I was taught as a child. Today, I am a minister.

Jim, who was also raised in church with his father being the senior pastor but left his father's church, said:

I am raising my children in church. Although I had some disagreements with my father about church, what he and my mother put into me as a child remains with me. I may have fought it as a child but I can now see the benefits of what they instilled into me because I am instilling it in my children.

Other scriptures in the Holy Bible that reinforce this conviction is

Ephesians 6:4, that says, And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (KJV)"; and 2 Timothy 3:15 that clarifies that, "...from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (KJV)." Some statistics appear to back up this contention. For example, overall, 61% of adults who attend church today attended church when they were children, compared to 22% of adult attendees who didn't attend church as youth (Barna, 2001). Another telling statistic reveals that among those parents who went to church as children, overall, 63% were more likely to take their own children to church versus 33% of adults who were not church-ed as children and take their children to church (Barna, 2001).

Many believe that there is definitely a dilemma with our young people that

must be addressed. With the problems of teenage pregnancies, gangs, and even substance abuse and incarceration, Generation X definitely holds an interest with the Black church. Brian, who was raised in the church but does not consistently attend church anymore, said:

The church should do what is necessary to go get the young people. There is way too many problems going on that the church should be addressing. It's time out for the church to continue to act as if the young people are just going to come to church just because. The church should be out in those streets reaching young people at their level.

Some churches have made concerted efforts to meet the needs of the young people according to what they believe their needs are. Some of the concerns of young people today that have been expressed to church leaders was to lead a fulfilling adult life, which included acquiring special skills (e.g. people skills, math skills, language skills); having occupational or career success; gaining more experience in the "real world"; building meaningful relationships; and mastering current technology (Barna, 1999).

Health Issues

The third major theme that materialized was the role of the Black church in regards to social issues affecting society and the African-American community. There were two sub-themes that appeared from the interviews taken. These issues included: HIV/AIDS, and the health problems that result from obesity (diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease).

One of the most pressing issues affecting the African-American community is health. African-Americans are becoming more aware of the importance of

gathering information to take care of their health. However, because healthcare has become such a commodity in the United States, those without the financial resources receive limited care. There have been nonmedical variables that have also had an influence on African-American society. Those variables can include lifestyle, nutrition, education, and racism (Pinn, 2002). The healthcare crisis has now come to the attention of black churches. Churches have now recognized that their role also includes the dissemination of information regarding healthcare education. They are now getting more involved in educating its members on the importance of their health, which includes diet and proper exercise.

HIV/AIDS

The sub-theme of HIV/AIDS in the black church is constantly in the forefront of the problems in the community.

The African-American community is now being decimated by the HIV/AIDS virus in the community and is swiftly becoming an epidemic. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Blacks constitute 37 percent of all those who contracted AIDS through needles and 48 percent of those who contracted AIDS through partners who use dirty needles. These patterns of transmission largely explain why blacks are 27 percent of all people with AIDS, and black women are 52 percent of all women with AIDS. Black men are almost three times as likely as white men to contract AIDS, and black women are twelve times as likely as white women.

Andi, previously mentioned, has some background with informational seminars for business women. She believes that the church needs to be more

active in teaching people, especially women, about the dangers of the HIV/AIDS virus. She said:

I think that it is a shame that we as the church can't seem to get out of the idea of not teaching our people about the AIDS virus. Our women are being killed by this and we want to act like it's not going on. This is wrong and we as the church need to do something about this.

One of the problems that the traditional Black church has when considering this issue is the traditional belief of AIDS and sexuality. Traditionally, the church teaches that HIV/AIDS originated as a disease of homosexual men and through drug use. Both of these are teachings that go against the general doctrines of the church. Many people know, however, that homosexuality is and has been an issue of the black church that is not readily discussed out in the open. Navi, a twenty-something male graduate student said:

The Black church needs to address the HIV/AIDS crisis in the black community. It is no secret that homosexuality is in the church. It becomes the responsibility of the church to inform the community as to how to protect ourselves. It is time for the church to start teaching people about using condoms.

Ram, who is a public school educator, said:

The subject of AIDS is a touchy subject in the African-American church. We've been taught from the onset of AIDS that it is a homosexual disease. We now know that the virus can also be spread in other ways. But the traditional church continues to have this hesitation to really tackle this issue. This needs to change if our communities are going to be healed.

Some controversy has arisen within the church as more and more churches are entertaining the idea of teaching the congregants and other members of the community to use condoms as a way to slow down the transmission of this disease. The reason why this is such a controversy is because some have said

that by teaching the use of condoms, the church is condoning sexual activity outside of the marriage bed. Pastor D is one of the pastors who believes that it is now time for the church to begin the teaching of using condoms. He said:

I know that this is a controversial stance, but I believe that the church should begin to teach the public about using condoms. We are so ignorant regarding how rapid this disease is spreading throughout the community. We are so busy trying to tell people what not to do, it is time for us to teach people what to do. This is not teaching people that it is alright to have sex outside of the marriage bed but it is teaching responsibility if you choose to have sex outside of the marriage bed.

Others argue that this virus is an epidemic that is not going to slow down anytime soon. The dominant teaching of the church continues to be abstinence until marriage but the realization is creeping in that people are going to do what they want to do regardless of what the statistics of HIV/AIDS are sharing, and that the greater need is to instruct the people on how to protect themselves to protect the community and the society.

Regardless of the belief system, Black churches are realizing that there is definitely a need to discuss the dangers of this disease and to talk more openly regarding sexual activity and substance abuse, but more specifically sexual activity, which is a taboo in the church. Over the past few years, organizations have taken the lead in educating churches regarding sexual issues and the response has been positive.

Obesity

The other major theme that arose regarding health issues among the African-American community was the problem of obesity and the diseases that come along with obesity. From 1988 to 2000, there has been an increase of 9.7%

(30.2% to 39.9%) of overweight African-Americans in the United States (American Obesity Association, 2002). This opens the door for various health problems to develop, such as Diabetes (2.7 million or 11.4% of African-Americans over the age of 20) (American Diabetes Association, 2002), cancer, heart disease, which is the number one killer of African-Americans (American Heart Association, 2005), and hypertension. The rate of high blood pressure among African-Americans is among the highest in the world (American Heart Association, 2005).

Maine, who is active in his local church and studying to be a fitness trainer, said:

We have a problem in the African-American community regarding obesity. For years we have eaten the wrong thing out of ignorance and it is costing us our lives. I believe that one of the roles of the African-American church is to educate people on how to eat right so that we can live longer.

Ram, a public educator, said:

Black people need to start eating right. The church can be a very instrumental voice in the problem of not eating right and obesity. You know about how we would eat every part of the animal back in the day, but how now those bad eating habits have caught up to us and it is now killing us.

This sentiment is not lost on others in the black community. Churches are also understanding the importance of teaching the people how to eat better and take care of themselves. Some churches are even having health fairs throughout the community and in the church. Maine said:

One of my goals is to teach the people in the church how to take care of themselves. As I talk to people it becomes very clear to me that we just don't know and that bothers me. So, one of the things that I want to do is educate people on the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise.

Traditional vs. Contemporary

Because of the times changing, there is a gap beginning to form between contemporary churches and traditional churches. Some of the major themes that came out had to do with technology, megachurches, and outreach techniques. Traditional trains of thought desire to hold to the strict teachings and ideals of the church of old. This can include dress code, lifestyles, and customs. This, they believe, will prevent people from straying away from the Word of God, and, therefore, preserve the integrity of the Word of God. Pastor C, previously mentioned, said:

One of the roles of the church is to continue to teach the right morals and values of the Bible. We are living in a world where everybody is defining their own values and it tends to bring confusion to the people. We can see the state of the world today. The church is responsible to not compromise the Gospel of Jesus Christ but to continue to teach what the Bible teaches.

Contemporary trains of thought, however, believe that trying new things is not a departure from the Word of God but is in obedience to the Word of God. They believe that traditional thinking hinders the move of God in the lives of the people. Pastor B said:

We are losing a generation of people because we are trying to put new wine into old wine skins. What worked to reach the people years ago is not working today. The black church need to wake up or we are going to continue to lose out on reaching the people.

Technology

Technology is increasingly becoming a part of the Black church experience.

Many churches are becoming technologically literate to expand the scope of their ministries. Black churches have realized that there is a need for a new type of

ministry that is made up of churches, pastors, and church leaders who are computer and technologically knowledgeable to expand the ministry vision that they believe has been God-given to them.

Churches are understanding that there is a population of people in the world who will never get the opportunity to go to their church or to any church but still have a need to hear the Gospel preached to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Churches are using visual aids during the church services to help people follow the sermon. The internet is now being used among many churches to help spread their information amongst the masses. Electronic bulleting boards, announcements, and other information can now be disseminated to millions of people in a short amount of time. The cost to run a website is also favorably for the Black church because it is fiscally suitable for small churches with small budgets.

Pastor H is a contemporary pastor who pastors a small congregation. He just recently left a major denomination to pastor because he felt that it was too restrictive to what he wanted to accomplish in his ministry. He said:

Technology can only help the development of the church and, consequently, the community. The multi-media ministry in the church can reach people throughout the world.

He is developing multi-media although he has a small congregation.

Arnie, who was also born and raised in the church and has been a member of the black church all of his life, agreed. He said:

We are missing so many opportunities to minister to the people. We have not yet grasped the magnitude of what we can do to reach more people than what we are doing right now. Churches need to catch this vision if we are going to be more of an effective force in the community.

There has been, however, some opposition to the development of technology in the church. Again, the argument comes in to play as to the message being lost due to all of the other things that tend to overshadow the message.

Technology has been viewed by many as unnecessary for the church. There has been resistance from traditionalists who see this as a way for the message to be compromised. The potential for growth is certainly there but many pastors are still fearful of the unknown and don't have a trust or an understanding of technology. Alonzo, a long-time member of the black church said:

I really don't see the need for all of that stuff. What we have been doing for years has always worked. God will send to us whoever He wants to come to church. We don't need all of that other stuff.

Another member of the church said:

Technology is good but we must not lose the message in all of this. If it can reach the people then good, but when we miss the message, then this is not good. This is where I see all of this technology going.

Technology, however, continues to be a growing part of the black church. It is being discovered that technology can help black churches build their ministries and become a force in the African-American community.

Megachurches

In recent years, the megachurch has also become a topic of discussion among the African-American community. In 1991, there were approximately forty-five churches in the United States who were considered megachurches (Ostling, 1991). Now, there are more than 350 megachurches in the United States and the numbers continue to increase yearly. Out of those 350 megachurches, an estimated 35 are now African-American. Megachurches are

defined as those congregations with at least 2000 members (Hartford Institute, 2000). In Las Vegas, Nevada, five churches are considered to be megachurches. Of those five, one is African-American. This church started out with fourteen members in 1990 and now reports a membership of over 3000 members. This is significant because the majority of the 3000 members are African-Americans. This means that black people still have an attraction for the black church. According to the Barna Group (2002), 53% of African-Americans attend church on a given Sunday, which is similar to the rate of church attendance among whites (43%). But the statistics from Barna (2002) also go on to say (2005) that Blacks (50%) are the ethnic group most likely to have attended a religious service in the past week, followed by whites (47%), Hispanics (40%), and Asians (36%).

I was fortunate to interview one of the associate pastors of the church. He shares his experiences as a child growing up in the African-American church. He said:

The Black church of today must invest in doing new things to reach the lost of the world. The role and the relevancy of the Black church in today's society remains a fundamental aspect of the development of the community as a whole.

He believes as well that the traditional Black church is missing a very important part of their ministry by not launching out to explore added ways to minister to the people. He said:

The traditional church is stagnated because they are not using godly wisdom to reach the masses. In turn, we are losing souls. The traditional church has shot down contemporary ways to reach people and we are losing souls.

Other African-Americans believe that the megachurch is a good place to be because it allows them to experience things that they haven't experienced in the traditional black church. Ieasha, a married mother of two who was born and raised in the traditional black church, and now attends a megachurch, said:

I like going to my church (over 2000 members). There are many things that they have offered for me and my family that I wasn't getting from the church that I was attending. There are also trained people here who take care of business here. It was so 'mom and pop' where I was. I like attending here.

Jim, previously mentioned, also belongs to a megachurch, and said:

I like going to this church (over 2000 members). I can bring my family here and believe that they are getting taught what I want them to learn. They have the opportunity for socialization and fellowship with more people and I like that.

There are, however, other lines of thought concerning the megachurch.

Another pastor, Pastor C, who considers himself traditional that moves close to middle of the road and pastors a church of a few hundred, believes:

The megachurch walks very closely to those contemporary churches that compromise the message in order to get people in the seats.

Others don't care for the megachurch because they don't feel connected to the church. Cherise, (previously mentioned) says that she prefers a smaller church because she has a need to feel that "family unit". She also said:

I need accountability when I go to church. I don't find that when I go to the megachurch. I don't know if many people have accountability when they belong to a megachurch. How can they?

Harry, a twenty-something male graduate student, says that he doesn't prefer the megachurch. He said:

I want to know my pastor. I want to be able to talk with my pastor when I need him. I can't do that at a megachurch.

He feels that the role of the black church is also to help develop people in their ministries so that they can eventually give back to the community. He said:

Some people lose why they are at church when they go to a megachurch. They lose themselves and they have no accountability for their actions or for their own individual growth.

Kyle, stated that he believed that the megachurch was just a business. He was a former member of a black megachurch in another city in the south. He said:

The bottom line in a megachurch is the business aspect of it. This is not dealing with the real issues of the people.

So, as this line of questioning continued, it became apparent that those who favor the traditional way of doing things related larger churches with being contemporary and those who favor the contemporary associated smaller, denominational churches with being traditional. One faction, the contemporary megachurch, appeared more interested in reaching the masses, while the other, the traditional church, was interested in preserving the message of the gospel without compromise. They both, however, had the same goal in mind, which was to minister the gospel to the people. They both felt that the role of the Black Church was to first minister salvation and revival to the people. They both took different views as to how to accomplish that objective.

Outreach Techniques

The African-American church is a strong proponent for reaching people. So much so, that in this modern society of the day, the Black church has even bolstered its efforts to reach its young people by implementing more “afrocentric” type programs in their congregations. They have also used the forum of Hip-Hop

to attract the young people to the church.

This strategy has drawn much criticism and much praise from others in the church. One faction of the church believes that the message of the Gospel is being compromised by allowing all the Hip-Hop activity to come into the church. Pastor A, when asked about the Hip-Hop generation in his church, asserts:

It's very difficult to reach this generation. This area of ministry in my church is the most difficult due to the fact that the message for and to the youth is not consistent. For this generation of young people, they are compromising based upon the compromising they're receiving. My methods may be revolutionary but my message must be consistent.

leasha, also said:

There are some things that I don't like about these big churches, though. One of those things is that it seems like people want to put on a show when they come to church. It doesn't seem to be about the Gospel of Jesus Christ but more about how much I can entertain you. It then becomes a competition among each other, which is what I don't like.

Jim agreed:

One thing that bothers me about the church is that it is becoming a lot more entertainment than ministry. I am all for reaching the young people with what gets their attention but there comes a time when they need the meat of the Word of God and not all of that other stuff to keep them in the church because that is what's going to keep them here.

Others believe that the young people are too vital of a cog in the church to not try something new and different to draw their attention and that you can do that without compromising the gospel. Another pastor, who also pastors a large congregation, was in opposition to leasha's and Jim's opinion said:

Strategies should be used to reach out to unchurched youth and to get people that are supervised by spiritual leaders. The church must meet the needs of many other people other than the youth.

Haley, a single graduate student, said:

When I go to church I want to learn something that is going to help out my personal situation. If the church is teaching subjects to help me become a better person then I am for it. I am not for all of the fluff that comes along with it, however.

Another topic that came up was the way the preacher brings the sermon. The overwhelming response was that the people want to hear a word that they can understand and can take home with them for the week. Traditionally, members of the black church know the black preacher as a “whooper and hollerer”, which is someone who preaches with a cadence but does not have much substance in their sermon. Haley said:

I want to go to church to hear something other than all of that noise. Teach me something. Challenge my intellect. Tell me something new. This is what I want when I go to church.

Jim had similar thoughts. He said:

When I was growing up, you did what the preacher said. You really didn't question him but you went along with what he said. Even though he didn't appear to say a whole lot that I could go home and study. Today, people want to know how and why. No longer do people just want to take someone's word for it but they want to know for themselves so that they can apply it to their own lives.

Marsha, who is very active in her church, said:

I like the way that my pastor teaches. I can get a better understanding and apply what he preaches and teaches to my life because it pertains to me and my current life situations.

The megachurch has become something that the community, as well as the black church, must deal with when dealing with the continuing role and relevancy of the black church in today's society.

The traditional and contemporary church are not mutually exclusive. Although the traditional and contemporary church seem to be at odds, each can learn from

the other. The traditional church can learn new and modern techniques for evangelism and ministry. The contemporary church can gain knowledge concerning the integrity and appreciation of the history of the church.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of the study, there were some limitations that affected the total outcome of the research.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations was the number of participants. This was a qualitative study with a small sample size (25 participants, 5 pastors), and, therefore, generalizations may be a concern. Eleven of the participants considered themselves to be traditional members while fourteen participants considered themselves to be contemporary. One pastor considered himself to be traditional while four pastors considered themselves to be contemporary. Future quantitative studies with a larger sample must be conducted to test the theories and insights generated by this study.

Another limitation was the number of participants (10) who volunteered to be interviewed but did not want to be recorded. This limited more in-depth comments from the participants. Ten of the interviews had to be hand written rather than recorded, which may have caused some of the interpretations to be lost.

and to be recorded. This, as well, may have caused some of the interpretations to be lost.

Discussion of Results

The statement to be explored was the role and the relevancy of the black church in today's society. The study has shown that the relevancy of the black church is still very much applicable. What differed was how people defined those roles of the black church. Whether it was someone who leaned on the side of the traditional black church or someone who leaned more on the side of the contemporary black church, the outcome was similar for all participants of the study, which is that the Black church is still very much relevant. The interpretations of those roles, however, are what bring the arguments.

Navi said it best when he said, "Church is for everybody. But there are different churches for everybody." This is what the bottom line seems to be. There are different churches that are for different people. Throughout this study, I have come to conclude that although many people have their own opinion of what the role of the church should be, the black church remains a very strong component in the black community. It is a good thing that people have their own outlook about the church. This causes more variety of opinions among the people, which will cause more people to discuss the differences that go on in the black church. This is necessary.

There appeared, however, to be quite a bit of dissension among the many factions of the Christian community. This can be dangerous because of the

threat of divisions among the leaders of the church. The focus is turned away from the real issues and too much time is spent on issues that maintain schisms.

The African-American community has suffered from the divisions that have already been caused. The problem of African-American men absent from the family has crippled the African-American community. HIV/AIDS have decimated the community and continues to be on the rise. The lack of education continues to keep the black community lagging behind other communities, which supports the notion of ignorance. A lack of education prevents many in the black community to improve their social status, which, again, keeps us behind the eight-ball struggling to try to make ends meet. Our young people are getting out of control and are in need of guidance. It is important for the African-American church to redefine its roles. In addition, it becomes important for all churches to unite in wanting the same things for the community, which is to improve the lives of the people who make up the community. This is made evident when you compare the two richest areas of Las Vegas to the two areas that make up the black community in Las Vegas. With 75 churches in one area in the black community, there should be more economic development and less crime. But the black community continues to be the poorest areas of the city.

Although they were not discussed in this study, issues continuing to arise that should be addressed, such as mental health issues, communal economic development, collaborations, Christians in secular positions, and home ownership.

Social Work Relevance

The mission of social work is to develop the welfare of human beings and help them to meet basic human needs of all people. The black church also seeks to empower oppressed and at-risk people. Through the different ministries incorporated in black churches, these needs of the people can be met. It would benefit the community more if the black church could team up with more of principles of social work to expand our knowledge, and, eventually, our effectiveness with the African-American community. By taking advantage of more opportunities to collaborate with social services agencies around the city, the black church could benefit the community more. There tends, however, to be a lack of trust among the African-American community when it comes to collaborating with outside agencies and organizations. But if we would just look at the plight of our community, we could and would realize that the alliance with social work, or at the least, social work principles, would definitely profit the black community.

Summary and Recommendations

The black church remains an integral part of the African-American community. By studying its current position in the community, it can become more clear as to what areas the black church needs to improve in to be of better service to the entire community and in the society as a whole. This study is recommended to continue because the roles of the church has changed as the society and people have changed. One of the problems is that change is difficult, even for the church. All of the subjects that were discussed in this thesis is just a sample of

the issues that continue to hinder the progress of the African-American community. And with this type of study continuing, it can only enhance the position of the black church in today's society.

It is also recommended that the study continue to give the black church more of a chance to understand what social work in the community is all about, which will, hopefully, open the eyes, and the doors, for many of the church leaders to take advantage of the resources available to them for the community. The opportunities are there for the black churches to become more effective in the community by the accepting of new ideas to reach the masses of people in the community who need the help and still keep its identity as the foundation of the African-American community. The black church is very much relevant in today's times and its roles continue to change and remain the same at the same time.

It is recommended that these previous named subjects continued to be explored and studied. HIV/AIDS, health issues, contemporary issues, the study of families, economic development, and other social issues. The sample size of the population studied must be expanded to get more information about the subjects studied. It would also help the study if different races could be interviewed to extend the boundaries of the research.


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL NOTICE



**Social/Behavioral IRB - Expedited Review Approval
Notice**

DATE: December 10, 2004

TO: Dr. An-Pyng Sun
Social Work 

FROM: Dr. Paul Jones, Chair
UNLV Social/Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board via
the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

RE: Protocol Title: **The Role and Relevancy of the African-
Church in Today's Society** OPRS# 0410- 1405

This memorandum is notification that the protocol for the project referenced above has met the criteria for exemption from full committee review by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in regulatory statutes 45CFR46.110. The protocol has been submitted through the expedited review process and has been approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB review. Work on the project may proceed as soon as you receive written notification from OPRS.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond December 9, 2005, it would be necessary to request an extension 30 days before the expiration date. Should there be any change(s) to the protocol, it will be necessary to request such change in writing through the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at
OPRSHumanSubjects@ccmail.nevada.edu or call 895-2794.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 451037
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1037
Office (702) 895-2794 Fax (702) 895-0805

Research Administration Building 104 M/S 1037
Email: OPRSHumanSubjects@ccmail.nevada.edu
Website: <http://www.unlv.edu/Reserach/OPRS/>
Directions: Campus Map #63

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Department of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

Hello, my name is Anthony Harris and I am from the UNLV Department of Social Work. I am a student in the Masters program of social work and I am the researcher on a thesis project. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. The study is "The Role and Relevancy of the Black Church in Today's Society."

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer questions and/or complete a questionnaire on the proposed subject.

By participating, you will be providing valuable information that will help African-Americans become more aware of the role that the black church plays in society and help churches improve their social services status because the information will be coming straight from the people that we are supposed to be helping.

You will receive an increased understanding of the importance of the church in this society in relations to social work.

Because I will be asking you for your opinion and about your personal history of church and social issues, you may experience some memories that may be unpleasant for you. You may also be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You are encouraged to discuss this with me. I will explain the questions to you in more detail.

If you have any questions about this study or if you believe you may have experienced harmful effects of participation in this study, you may contact Brenda Durosinmi.

For questions regarding rights of research subjects, you may contact the UNLV office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

I understand that this interview may be recorded.

_____ I consent to have this interview recorded.

_____ I agree to participate but not recorded.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

APPENDIX C

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Megachurch- A church that has a membership of 2000 or more congregants.

Social Work- The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.

Ministry or minister- The word ministry or minister comes from the Greek word Diakoneo, which means "to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister"

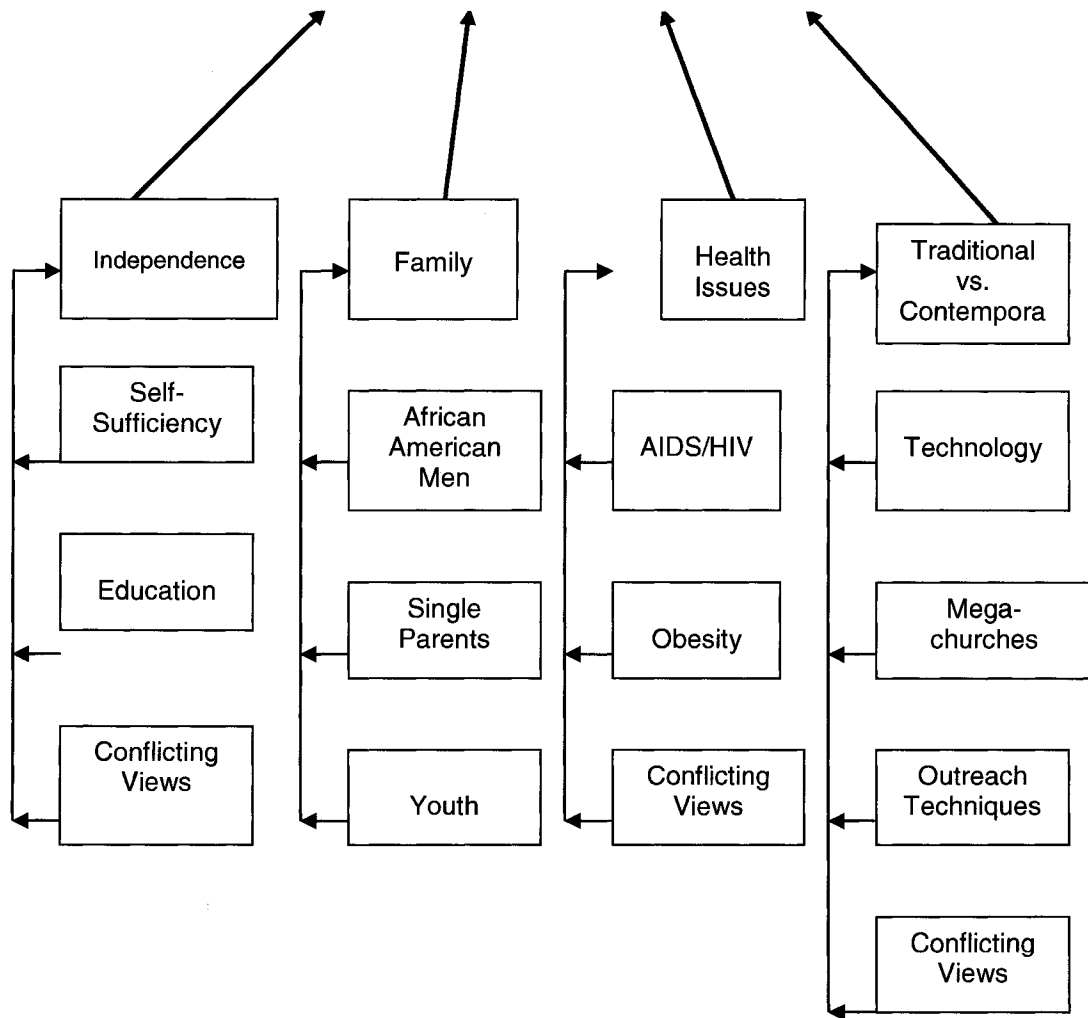
Pastor- The official leader of the church who is responsible for the spiritual and overall functioning and well-being of the church.

Single-Parent Family- Defined as only one parent in the home.

Multi-media ministry- ministry consisting of tape recordings, radio, television, internet, etc.

APPENDIX D

Issues Perceived by the African American Church
Pastors/Congregants and Community Members that
Are Related to Today's Black Churches' Role and
Functions



APPENDIX E TABLE 1

Education Profile of All Las Vegas Residents

Education Profile of All Las Vegas Residents, Residents in the 89101 and 89106 Communities Compared to the Two Highest Educated Area Codes, 89052 and 89141

<i>Education</i>	<i>Percentage (All Las Vegas Residents)</i>	<i>89052</i>	<i>89141</i>	<i>89101</i>	<i>89106</i>
Some High School	7.5%	3%	4%	22%	26%
High School Graduate	23.0%	13%	17%	24%	27%
Some College	33.9%	26%	33%	31%	30%
Completed College	19.0%	32%	30%	8%	9%
Some Graduate	5.2%	8%	6%	3%	3%
Advanced Degree	11.4%	18%	10%	12%	5%

APPENDIX F TABLE 2

Household Income in Percentage

<i>Income (All Las Vegas Residents)</i>	<i>Percentage (All Las Vegas Residents)</i>	<i>Percentage (Area Code 89135)</i>	<i>Percentage (Area Code 89011)</i>	<i>Percentage (Area Code 89101)</i>	<i>Percentage (Area Code 89106)</i>
Under \$15,000	10.7%	1%	1%	43%	40%
\$15,000-\$19,999	4.4%	4%	1%	11%	7%
\$20,000-\$24,999	8.1%	1%	1%	12%	8%
\$25,000-\$34,999	11.5%	6%	11%	8%	17%
\$35,000-\$49,999	19.1%	7%	12%	13%	11%
\$50,000-\$74,999	22.7%	19%	23%	9%	11%
\$75,000-\$100,000	12.1%	18%	5%	2%	4%
Over \$100,000	11.4%	44%	46%	2%	2%
<i>Median Income</i>	\$47,097	\$91,989	\$78,723	\$18,302	\$21,626

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