The presentation of this dissertation represents the final component necessary for fulfilling the requirements of the Doctor of Theology degree from Emory University.

Wynnetta Wimberley

Cracks in the Pillar: A Pastoral Theological Response to Depression in African American Clergy

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An Abstract of
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2014

ABSTRACT OF

CRACKS IN THE PILLAR: A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO DEPRESSION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY

This study utilized the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-IITR) to establish the existence of depression among African American pastors. The work argues that due to the monumental significance of the black preacher in the African American religious tradition, there exists a type of 'cultural sacramentalization' of the black preacher which sets clergy up for failure through isolation, internalized or external expectations and a loss of self-awareness. It shows how the preacher-pew dyad in the black church evolves from the long-standing influence black pastors have held within their churches and communities. Since African American pastors are frequently viewed as a welcomed part of the family (in an 'extended' family system), this kind of familial relationality, often becomes problematic in the context of the black church where themes of dependency loom large among a population that, in large measure, tends to grapple with paternal abandonment issues. As a result, pastors experiencing depression are more prone to encountering relational conflicts within their congregations. This dissertation draws from a communal-contextual model of pastoral theology, utilizing Donald Winnicott's theory of the 'True' and 'False' self to examine how depression emerges from the aforementioned psycho-socio-theological conflict. The dissertation concludes by proposing a method based on the Biblical prophetess HULDAH as a therapeutically sensitive pastoral theological response to depression in African American clergy.

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Wynnetta Wimberley

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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The Problem

The field of pastoral theology, care and counseling currently lacks adequate resources to address depression[1] among African American[2] evangelical[3] pastors, because it fails to provide appropriate methods of evaluation, self-care and accountability among black clergy leaders. The following accounts illustrate just how detrimental the impact of clergy depression can be within religious communities:

This (true) story is told[4] of a pastor who faithfully served his congregation for over seventeen years. However, the pastor had grown distracted, agitated and burned out. He reached out to the elders to relay his concerns, only to be dismissed with 'God's got you Rev. – you'll be alright!' Weeks passed by, eventually turning into months and still, no relief. The pastor became even more weary, distracted and aggravated as he performed his pastoral responsibilities. Finally, the pastor convened the diaconate to request 'time off' for a much needed sabbatical as a result of the ensuing stress; but, to no avail. The diaconate's response was that the church could not afford to have the pastor

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[1] Depression is a complex mood disorder involving the entire psychobiological organism and characterized by persistently negative views of the self, the world, and the future. Depression is characterized by a significant loss of self-esteem and is considered a complex pattern of psychological and physical symptoms – see Rodney Hunter, *(Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling.* 2005. Expand. Ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press*),* p.1103.

[2] The terms 'black', 'African American' and 'negro' will be used interchangeably based upon the texts cited.

[3] Here, I use the term 'evangelical' in a broader sense as a means of identifying those Protestant traditions that uphold a belief in the salvific work of Christ on the cross, religious conversion as a transformative experience and the centricity of the bible for the praxis of faith and life.

[4] It is not uncommon for pastors to receive periodic 'updates' from one another during annual conventions, conferences and/or retreats regarding denominational events (i.e., available pulpits, ensuing retirements, jurisdictional appointments, church scandals, etc.) that occur throughout the year.

take time off during such a colossal building campaign. They encouraged the pastor to hold out until the holiday season, at which time it would be deemed more feasible for him to spend time away from the pulpit. The pastor subsequently sought out the 'Mother Board'[5] asking them to pray for his strength because his duties were becoming exceedingly overwhelming. The Mother Board responded to him with scripture saying, "God's strength is made perfect in weakness!" They then proceeded to remind him of his commitment to speak at their annual mission campaign.

Consequently, one Sunday morning, before a packed congregation, after the shout[6] had fallen, after the offering baskets were collected, after the choir had rendered the pre-sermonic hymn of the morning – the pastor slowly mounted the 'sacred desk' to the hush of a waiting congregation, as he had done so reverently in times past. He positioned his bible firmly on the pulpit and humbly leaned towards the microphone. He turned to the elders saying, "I *told* you that I needed time off and you told me to wait." He turned to the diaconate and said, "I *told* you I was suffocating and you said it wasn't the 'right time' for me to take a sabbatical!" He turned to the Mother Board and said, "I *told* you I needed prayer and you insisted I show up for your auxiliary event!" He turned to the ministers and said, "I *told* you I couldn't take one more phone call, one more hospital visit, one more auxiliary meeting; and you refused to assist me in ministering to

[5] In traditional African American religious communities (Evangelical and Baptist circles), this designated group of seasoned elder women provide insight, counsel and guidance on spiritual matters concerning faith, growth and practice (otherwise known as 'Titus 2' women).

[6] An ecstatic form of religious experience where one encounters the power of God through worship and actively expresses that divine connection through rhythmic bodily movements (i.e., moaning, hollering, dancing, etc.) – when the Spirit manifests, it 'sits on' or cloaks the individual, thereby invoking such a response, otherwise known as 'getting the spirit'.

the people!" "And since you refused to listen to me, as far as I'm concerned, you can all *kiss my* black ____!" And to the shock and horror of everyone in the sanctuary, he turned his back to the congregation, lifted his robe and pulled down his pants, as the leaders rushed towards him in an attempt to cover his nakedness and carry him[7] out.

As a result, he was hospitalized (in a mental health facility) for several months following extensive psychiatric treatment; and, with the love and support of his family and congregation, has since resumed pastoral responsibilities.

Another account is told of an African American evangelical bishop who, during an annual convention, stood before a delegation of pastors demanding that a prominent young pastor (known to be 'on the rise' within denominational circles), submit himself to the authority of the bishop by publicly 'laying prostrate' at the bishops' feet in repentance so the demonic[8] spirit of 'pride' could be cast out of him. This young pastor was forced to profess that he indeed possessed a demon as the bishop proclaimed; and, proceeded to lie at the bishops' feet to beg forgiveness, until the bishop was satisfied the demon had been 'cast out'. This young pastor later recalled that as he looked into the bishop's face upon approaching the podium, he knew there was something psychologically awry. But, admittedly, he did not want to embarrass this great man whom he'd grown to respect and love. So he obediently laid prostrate, repenting and silently praying to himself out of fear. He later learned the bishop had indeed suffered a psychotic break and was subsequently admitted to a mental health facility, relinquishing all ecclesiastical responsibilities for one year.

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[7] For the purposes of confidentiality of the pastor, these pastors will remain anonymous.
[8] This is the realm of experience in which power, usually evil, is felt to be exercised by agents not under direct human control. Hunter, Rodney J. "Demonic." Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Expanded Edition. 2005. p.271.

These are factual accounts of African American evangelical pastors who have gone over the edge. After numerous cries for help, they eventually lost control, suffering emotional breakdowns in the midst of the congregations they were called to serve.

The purpose of this research study is to examine the incidence of depression among African American evangelical pastors.

First, let me begin by clearly stating I think it's important to underscore the respect, admiration and love I hold for the extraordinary institution known as, the black church.[9] I cannot imagine any other place I would rather be on a Sunday morning, than in the heart of a spirit-filled, African American church worship experience. I dare say, anyone who has ever encountered worship in the African American religious tradition, would be hard-pressed to deny the exuberance, vitality and (in some instances) pageantry encountered on any given Sunday morning.

That being said, this is not a type of lashing out at my male counterparts (in ministry or otherwise) due to the seemingly impenetrable walls of the 'good old boys network'[10] which provides ready access to available pulpits across the nation (to males only).

[9] The nomenclature 'black church' is being used here to distinguish worship in the Christian church writ-large from the particularities and socio-cultural nuances which comprise the African American evangelical worship experience (i.e., when the 'shout' falls, the 'call and response' tradition, 'lining a hymn', extemporaneous worship, the hoop, the sound of the washboard being played, etc.).

[10] This alludes to gender discrimination by any association or network of men, prohibiting access to women based upon ascribing to a male-only pattern of professional affiliation.

Conversely, I am writing on this subject out of my particular[11] concern for the welfare of the black church; and, my predilection for the mental health of her clergy leaders. My hope is that this research will generate the beginnings of much needed dialogue around the phenomenon of depression among African American clergy. Unfortunately, similar to the leaders in each of the aforementioned accounts, we, the black church, have historically made haste to 'hide the nakedness' of our leaders (pastors) – oftentimes, to the detriment of the pastors themselves, in addition to the congregations they have been called to serve.

In view of the autonomy of evangelical churches, it has been my experience that the culture of the black church often correlates with the personality of the pastor.[12] I argue that African American evangelical clergy are most able to remain true to who they are when they are self-aware. The task of aiding pastors in overcoming the oppressive reality of depression, involves equipping them with resources that enable them to receive the help they need; and, in ensuring they assume and maintain ethical responsibility through clearly defined parameters of evaluation, self-care and accountability.

The opening accounts detailing pastors in crisis are not foreign to those within African American evangelical circles; but rather, are representative of the startling

[11] I speak from the distinctive lens of an African American (quasi-Womanist) pastoral theologian who practices psychodynamic psychotherapy and prepares clergy and church leaders for contextualized caring with individuals, churches and communities.

[12] African American pastors have tremendous influence in the black church. Wimberly suggests black people view the pastor as being "a representative of God" and he/she is accorded great respect. As such, the influence of black pastor is very broad. In this regard, the personality of the pastor, often dictates the culture of the religious community. See Edward Wimberly, Pastoral Care in the Black Church. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), p.37.

statistics that continue to emerge regarding the state of clergy mental health in the United States.

Clergy and Depression

Trans-denominationally, pastors are suffering with diverse mental health issues in silence and isolation. Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) alone, statistics from the Board of Pensions cite the denomination at risk of declining membership due to poor wellness disciplines among pastors. In their 2006 health analysis report, the Board of Pension's statistics show that approximately 63% of ELCA pastors had risk factors indicating poor emotional health.[13] Among Presbyterian clergy, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (Charlotte Presbytery) reports the leading cause for stress among clergy, are feelings of loneliness or isolation.[14] The Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention to the 216th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., indicates specific issues that impact how pastors experience their work (each of which, singularly or combined, can lead to depression):

1) Inadequate skills in managing what are perceived to be unrealistic expectations of the congregation;
2) Unrealistic expectations of pastors entering a new call, especially their first call; and
3) Feeling lonely or isolated.[15]

The American Baptist Churches, USA responded to clergy burnout within their organization by establishing a wellness program to ensure that cultural values regarding

[13] Clergy Renewal Fund website, http://www.clergyfund.org/index, 4/1/2008.
[14] Ibid.
[15] A Report On Clergy Recruitment and Retention to the 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004, p.25.

pastoral functioning changed among clergy, becoming more central to the pastorate. This wellness program 'followed a yearlong study'[16] by the Ministerial Leadership Commission, proposed that a large number of ministers were experiencing burnout and other significant health-related issues within the denominations' over eighty-nine hundred pastors.

Accounts of clergy mental health issues in the United States continue to emerge. For example, a rise in the frequency of black clergy suicides in the United Methodist Church (in Ohio) over the past few years has been discreetly kept under the radar; but, are only now beginning to surface. Mental illness among smaller religious sects of evangelicals, have more recently come to light. For instance, the expansive growth of online media, in conjunction with communal outrage, have generated new websites[17] identifying several black pastors' (via their mug shots) within the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination, who were arrested on charges of child molestation, sexual abuse and sexual misconduct with church members.

According to the Clergy Health Initiative[18] at Duke Divinity School, programs designed to promote clergy health are only effective if the conditions that compromise clergy health are addressed, namely congregations and denominational governance.

[16]Website: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_12_119/ai_87705906/pg_1 American Baptists Focus On Clergy Health, 4/3/08.
[17] Restore Equality Now website, http://www.renwl.org/six-recent-sex-scandals-with-black-ministers-you-may-not-know-about-and-why-blacks-dont-report-clergy-sex-abuse/7890/, 12/10/11.
[18] Duke Divinity School website, http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/clergy-health-initiative/learning, 11/30/11.

Clearly the stigma[19] of depression in the black community heightens the need for extensive teaching, training, treatment and resources.

In recent years we (in the African American community, specifically) have heard of countless accounts of psychological implosions/explosions experienced by pastors – those otherwise known and/or perceived as 'pillars' of the community. Each charge has come at great cost to the African American community (writ-large), in that, the charges have undoubtedly created a healthy cultural suspicion around the validity, integrity, necessity and, dare I say, safety of the black church as an institution (for members) and of the black pastor, as her heralded leader.

Given the fact that African American churches who are considered to be *relevant,* are those which tend to be more programmatic in nature (i.e., whereby greater emphasis is placed upon communal development through various forms of educational programming), there is growing concern around the 'safety' of the black church today, in view of psychologically imploding/exploding pastors.

Sadly, many in the religious community feel vulnerable. Questions continue to be hurled having to do with the plausibility of the black church as a place of refuge within community. Has the black church become a structural form of religious oppression in her negation of the mental health crises among her leaders? Can she (the black church) potentially ignite the re-traumatization of oppressed individuals by way of violence

[19] African Americans and Hispanics are less likely than whites to obtain mental health treatment from any source, are more likely to delay seeking treatment, and are particularly less likely to receive treatment from medical providers rather than from social service agencies or other sources. See Probst, Janice C. and Sarah Laditka, Charity G. Moore, Nusrat Harun, M. Paige Powell, - "Race and Ethnic Differences in Reporting Depressive Symptoms" *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*. Vol. 34(6), Sept, (2007). pp.519-529.

enacted and/or unleashed from the pulpit (i.e., verbal, spiritual, sexual, psychological, financial, etc.)? Is the African American community safe from harm as it becomes more consciously aware of the implications of depression among clergy?

In exploring the subject of mental illness one can become inundated by the diversity of diagnoses that encompass the field. The DSM-IV-TR[20] refers to mental illness as "a group of brain disorders that cause disruptions in thinking, feeling, behaving and relating. These disruptions vary in their degrees of severity and are sometimes referred to as 'major mental illness,' 'prolonged mental illness' or 'serious mental illness.'"[21]

There are many different types of mental illness categories listed in the DSM-IV-TR with significant disorders[22] categorized as *Mood Disorders* (Depression, Bi-polar Disorder, etc.), *Personality Disorders* (Narcissistic, Avoidant, Antisocial, Obsessive-Compulsive, Paranoid, etc.), Psychotic Disorders, Schizophrenia, and Dementias. Personality Disorders consist of "enduring pattern[s] of inner experience and behavior that are sufficiently rigid and deep-seated to bring a person into repeated conflicts with his or her social and occupational environment."[23] The *DSM-IV-TR* specifies that these "dysfunctional patterns must be regarded as nonconforming or deviant by the person's

[20] The DSM-IV-TR, published by the American Psychiatric Association, is an American diagnostic manual used by mental health professionals worldwide to diagnose psychiatric illness and/or mental health disorders.
[21] American Psychiatric Association, "Personality Disorders." *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington, DC: APA, 2000), p.717.
[22] The term 'disorder' is widely used in the medical model – a traditionally westernized approach to (mental) health care as regards diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.
[23] American Psychiatric Association, DSM-IV-TR, ibid, p.717.

culture, and cause significant emotional pain and/or difficulties in relationships and occupational performance."[24]

Depression "is a complex mood disorder characterized by a significant loss of self-esteem and is considered a complex pattern of psychological and physical symptoms."[25]

The diagnostic criteria for depression involves the presence of five or more of the following symptoms: 1) fatigue and/or loss of energy, 2) marked decrease in pleasure or interest in things otherwise enjoyed, 3) experiencing a 'sad' mood virtually all day everyday, 4) weight gain or loss of up to five percent in one month, and, 5) excessive sleep or decrease in sleep [to name a few].

Dysthymia,[26] (or Dysthymic Disorder) more specifically, is a lower-grade form of depression and much more chronic in its presentation (lasting two years or less and void of suicidal ideation). Research suggests that dysthymia may be a more appropriate diagnosis for African Americans presenting with depressive symptoms because of its orientation (low-grade), duration (long-term, two years or less), and presentation (somatic, without suicidal ideation).

> Dysthymic Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder are differentiated based on severity, chronicity, and persistence. In Major Depressive

[24] American Psychiatric Association, DSM-IV-TR, ibid, p.717.
[25] Hunter, Rodney J. "Depression." *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. (Expanded Edition.) 2005, ibid, p.1103.
[26] Dysthymic patients are chronically depressed. They have many of the same symptoms that are found in Major Depressive Episodes, including low mood, fatigue, hopelessness, trouble concentrating, and problems with appetite and sleep. Absent from the criteria are thoughts of death or suicidal ideas. Dysthymia is not an appropriate diagnosis if the patient has never experienced a Manic or Hypomanic Episode. Because they suffer quietly and are not severely disabled, such individuals often don't come to light until a Major Depressive Episode supervenes. Morrison, James. DSM-IV Made Easy: The Clinician's Guide to Diagnosis. (New York, NY: Guilford Press), 2006, p.223.

> Disorder, the depressed mood must be present for most of the day, nearly every day, for a period of at least 2 weeks, whereas Dysthymic Disorder must be present for more days than not over a period of at least 2 years. The differential diagnosis between Dysthymic Disorder and Major Depressive Disorder is made particularly difficult by the fact that the two disorders share similar symptoms and that the differences between them in onset, duration, persistence, and severity are not easy to evaluate retrospectively. Usually Major Depressive Disorder consists of one or more discrete Major Depressive Episodes that can be distinguished from the person's usual functioning, whereas Dysthymic Disorder is characterized by chronic, less severe depressive symptoms that have been present for many years.[27]

As practitioners of pastoral theology, care and counseling, we understand that depression in clergy can play out in innumerable ways (i.e., workaholism, financial impropriety, extra-marital affairs, substance abuse, avoidance, binge-eating, pornography, domestic violence, etc.) Since clergy by virtue of their profession, influence the lives of others, the scope of clergy depression surpasses personal suffering, becoming most damaging in the context of a congregation.

As a Womanist[28] pastoral theologian, I would argue the cost becomes far greater for black female pastors, since there are nuances to the term 'strength,' as it relates to the 'strong black woman' (SBW)[29] motif, that bind black female pastors to postures of 'over-functioning' within the context of their personal and professional relationships.

Womanist theology at its core is concerned about the health and well-being of the entire African American community – male and female, adults and children. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance

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[27] American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). Fourth Ed. "Major Depressive Disorder", ibid, pp. 369 – 381.

[28] Williams, Delores S. Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p.67.

[29] Jackson, Leslie C. and Beverly Greene, - Psychotherapy with African American Women: Innovations in Psychodynamic Perspectives and Practice. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 2000, p.227.

of their experience and faith for determining the nature of religion in the African American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Womanist theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical ability and caste.

I broach this subject as a means of underscoring the significance of depression among black pastors, as it regards the devastating impact it has had upon the African American community. I contend that African American pastors, by virtue of their historical significance in the community, hold particular influence in the lives of their churches and communities. Therefore, the scope of clergy depression among this population proves most injurious in the context of a religious system.

My motivation for investigating this phenomenon follows in the prophetic tradition of Womanist foremothers – who with courage and conviction dared to hammer away at the scaffolding of western theology, by refusing to be *bogarted* out of the theological discourse in their articulation of what it meant to be a black woman (of faith) amidst race, class and gender oppression. As a *third-wave*[30] Womanist pastoral theologian, I draw from the rich legacy of Womanism, while simultaneously upholding the stance of a religiosity that demands I press ardently towards more expansive discourse on psycho-socio-theological transformation reflective of the diverse lived experiences of black women (and communities), everywhere.

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[30] Theologian Monica Coleman describes *third-wave* womanism as promoting and defending the legacy of Womanist thought while simultaneously challenging the parameters of its boundaries for the purposes of broadening the discourse. See Third Wave Womanism website, http://www.thirdwavewomanism.com, 2/10/10.

As such, this research serves as a corrective, meant to summon the black church to examination and accountability, as it regards the mental health of her leaders. The task of overcoming this religio-cultural conflict is critical at this juncture especially if the (black) church endeavors to maintain her position of relevance within the community. Furthermore, I purport that the lack of regard and/or negation of clergy depression as a salient issue indisputably undermines the life and health of African American congregations everywhere.

Given the knowledge and research on endemic clergy depression in mainline churches, the absence of such literature in evangelical circles is even more striking. I argue that the scant research available in the field (of pastoral theology) regarding depression among black clergy warrants further examination.

Method

To begin, this is a mixed methods research study aimed at determining the rate of depression in African American clergy. A communal-contextual pastoral method is employed to provide a clearer understanding of the inter-relatedness of: 1) the pastors' suffering (depression); 2) the dynamic interplay of the 'preacher-pew dyad'[31] in the African American religious tradition; and, 3) the embodiment of the Spiritual Presence during the preaching moment, as a cultural hermeneutic specific to the black church. I draw upon an ethnographic approach in this research because it befits the nature of the phenomenon; and, it augments the nuances of religious contextuality amongst the population being investigated.

[31] The term '*preacher-pew dyad*' speaks to the conscious and/or subconscious relational dynamic at work between the preacher and the congregation, finding its most visible expression within the context of the call and response engagement, but certainly not limited by it.

In contemplating the most efficient means of data collection with this population, I opted to implement a survey instrument. Fundamentally, employing a survey method was most appropriate for this study because surveys, by nature, are intended to be quick, effortless and anonymous – all of which were significant factors in preparing to extrapolate personal, psychological information from my subject pool of African American pastors.

My research instrument was the Beck Depression Inventory[32]– a twenty-one question self-report which assesses the existence and intensity of depression symptoms over a period of two weeks (corresponding with the DSM-IV criteria for Major Depression). The BDI-II is *the* standard (multiple-choice, score-based) psychological instrument used to measure depression in individuals. The BDI takes approximately (5) five minutes to complete.

Overall, this was a non-gender based, socio-behavioral study. Approximately (100) one hundred eligible African American pastors were randomly recruited, with an intended target enrollment of (25) twenty-five research participants.[33] The initial stages of the recruitment process entailed securing written permission from prominent organizational leaders[34] to attend conferences for clergy or at which they would be present. After undergoing the approval process of several boards, committees and

[32] Beck, Aaron T., Robert A. Steer & Gregory K. Brown. The Beck Depression Inventory, Second Edition (BDI-II), 1996.

[33] The final tally of (25) twenty-five research participants comprised (17) seventeen male and (8) eight female pastors.

[34] Gaining access to these gatherings was no small feat, since these types of national conferences are exclusively 'By Invitation Only' events – understandably so, since pastors of this 'prominence' predominantly frequent these venues for privacy, refreshing and retreat (away from parishioners).

attorneys, permission was granted to conduct research at two national pastors' conferences held in Maryland and New Jersey in 2012.

I determined that the most effective means of capturing data from a group of pastors would be through attending well-known African American clergy conferences – given that it is quite customary to see pastors wandering around the lobby area, frequenting vendor tables, seeking professional literature, examining congregational resources, reconnecting with former colleagues and the like. Once there, I positioned myself accordingly to begin the recruitment process. My approach was four-fold: 1) to introduce the study, 2) to solicit eligibility, 3) to obtain oral consent; and, 4) to distribute the survey, respectively. Each pastor was approached and their eligibility for participation in the study was determined based on the criteria set forth in the paragraph below.

The Emory University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for conducting research on human subjects was met. The process is in place as a means of obtaining informed consent from participants and to safeguard subjects against unethical research practices.

Since the term 'pastor' carries with it, a vast array of complex and diverse intra-cultural connotations, coupled with the lack of available data (within the discipline) to investigate my claims, the following inclusion criterion were established for my subject pool:

1) Male/Female clergy who identify as either black or African American;
2) Between the ages of 32 and 70;
3) Solo, senior, staff and interim pastors;
4) One or more years of pastoral experience;

5) Employed in the United States of America; and,

6) Full-time, part-time, unemployed, retired, and displaced clergy.

Once the inclusion criteria were met and potential research subjects agreed to participate in the study, the oral consent process commenced to ensure that each participant understood the study requirements and procedures. Study participants were also given the opportunity to ask questions for clarity; and, my responses to their questions were provided in a manner that was easily understood.

Study participants were informed of their right of confidentiality and of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Study participants were also informed of their right to refuse to engage in any procedure they did not feel comfortable with; and, of their right to refuse to answer any questions they did not wish to answer.

Consequently, the twenty-one question (self-report) survey instrument was completed by each study participant, with the overall recruitment and self-report process taking no more than ten minutes. Once it was understood that the benefits of participating in the study could be used to foster dialogue on the issue of clergy depression among African American pastors, most of the clergy were excited about participating in the study.

It is important to note that study participants were made aware that there were few risks associated with the study, outside of the normal momentary feelings of anxiety or stress that sometimes surface when completing a psychological instrument. Study participants were also informed that their responses carried a unique code, void of any information that could be identifiable, such as their names. The data collected from study participants was stored in a locked file container, at a secure Emory University facility.

Finally, there was no compensation associated with participation in this study; and, none of the recruitment venues or pastoral organizations benefited from agreeing to host this study.

Limitations/De-limitations

Overall, my primary objective for implementing this study was to investigate whether depression exists among African American clergy.[35] As such, one of the first delimitations of this study surrounds use of the BDI-II (Beck Depression Inventory II) as a research instrument. The BDI-II only measures symptoms for two weeks or less. Essentially, this proves problematic because depression in African Americans tends to be more chronic (well beyond the BDI-II's limited scope of two weeks or less). Therefore, the secondary aim of this study, is that it will serve as a precursor to further research which would proffer dysthymia as a more appropriate assessment for African Americans presenting with depressive features, based upon the following: 1) depression in African Americans tends to be more chronic (two years or more); 2) depression in African Americans is more somatic, given they may not know they are depressed; and, 3) there are lower rates of suicidal ideation in African Americans who experience depression. Since there are no psychological instruments that assess for dysthymia, further research is

[35] Many African Americans experience low-grade depression, referred to as Dysthymia in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders (4th ed., text rev.; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). After more than 250 years of enslavement, prejudice, and discrimination, Dysthymia is reflected in chronic low-grade sadness, anger, hostility, aggression, self-hatred, hopelessness, and self-destructive behaviors. To avoid misdiagnosis, counselors need to understand how cultural factors can elicit a collective psychological condition in an oppressed group. Vontress, Clemmont E. (2007). Cultural Dysthymia: An Unrecognized Disorder Among African Americans. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development.* 35. 130 – 141.

needed (beyond the scope of this study) to design an instrument to assess for dysthymia in African American clergy.

The second limitation of this study pertains to scale. When I initially embarked upon this research, my intent was to solely measure for depressive features in African American clergy. While I'm quite clear that a more comparable cross-cultural analysis may have yielded far richer results, my concern was that this study not become all-consuming or too expansive (or expensive) as a dissertation topic. Thus, research inclusive of other cultural groups will be regarded in a subsequent (postdoctoral) study.

Finally, a significant limitation of this study surrounds the issue of *face validity* – in employing the BDI-II concerns arose from several contributing factors. The first factor involved African American perceptions around participation in research studies as a whole, stemming from the infamous United States Public Health Syphilis Study conducted at Tuskegee.[36] Unfortunately, historic experiments like the USPH Syphilis Student Study at Tuskegee, tend to foster healthy cultural suspicions (around research) stemming from the oral tradition, which hinder even the most well-informed among us,

[36] The controversial United States Public Health Service (USPHS) conducted a syphilis study through the Tuskegee Institute from 1932 – 1972. The USPHS initiated this forty-year study among poor, rural black men in Alabama. These black males were recruited for participation in the study but, were intentionally never told they had syphilis nor were they ever treated for it. Conversely, they were informed they had 'bad blood', a common term for ailments like fatigue or anemia, during that time. As compensation for participation in the study, each participant received free medical care, meals and burial insurance instead of the treatment they needed for the syphilis. As a result, many of the study participants either died, transferred the syphilis (disease) to their spouses (and/or significant others) who, in turn, infected their unborn fetuses, producing children born with congenital syphilis. This heinous, unethical experiment enacted by the USPHS and others like it, continue to haunt the African American community today – inasmuch as it has fostered cultural suspicion around participation in "research studies".

from participating in research, even when we know it will benefit the community at-large.

Another factor of face validity had to do with the longstanding stigma in the African American community that correlates depression with weakness. The perception of being identified as one who suffers with depression, further proliferates its' hidden nature in the black community.

A final contributing factor involved denominational concerns about who I was as (PI) principal investigator and/or who my affiliates were in the black church worlds' circuit of prominent pastors. The assumption was, whoever I was affiliated with, might gain access to the survey responses (even though the 'About This Study' form was explicit in terms of confidentiality per Emory's IRB process). Some questions that emerged for me around face validity were: How honest will participant responses be when it involves such a stigmatized mental illness as depression? Will there be participants who will simply breeze through the survey completion process, being careful to check all of the appropriate boxes, so as to not meet the criteria for depression?

Ultimately, while education about depression is slowly beginning to materialize in black churches and communities, in large measure, we've only begun to scratch the surface in our understanding and validation of depression as an authentic issue of concern. Not enough has been done to aid in dispelling the myths. These were just a few of my concerns around face validity in this study.

Literature Review

As one might imagine, literature on clergy depression is rare. Most of the scholarly information I've uncovered details ways clergy can provide care and counseling

to church members who are depressed. It has been difficult to amass literature that expressly aims at *clergy* who are depressed. The scant research that *is* available, however, solely relates to autobiographical accounts of clergy who have experienced depression, or more specifically, Catholic priests, as it regards the sexual abuse of prepubescent children (pedophilia) or mid-to-late adolescents (ephebobilia). Given my knowledge and research on clergy mental illness in African American mainline churches, the absence of literature in evangelical circles is even more striking.

i. Pastoral Theological

In the text, *The Pastor as Moral Guide*, Rebekkah Miles reminds pastors of their moral obligation to self and religious community by stressing the critical need for clergy to be self-aware during seasons of loneliness, vulnerability and/or crisis (opportune occasions for sexual misconduct). Through Miles' work, I envision my own work will serve as a corrective to the black church as it regards the psychological health of her leaders. As such, I resonate with Miles' charge that pastors maintain their integrity by exercising healthy boundaries in pastoral relationships, that they become fully aware of the power dynamics embedded in the pastoral function and that they do what they must to implement formal structures of accountability for themselves.

While Jim Polings' text *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*, does not directly address clergy mental health, he does provide a means of conceptualizing the correlation between abusive power enacted against children in families and abusive pastoral power enacted against members of churches. His itemization of abuser characteristics includes: 1) A failure to see the child as separate from self; 2) treatment of the child as an extension of his or her own needs; and, 3) an inability to establish

boundaries from a patriarchal standpoint – all of which, interestingly enough, point to characteristics of a narcissistic personality. For me, Polings' text is critical in that he underscores how we internalize relationships in our quest for self-discovery. Most important, is his assertion that wounds of abuse erode the internal structures that makeup our core 'self' – hindering the development of healthy patterns of relational functioning and a healthy regard for self. So what does this mean for pastors?

ii. Theological

I found myself struggling to find theological literature that gives expression to the cultural aesthetic of the black preacher. Most available literature points either to the history of the black church as an institution, the pastoral role of the black preacher or to black preaching as an art form. Scant literature exists that gives expression to the personhood and/or identity of the preacher. Moreover, there is limited data that aptly describes what is really at the crux of the dynamic interplay between the preacher and the pew.

Theologically, the term 'cultural sacramentalization' is derived from my desire to give particularity to the phenomenon at work in the black church, whereby the preacher is viewed as the 'mouthpiece' of God. In *Systematic Theology III*, Paul Tillich's description of 'Spiritual Presence' as it regards the meaning of sacrament, provides insight as to how this personification of the preacher (in the preaching moment) evolves into a form of *cultural sacramentalization*. Tillich writes:

> The term 'sacramental', in this larger sense, needs to be freed from its narrower connotations. The Christian churches, in their controversies over the meaning and number of the particular sacraments, have disregarded the fact that the concept 'sacramental' embraces more than the seven, five, or two sacraments that may be accepted as such by a Christian church. The largest sense of the term denotes everything in which the Spiritual

> Presence has been experienced; in a narrower sense, it denotes particular objects and acts, in which a Spiritual community experiences the Spiritual Presence (121)…Above all, sacramental symbolism is associated with the ritual activities of the group itself (123).[37]

I argue that Tillich's description of *sacramental*, speaks to the embodiment of the Spiritual Presence at work in the black preacher during the preaching moment. It is within the context of this cultural hermeneutic that both 'sacramentalization' and 'deification' (of the pastor) are made manifest.

iii. -Social Sciences

In the social science literature, specifically, Candace Benyei's text, *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets and the Abuse of Power,* is the most informative, in that she adds credence to my claims of cultural sacramentalization by suggesting unfulfilled parental needs often lead to *deification* (of the pastor) setting pastors up for failure and congregations up for abuse. There is also a connection around her claims of '*deification'* with perpetually distorted images of 'self' (on the part of clergy) and, that of 'cultural sacramentalization' with distorted images of the pastor (on the part of the congregation).

Further, I correlate her claims of dysfunction within the pastors' family of origin, to issues of loneliness emergent from ones' empty childhood (relational) experiences. She emphasizes that when exposed to abusive patterns of behavior in childhood, children do what they must to survive the abuse. Finally, she examines the prevalence of personality disorders among clergy, highlighting narcissism as chiefly common and easily masked when pastors are gifted; since, congregations are often used by clergy to satisfy feelings of inadequacy.

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[37] Tillich, ibid, p.121.

I've opted to include Dunbar's poem, *We Wear the Mask*, to associate the historical practice of cultural masking (as a survival mechanism for protection against psychic injury), to the practice of pastoral masking by clergy. The similarities between the two are beautifully captured in the opening lines where Dunbar gives voice to the significance of the 'mask' as an instrument whereby emotions can be repressed:

We wear the mask that grins and lies, it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,
This debt we pay to human guile; with torn and bleeding hearts we smile
And mouth with myriad subtleties
Why should the world be over wise, in counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us while we wear the mask.
We smile but, O great Christ, our cries to Thee from tortured souls arise,
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise, we wear the mask.[38]

The essence of his writings disclose just how oppressive isolation can be – eventually leading to a sense of inadequacy or loss of personhood. Maskings' historical significance as a technique utilized by blacks in the presence of whites to maintain a semblance of empowerment in an otherwise racially motivated society, is derived from DuBois'[39] concept of 'the mask of invisibility'. *Pastoral* masking speaks to the inner turmoil of isolated, pedestal-propped, emotionally-depleted leaders.

In *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*, Richard Majors contends masking serves to hide the authentic feelings and frustrations of black males through expressive forms of behavior that portray complete control, indifference and detachment. I draw from his concept of *cool pose* in my description of 'pastoral masking'. He posits 'cool pose' as a method of self-preservation that black males use which consists of a composed presentation of self in light of present-day realities. The

[38] Bontemps, Arna. American Negro Poetry. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1974, p.14.
[39] DuBois, W. E. B. The Souls of Black Folks. (New York, NY: Signet Classic), 1995.

masking of cool pose helps black men to hide their pain and protect their spirit from the deadening blows of societal injustice. Majors writes:

> This is a performance that runs in the family; it was passed down through generations who lived in traditional Africa during the times when ashe (cool pride) was a noble quality, distorted by slavery, and transformed into the daily mask of survival in contemporary American society….By acting calm, emotionless, fearless, aloof and tough, the African American male strives to offset an externally imposed *zero* image. Being cool shows both the dominant culture and the Black male himself that he is strong and proud. He is somebody. He is a survivor, in spite of the systematic harm done by the legacy of slavery and the realities of racial oppression, in spite of the centuries of hardship and mistrust.[40]

There are similarities between the cool pose of disenfranchised black males and pastoral masking among black clergy. *Pastoral masking* is defined as an inauthentic presentation of self;[41] utilized as a defensive mechanism when aspects of the pastor's personhood are threatened.

Masking behaviors among black pastors is often guised in pretentious language and dialogical bravado such as "Doc, I preached so hard, I had them folk falling out like roaches after Raid!"[42] This manner of braggadocio may simply be a culturally rooted form of pastoral repartee – or, it could be reflective of a much deeper need for acceptance, identification, affirmation and significance, amidst the isolating work of the pastorate.

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[40] Majors, Richard and Janet Mancini Billson. Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America. (New York, NY: MacMillan), 1991, p.61.

[41] 'Pastoral masking' refers to a forced affect that emerges when internalized/external expectations are placed upon the pastor prompting him/her to present as amenable, congenial, agreeable – when he/she feels otherwise. It's a forced inauthenticity which further isolates clergy by locking them into 'performance mode' (i.e., doing vs. being), at the expense of their emotional selves.

[42] This intended humor is meant to insinuate that the power of the preaching moment was such that people were being 'slain in the Spirit' and/or passing out in a manner similar to roaches, after being exposed to Raid – a commercial brand pesticide which kills bugs.

Some might postulate that psycho-socio-theological concepts surrounding isolation and loss of personhood among black clergy are irrelevant. But, the opening accounts of suffering clergy demonstrate, the need to formulate a viable pastoral theological methodology for countering depression diagnoses in African American clergy.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two, "We've Come This Far by Faith: The Socio-historical Groundwork for Depression in African American Clergy," I provide the underpinning of my argument concerning the trans-generational transmission of depression in African Americans by presenting a cursory examination of the atrocity of the American transatlantic slave trade, primarily using Al Raboteau's *Slave Religion.* Clearly, I cannot adequately frame my argument for depression in black clergy without investigating the historical context of the slave preacher. Drawing from H. Beecher Hicks' work, *Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows,* I use the backdrop of slavery as the tipping point to clarify the significance of the 'preacher as pillar' in the African American community. Finally, I bridge black religion and oppression by postulating how the socio-cultural implications of race-class oppression point to origins of depression in African Americans. I conclude the chapter by giving expression to depression as an indelible cultural stigma on the black community's psyche, as a whole.

Chapter Three, "Sifting through the Research Findings" comprises an analysis of the research results after implementing the Beck Depression Inventory among two groups of African American pastors.

In Chapter Four, "Breaking Up Fallow Ground: Digging Deep to Make the Shift Towards Psychological Clearing," I begin by proffering cultural cues that may help suggest how the black church has arrived at this dilemma of mental illness among her leaders.

Utilizing Donald W. Winnicott's theories of 'true' and 'false' self, I propose considerations for the ways in which black pastors construct false images of 'self' through image projection/promotion (and/or masking behaviors), and how they internalize the selfsame. Since black pastors are often thrust into roles of 'messiah', leader, father/mother – there are internalized/external pressures that exist within the black church (and community) that induce masking behaviors, prompting pastors to deny their feelings as opposed to expressing how they genuinely feel. Given that maintaining a positive image as a contemporary black pastor is paramount for pastors in mainline churches, from a family-systems perspective, the cost of 'keeping the secret' (of depression) versus 'airing dirty laundry' is also examined.

Lastly, I address how the suppression of depression impacts black female pastors specifically, I delve into the dangers associated with depression in black female pastors, in light of cultural expectations that advocate adherence to the 'strong black woman' (SBW) motif.

Chapter Five "…No Other Gods Before Me: The Task of Dismantling Culturally Embedded Altars," I provide a theological framework for understanding the experience of the black church as a cultural hermeneutic. I explore the enigmatic 'setup' of pastoral deification and/or pedastallization from within the pews, by introducing ritualization and

conjuring as clues into what it is about praxis in black churches that evokes these types of allegiances to the pastor.

Next, Paul Tillich's theology of Spiritual Presence is elucidated, as it regards the embodiment of the Spiritual Presence in the black preacher, during the preaching moment – giving credence to the hypothesis of the 'cultural sacramentalization' of the black preacher. The chapter concludes with consideration given to the impact and power of phallic imagery in the black pulpit; and, the ways in which these types of images promote cultural sacramentalization.

I conclude with Chapter Six, "…Am I My Brother's Keeper?: Merging the Intersections of Religion, Psychology and Culture to Proffer An Appropriate Therapeutic Response to Depression in African American Clergy." The chapter offers a communal-contextual model for pastoral care drawing from the Old Testament prophetess Huldah[43] as a constructive metaphor for engaging therapeutic practice with African American clergy. A HULDAH acronym (Helping to Undergird Leaders through Direction, Accountability and Healing), which I have coined, constitutes a liberative model of pastoral care which provides clergy specific 'holding spaces' for pastors to experience reincorporation into communal life.

[43]In 2 Chronicles 34:19-28, when King Josiah decided to repair the temple, the book of the Law was found and read to him – "…Josiah took its warnings seriously and sent to Huldah the prophetess to see if there was still a chance for mercy." MacDonald, William. Bible Believer's Commentary: Old Testament. Nashville, TN: Thompson Nelson Publishers, 1992, p.464. I use Huldah as a metaphor because she is one of only four women with an authentic prophetic ministry mentioned in the Old Testament (along with Miriam, Deborah, and Isaiah's wife). Spangler, Ann and Jean E. Syswerda. Women of the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999, p.248.

CHAPTER TWO

WE'VE COME THIS FAR BY FAITH: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL GROUNDWORK FOR DEPRESSION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY

In order to examine the link between depression and African American clergy, I will begin by identifying plausible indicators from early American history, chiefly the transatlantic slave trade in America,[44] which lend credence to my supposition of depression among African Americans as an historical trauma. Historical trauma is the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences.[45] A cursory review of the historiography of America reveals an unconscionable record of inhumane treatment towards enslaved (and freed) African peoples. It is an oppressive history, fraught with dehumanization, racial injustice and the systematic alienation of blacks by whites – all of which was believed by some to be socially constructed, as a means of fostering an ideology of racial superiority.[46]

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[44] The American transatlantic slave trade occurred from the 16th through the 19th century with illegal slave trading continuing long after U. S. laws prohibiting such were enacted. Domestic slave trading (in the United States) is where I place the particular emphasis of my work. See Franklin, John Hope and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham. From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Company, 2011), p.49.

[45] Ringel, Shoshana and Jerrold R. Brandell. Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), pp.198-199.

[46] Franklin and Higginbotham conclude that notions of race superiority were not the case among Europeans during slave trading negotiations with African rulers. However, this debate continues among many historians today. I contend that ideas of race superiority were indeed present to some degree in European slave trading with Africans if not overtly, then certainly the seedlings of such were present. I do not believe it possible that ideas about race superiority were capable of emerging so fully, or to be espoused so broadly and accepted so freely throughout the culture of the American slave industry, if it were not the case. Commentary like the following supports my claim, "…Female slaves were found in much larger numbers in the city as opposed to rural areas working in their

Without question, the psychological and physical[47] brutality experienced by (enslaved and freed) Africans in American slavocracy[48] has had a trans-generational[49] impact on the psyche of (African) Americans collectively. The insatiability of European avarice for wealth and power prompted the coercion of an entire population of people. The psychological effects of slavery are monumental, in that, they continue to inform the ways in which African Americans (as a whole) navigate the wider white world[50] socio-

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masters' homes…slave women monopolized the public markets selling their wares….some dressed so fashionably that the South Carolina legislature passed sumptuary laws as to prohibit blacks from wearing such fabrics as silk or other fine apparel…their goal was to deny blacks the outward appearance of equality with whites." Franklin, ibid, p.75.

[47] Morrison, James. DSM-IV Made Easy: The Clinician's Guide to Diagnosis. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2006), p.269. There has been very little scholarly research that gives recognition to the degree of physiological trauma inflicted upon the slave body as a result of corporeal punishment upon (enslaved and freed) Africans during slavery. "While slaveholders may not have been explicit in their descriptions of discipline and its effects on slave bodies, corporeal punishment was a significant element of the culture of mastery." See Boster, Dea H. African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800 – 1860. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp.47 – 48.

[48] The term slavocracy is used to describe the commerce and/or industry of slavery.

[49] Trans-generational trauma is defined as the unresolved trauma that is passed from one generation to the next (the effects of which are also passed on when left unresolved). "A primary focus in the study of generational trauma has been to discover the processes by which parental trauma may be passed on to the next generation. Four basic psychological pathways of trauma transmission may be categorized as follows: (a) the vicarious identification of children with their parents' suffering at similar stages of chronological development, (b) the intuitive responsibility assumed by children to compensate in various ways for their parents suffering, (c) the particular patterns of parenting demonstrated by survivors toward their offspring, and (d) the styles of communication between parents and their children concerning traumatic experiences the parents had endured." Doucet, Marilyn and Martin Rovers. "Generational Trauma, Attachment, and Spiritual/Religious Interventions." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 15 (2010): 95-96. Web. 14, May 2013.

[50] Dr. Nancy Krieger, a professor of social epidemiology at Harvard School of Public Health, contends "we carry our history in our bodies". In other words, Krieger is suggesting that systemic and structural race discrimination and oppression become an embodied phenomenon for people of color, spanning multiple generations; and, it is causative of a variety of health disparities. Krieger, N., Kosheleva, A., Waterman. P.,

culturally, psychologically and spiritually, insofar as it pertains to the physiological stress response to the daily encounters with incidences of societal oppression.[51] I will expand my discussion of the socio-cultural repercussions of the American transatlantic slave trade in the latter portion of this chapter, followed by chapters three and four, which will consider the psychological and theological impact of the trans-generational transmission of depression upon African Americans, respectively.

To begin, the scholarly legacies of prominent black sociologists[52] like W.E.B. Dubois, E. Franklin Frazier and bell hooks, have broadened our understandings of the social-cultural implications of slavery by providing us with theoretical tools with which to dissect the complicated trajectory of race, class and gender oppression.

Chen, J. and K. Koenen. "Racial Discrimination, Psychological Distress, and Self-rated Health Among US–Born and Immigrant Black Americans." *American Journal of Public Health.* 2011 Sep; 101(9)1704 -13. Doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300168. Epub 2011 Jul 21.

[51] Claire Sterk argues a shift has occurred in the field of public health intervention, whereby the practice of solely examining an individual's behavior should not be done to the negation of consideration of their socio-economic and communal context. Sterk contends public health intervention ought not be done in a vacuum since "social forces external to the individual shape quality of life, including health status." Sterk, Claire, Kirk W. Elifson and Katherine Theall. "Individual Action and Community Context: The Health Intervention Project." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2007 June; 32(6S), 177-181.

[52] DuBois' theory of double consciousness provides a distinct cultural lens into understanding how the problematic nature of race and class oppression is experienced by blacks in America. Moreover, E. Franklin Frazier's analysis of the Negro condition following emancipation, posited the Negro church as the sole institution of social control amongst freed slaves; in that, the merging of the invisible institution into a more cohesive structure like the church, created an organized religious life and an organized social life through economic cooperation, education and leadership responsibility. From a more postmodern perspective, in 'Black Looks: Race and Representation', bell hooks identifies the intersectionality of race, class and gender oppression in popular culture and mass media, depicting how stereotypical images of blacks are appropriated by the broader white world to further notions of dominance and the oppression of black peoples.

More specifically, in this work, I draw from Joy DeGruy's theory of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome[53] (PTSS) in which she contends that blacks sustained multigenerational psychological and emotional trauma from the systemic racism and oppression emanating from slavery. DeGruy argues that despite the much lauded resiliency of (enslaved and freed) African peoples', there remains a multi-generational component of psychic trauma (from slavery) which perpetually transmits and/or re-traumatizes individuals within familial, communal and societal contexts.[54] While I agree with DeGruy's theory of PTSS as being consistent with the trans-generational transmission of trauma, my point of departure with her stems from her notion of 'ever present anger' as intrinsic in African Americans, specifically. Here, she argues that in PTSS, African Americans have a *marked* propensity towards violence caused by a stress-induced response to the enduring marginalization experienced in society.

I think it is important to recognize that due to the many cultural stereotypes attributed to the term 'violence' and/or 'anger' as it regards (African) Americans (i.e., the violent black male, the angry black woman, the unruly savage, etc.), we, as African

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[53] In Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS) theory Joy DeGruy argues that African Americans suffered severe emotional and psychological trauma stemming from years of enslavement, in many instances, causing the disruption of familial, communal and cultural relationships. This trauma, when left undiagnosed or untreated leads to maladaptive behaviors which manifest into vacant self-esteem, the perpetual presence of anger and racist socialization. DeGruy-Leary, Joy. Reparations and Healthcare for African Americans: Repairing the Damage from the Legacy of Slavery. (Milwaukee, OR: Uptone Press, 2005), pp.127-43.

[54] DeGruy contends that trauma affects an individual's behavior and interrupts their sense of well-being. The anxiety of the victim causes those around him/her to re-experience that same anxiety on varying levels. For example, a woman who has been assaulted may tend to be hyper-vigilant as it regards the safety and security of her children. Through the psychological re-living or rehearsing of the traumatic event, she re-experiences the anxiety; thereby, inadvertently triggering vicarious trauma in her children as a result of her own overcompensating self. DeGruy, ibid, p.123.

American scholars, must be sensitive to the ways in which we proliferate the selfsame aspersions cast upon us by the dominant society. This goes beyond mere semantics and speaks more directly to the need for an intra-cultural sensitivity. I would be more inclined to agree with DeGruy's theory if she were able to more readily connect her claim of 'ever present anger' to one of the core features of the stress symptom criteria found in the PTSD diagnosis. Since one of the indicators for PTSD suggests "angry outbursts or irritability" this seems to be a far cry from the enduring nature that DeGruy's 'ever present anger' prescribes.[55] If DeGruy *is* in fact arguing for this, she does not do so convincingly.

Overall, much has been proffered as regards the plight of black America[56] and its failure to gain a sense of belonging in mainstream American society. While some agree there is a need for more extensive dialogue around race, class and gender oppression in America, conversely, the psychosocial well-being of blacks' in the 21st century remains debatable for others – a fairly distasteful subject, if you will. America appears at an impasse, opting for trendier dialogue bent towards concern for more 'global' populations, rather than to address the anguish and desolation of African Americans in her own

[55] The criteria 'angry outbursts' or 'irritability' are one of several criteria for diagnosing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. Morrison, ibid, p.270.

[56] There is substantial evidence which supports the huge disparities in the health and well-being of African Americans, in contrast to the dominant society. Despite the promise of these emergent trends in healthcare and life expectancy, the quality of life for African Americans in the U.S. continues to be on the decline. The question becomes, 'How much longer will mainstream America promote arguments for individual responsibility, in a country where neither wealth nor healthcare are equitably distributed?' See Lemelle, Anthony J. Reed, Wornie Taylor, Sandra. Handbook of African American Health: Social and Behavioral Interventions. (New York, NY: Springer, 2011), p.35.

backyard. It's more palatable (dare I say, en vogue)[57] to harbor concern for Israeli women, Czech children or Burmese families, than it is to broach the subject of poverty and devastation in the African American community (which finds its origins in slavocracy). Considering the more than 12 million[58] African souls who were traded-sold/stolen-captured-resold (TSCR)[59] and transported to these United States, one cannot help but hear the voice of their blood *"crying out from the ground"*[60] and (Atlantic) sea.[61]

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[57] The influence and evolving nature of popular culture has generated significant interest in celebrity trends. America's thirst for celebrity has caused her to essentially 'go Hollywood' in her perception of what is deemed normative. As cultural trends go, the practice of *donning* an ethnically different child on the hip like a fashion accessory, as a means of expressing ones' global sensitivity, appears to be the new craze among celebrities (and/or those desiring to be affiliated with such).

[58] Intense discussion has occurred around the actual number of African slaves traded-sold/stolen-captured-resold in the American trans-Atlanta slave trade industry. "Considering the great many who were killed while resisting capture in Africa, those who died during the transatlantic passage, and the millions successfully brought to the Americas, the aggregate number of victims approaches staggering proportions. After decades of debate over the number of Africans carried to the New World as slaves during the era of the Atlantic slave trade, an extensive digital database, compiled under the leadership of historian David Eltis, concludes that approximately 12.5 million slaves were transported." See Franklin, ibid, p.35.

[59] TSCR – traded, sold/stolen, captured, resold. There is scant literature available which clearly distinguishes between those Africans who were traded or sold by other Africans, those Africans who escaped enslavement in Africa, and those Africans who were stolen and/or captured by Europeans unbeknownst to African rulers/traders. I use the acronym 'TSCR' as a means of incorporating the aforementioned as African slaves who were either (T) traded, (S) sold/stolen, (C) captured and/or (R) resold in the complex system of transatlantic slave trade (slavocracy) in America.

[60] This passage of scripture refers to the quintessential blood-guiltiness on Cain's hands, when God challenges Cain to be forthright regarding his treatment toward his brother Abel (Genesis 4:10).

[61] Upon their arrival in the southern low country of the New World, many Africans remained held up on slave ships for months on end for several reasons – i.e., they were either in the process of being sold, they were held in order that other area slave ships could unload, they were quarantined due to disease outbreaks, etc. It is important to note, that scores of Africans died within the first year of arrival to the New World due to dysentery and other diseases contracted aboard the slave ships. In such instances, it was common practice for crew members to throw the slaves' bodies overboard to avoid burial expenses. This, in turn, created huge sanitation problems for those whites living near the

Primarily, I have found that current Euro-American scholarship on the trans-Atlantic slave trade (for the most part) tends to place greater emphasis on 'the sale of Africans by Africans', as if there was no need for whites to acknowledge responsibility for their hand in the atrocity of domestic enslavement and the immoral, inhumane treatment sustained by (enslaved and freed) African peoples. As a person of African descent, it is interesting, to say the least, to hear one's history told from the perspective of the perpetrator, so to speak – so much of the context(uality) of 'lived' experience becomes lost when someone else presumes to articulate your narrative.[62] Of this, Africana Studies scholar Maulana Karenga writes:

> In fact, although there were transactions between Europeans and Africans which would be called commerce in enslaved persons, "on the whole the process by which captives were obtained on African soil was not trade at

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port and harbor areas of southeastern America – "…it was unpleasant to think that the citizens might eat fish fattened on the carcasses of dead negroes." See McCandless, Peter. Slavery, Disease, and Suffering in the Southern Low Country. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.49-50. Figure 1.1 was originally published in The Liberator, the American abolitionist newspaper, 7, January 1832 (vol. 11, p2) www.hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php. "Africans Thrown Overboard from a Slave Ship, Brazil ca. 1830's". Image Trade-3, as shown on www.slaveryimages.org. This woodcut depicts how sickly Africans slaves were thrown overboard alive by slave captains who knew the slaves could not be sold; and, as a means of avoiding the costs of paying import duties on them.

[62] During a recent scholarly conference I attended (at Emory) on slavery, one of the visiting presenters relegated the origins of the American trans-Atlantic slave trade to "whites' hankering for sweet tea" – much to the amusement of several of the attendees in the room. This brazen insensitivity to the nature of systemic and structural racism is what has aided in fostering this kind of commentary, which further devalues the human cost of slavery – i.e., the blood that was shed, the lives lost, the culture erased, the children stricken and traumatized, the women who were violently abused and repeatedly raped and re-raped, the sexual exploitation of an entire group of people, the innumerable slaves who silently slipped overboard the slaveships as a means of escaping captivity, all of their bodies having since disintegrated into the Atlantic sea. Imagine, such a callous comment, expressed so cavalierly, in light of the base brutality which transpired in American history. Amidst this blatant insensitivity and utter disregard for human life (masked in scholarship), I affix my gaze intently upon the academy, with a *healthy* cultural suspicion.

> all." On the contrary, "it was through warfare, trickery, banditry and kidnapping." Europeans did not escape moral indictment by blaming Arabs and Africans for participation in the trade...when the so-called Arab slave trade in East Africa was at its height in the 18th century and early 19th century, it was still tied to and controlled by Europeans.…Thus, one discovers that what looked like an Arab-controlled trade was in fact a European dominated trade with Europeans using Arabs as middle men. None of this is to deny Arab involvement in or even the involvement of some East Indians, but rather to focus the bulk of the responsibility for the ultimate and greatest demand, and the wholesale destruction and depopulation of Africa where it belongs – squarely on the shoulders of Europeans.[63]

What I find most compelling about Karenga's research, is that he intentionally makes the point of employing language that depicts the ravages of the slave trade industry by referencing the event of slavery as the 'holocaust of enslavement'. My understanding of the term 'holocaust' is that it essentially means the killing of a large number of people. It is a term synonymous with genocide – that is, the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group. In fact, I believe by using the descriptive 'holocaust of enslavement', Karenga endeavors to expose the dehumanization embedded in slavocracy – or, as I so clearly envisage the event, as the systematic rape of Africa. Karenga writes:

> …to use the category "slave" without a cultural, ethnic or national qualifier is to suggest the person has no identity outside of being enslaved, that s/he is a "slave" by nature not by social imposition.[64]

Karenga places great emphasis on the fact that, "the immorality of slavery is often obscured in scholarship", because it is often viewed from the context of industry, trade and/or commerce; therefore, his insistence on using 'holocaust' language is tripartite. He intends to shed light on three salient claims regarding slavery as: 1) the destruction of

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[63] Karenga, Maulana. Introduction to Black Studies. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), p.117.
[64] Karenga, ibid, p.116.

human life; 2) the destruction of African culture; and, 3) the destruction of human potential.[65] I concur with Karenga's assertion of the institution of slavery as an attempt to systematically annihilate the life, culture and history of a people – based solely upon race.

> Such was not the case with the Europeans. They brought their churches with them. They brought their own foods with them and could continue to get supplies of specific items from the old country if need be. They brought their own dress with them and could choose to wear it or abandon it as they saw fit. They brought their own marriage customs, their own rights of passage, their own kinship system. The Europeans preserved their old customs for as long as they were needed and gradually modified them as they moved into the main society. While some met opposition for being foreigners, they were not stripped of their foreignness overnight. But the African slaves could do none of this. Overnight they were transformed from merchants, or Arabic scholars, or craftsmen or peasant farmers, or cattle-tenders into American slaves.[66]

Socio-historically, it doesn't take much delving into America's record of base treatment towards (enslaved and freed) African peoples, to decipher exactly where and how (present day) African Americans arrived at such blight. When the slave ships arrived on the shores of the New World, the profitability of human cargo,[67] expressly

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[65] Karenga, ibid, p.115.

[66] Rawick, George P. From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), p.7.

[67] "The Middle Passage was physically dangerous and psychologically traumatic. "Ships were chronically overcrowded, for shippers usually allotted only six to seven square feet of space per person. Decks swam in urine, feces, vomit, and menstrual and fecal blood…Severe overcrowding fostered disease, most commonly dysentery, typhoid, measles, small pox, yellow fever and malaria. Undernourishment and dehydration also bred disease…The trip produced predictable outcomes among those who survived: depression, shock and insanity. Historians have not yet focused on the psychological injuries of captivity and passage or on the fates of the infants conceived through the rape of women and girls." See Nell Painter. Creating Black Americans: African American History and its Meanings, 1619 to the Present. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.33.

evident in the underbelly of slave ships[68] where Africans were crammed together like sardines,[69] had long been established prior to their fettered feet ever touching the terrain of the New World.

In his text *Before the Mayflower*, Lerone Bennett provides a glimpse of the deplorable conditions under which the slaves were transported to the shores of the New World:

> They were packed like books on shelves into holds which in some instances were no higher than eighteen inches…Here, for the six to ten weeks of the voyage, the slaves lived like animals. Under the best conditions, the trip was intolerable. When epidemics of dysentery or smallpox swept the ships, the trip was beyond endurance.[70]

However, my task here is not to corroborate man's brazen inhumanity to man – that has since been duly established. Nor is it necessarily my intention to explicate the exhaustive history of how whites utilized Christianity to justify the perpetuation of slavocracy as a means of arguing for the superiority of the white race. The focus here is

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[68] "The filth caused by the close, stinking quarters brought on more illness, and the mortality rate increased accordingly. Many of those who did not die of disease or commit suicide by jumping overboard were permanently disabled by the ravages of some dread disease or by maiming, which often resulted from struggling against the chains" – See Franklin and Higginbotham, ibid, p.35.

[69] Personally, having to repeatedly reflect on the atrocity of slavery (throughout the writing of this work) undoubtedly, has prompted the envisaging of the slave ships as being 'glass-bottomed' – the perpetual imagery of cramped, shackled bodies spooned together in the hollow of ships, fearfully (or courageously) awaiting their fate. See figure 1.2 - www.slavevoyages.org/tast/resources/images-detail-expanded.faces This is a section of Canoe for Transporting Slaves, Sierra Leone, 1840's as shown on the Voyages Website, Emory University, figure 1.3 www.hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/SlaveTrade/collection/large/wad-1.JPG "Plan of the British Slave Ship 'Brookes", 1789, Image Reference Wad-1, as shown on www.slaveryimages.org, compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library; and, figure 1.4 www.slavevoyages.org//tast/resources/images-list.faces.

[70] Bennett, Lerone Jr. Before the Mayflower. (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Company, 1961), p.40.

to substantiate my claim that the cumulative forces of societal oppression enacted against (enslaved and freed) Africans has contributed to the deleterious effects of the trans-generational transmission of depression in African Americans today. Not only am I purporting that African Americans suffer with depression, but I contend, the depression is chronic.

Survivable African Origins

As a means of putting forth a plausible argument for the presence of depression in slavery, I begin by offering a letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush[71] as an initial source for consideration. In 1772, Rush penned this letter to a colleague regarding his medical observations of (enslaved and freed) Africans' behavior. In it, he describes his concern for the well being of slaves by suggesting they be afforded an education, along with the opportunity to practice (Christian) religion to stave off what he identifies as *depression*. Rush writes:

> Since our correspondence began, in 1771, what wonderful things have come to pass in favor of our friends the poor Africans! In Pennsylvania our laws have exterminated domestic slavery, and in Philadelphia, the free blacks now compose near 3,000 souls. Their men are chiefly waiters – day laborers – and traders in a small way. Their women are chiefly cooks and washerwomen. Such is their integrity, and quiet deportment, that they are universally preferred to white people of similar occupations. But under these circumstances they are still in a state of depression, arising chiefly from their being deprived of the means of regular education, and religious instruction.[72]

[71] Dr. Benjamin Rush, considered the father of American psychiatry, was a prominent Presbyterian physician from Philadelphia, known for his fierce opposition to the institution of slavery. Rush was instrumental in assisting Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in establishing the first independent African American church in Philadelphia. See Benjamin Rush. The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His Travels Through Life with His Commonplace Book for 1789 – 1813.

[72] Rush, Benjamin. *Extract of A Letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, to Granville Sharp*. London, 1792. 7pp. *Sabin Americana*. Gale, Cengage Learning. Emory

A staunch abolitionist, Benjamin Rush disputed the misnomer that slaves were intellectually or morally inferior as was broadly promulgated in his day. While I have my own misgivings around Rush's narrow (early) understandings of race and difference, what I do find compelling is his ability to identify visibly depressive features (and a lack of sanguinity or 'hopefulness') among the slaves – to the extent that his end prescriptive for their depression was *religion*.

From what we now know about symptoms and diagnosis in the treatment of depression, I contend that Rush was onto something as it regards his observations of the slaves' demeanor. The fact that he was able to visibly detect *dispiritedness* or a lack of hopefulness amongst the slaves' is central to understanding the significance of my argument for the trans-generational transmission of depression in this work.

My next source for consideration comes by way of documentation extracted from slave records retrieved from a plantation in South Carolina. A review of the Pedee Plantation records dated 1782, reveals the repetitive insertion of the term *'indifferent'* alongside the names of several (African) slaves. Due to variations on the term 'indifferent' (i.e., one meaning suggesting: sloth, laziness, indolence, etc., while yet another classifies the term as disconsolate, dispirited, dejected, etc.), one can reasonably infer that what may appear as 'lazy chattel' from the commerce perspective of a slave owner/trader, can certainly be interpreted as 'depressed human being' from the pastoral theological lens of 'the human condition'. In fact, it is difficult to even imagine that any

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University Robert W. Woodruff Library. 15 May 2013.
http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/Sabin?af=RN&ae=CY102419785&srchtp=a&ste=14

human being who is fettered and/or chained would genuinely[73] present as affable, carefree or imperturbable when oppressed.

Here, Rush's recommendation of *religion* as antidotal for the slaves' depression, reinforces for me, the validity of re-incorporated traditional African ritual practices as viable survival mechanisms for countering depression in slavery.

Although we may differ in our reasoning for it, I concur with Rush's prognostication of religion as a critical resource for depressed (enslaved and freed) Africans. My argument for religion as being *antidotal* bespeaks the creative resiliency of a population of people who bore incredible suffering at the hands of white Christian slave owners both pre and post-Maafa.[74] Undoubtedly, little was done to assuage the psychic stressors of subjugation, corporeal punishment and the physical toil of plantation life. In their quest to find meaning amidst the perpetuity of suffering, I contend (enslaved and freed) Africans drew strength from the ritual practices of their ancestral heritage, thereby deftly re-establishing for themselves crucial forms of survival and cohesion in communal life:

> Thus, in the midst of their suffering, Africans discovered that they had not left God on the continent with their material cultural artifacts, but had discovered their God anew in this alien land inhabited by such cruel people….Like that of their African forebears, the basic theology of

[73] This excludes the use of pretense by slaves as a means or ingratiating those white slave owners who exerted power over them.

[74] The term *Maafa* means 'the great disaster' in (Ki)swahili. Butler, Lee H. A Loving Home: Caring for African American Marriage and Families. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000), p.77. However, Dr. Nancy Boyd-Franklin goes a bit further in her psychosocial description of the term Maafa, by describing it as "…a wound on the soul of African Americans that has had profound multigenerational consequences…many African Americans are vividly reminded of this when we construct our genograms, or family trees and experience the gaping holes in our family histories left by the enslavement and death of our ancestors." See Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American Experience. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2003), p.6.

> Africans in the diaspora reflected the survival orientation of the community, on the one hand, and the community's longing for relief from oppression, on the other hand. With respect to the latter, it is important to point out that whenever they were faced with suffering of any kind, traditional African peoples became preoccupied with the quest for relief: a two-directional search that centered on God as the agent of relief and on themselves and others as the cause of their misfortune.[75]

That being said, the faith traditions of African Americans encompass an amalgamation of distinctive ritual practices emanating from African ancestral heritage; and, include the evolution of these practices upon the slaves' (Christian) assimilation into the New World.[76] The ability to comprehend the linkage of faith between past and present helps to shed light on the centrality and cultural significance of religion in the everyday lives of present-day (African) Americans, as a whole.

> Widely shared by diverse West African societies were several fundamental beliefs concerning the relationship of the divine to the human; belief in a transcendent, benevolent God, creator and ultimate source of providence; belief in a number of immanent gods, to whom people must sacrifice in order to make life propitious, belief in the power of spirits animating things in nature to affect the welfare of people; belief in priests and others who were expert in practical knowledge of the gods and spirits[77].

For (enslaved and freed) Africans in the New World, religion was the prevailing counteractive force that enabled them to withstand the psychic (and corporeal)[78] blows of

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[75] Paris, Peter. J. The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for Common Moral Discourse. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), p.45.

[76] The custom of assimilation in religious practice was not uncommon within the African slave community – it was otherwise known as, *syncretism*. Al Raboteau suggests a probable similarity of syncretistic traits occurring among African religion and European evangelical Protestantism on two fronts – as it regards ecstatic mannerisms and in supernatural folk belief. See Raboteau, Albert J. Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1978), pp.28-30.

[77] Raboteau, ibid, p.11.

[78] While much of this work draws upon the relevance of the trans-generational psychic injury sustained during (and beyond) slavery, it does not dismiss the significance of the

societal oppression. Since most slaves were prohibited from participating in religious gatherings[79] without a white person being present, they were cleverly able to construct for themselves, what Al Raboteau[80] refers to as informal mechanisms or '*invisible institutions*'[81] which were hidden from the view of slave owners. Here, the slaves were able to regulate their spiritual encounters with God individually and collectively, through oral praise, prayer, songs and ecstatic forms of worship. In *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, Al Raboteau expounds upon the value of these informal structures as places of refuge and mechanisms of survival for (enslaved and freed) Africans:

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psychological impact of corporeal injury and *violence to the body* sustained by (enslaved and freed) Africans, in addition to its affects, as it pertains to trauma and PTSD. "While slaveholders may not have been very explicit in their descriptions of discipline and its effects on slave bodies, corporeal punishment was a significant element of the culture mastery. Southern slaveholders focused on the external bodies of slaves that had 'dishonored' them, and utilized disfiguring and physically disabling punishments for disobedience or running away…" See Boster, Dea H., ibid, pp.47-48. It's important to note that corporeal punishment was enacted upon the slave body, not to the degree that slaves were left incapable of performing physical labor; but rather, they were physically maimed and mutilated as a means of incapacitating their ability toward insurrection or escape. This is an actual documented direct threat of corporeal punishment, as taken from a plantation owner's journal entry – "Jerry has been sherking [sic] about every time since began to pick cotton. After whipping him yesterday told him if ever he dodged about from me again would certainly shoot him. This morning at breakfast time Charles came and told me that Jerry was about to run off. Took my gun found him in the Bayou behind the Quarter, shot him in his thigh." Boster, ibid, p.50.

[79] In large measure, slaves were prohibited from attending religious services because of the widely held belief they did not have souls. For those slaves who accepted Christianity, it was feared that if given the opportunity to participate in their own religious gatherings, the slaves would begin to think they were free. Raboteau, ibid, p.220.

[80] Albert J. Raboteau, a notable scholar of African and African American religious history, revised and published his dissertation to formulate the text "Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*",* his seminal work.

[81] Since slaves were prohibited from reading (the bible), praying or holding religious services, they held secret meetings comprised of informal systems of religious practice, whereby they were able to commune individually and collectively with their God, Raboteau, ibid, p.212.

> Prayer, preaching, song, communal support, and especially 'feeling the spirit' refreshed the slaves and consoled them in their times of distress. By imagining their lives in the context of a different future they gained hope in the present…Slaves sought consolation in the future, but they also found it in the present…Nevertheless, at the core of the slaves' religion was a private place, represented by the cabin room, the overturned pot, the prayin' ground, and the 'hush arbor'…[82]

As Raboteau suggests, each of these clandestine undertakings afforded African slaves a measure of transitory relief from their suffering, enabling them to hold fast to their religious heritage amidst race oppression. Despite the extreme lengths by which whites contrived to exact power over the slaves, the slaves' unwavering belief in the transcendent nature of their god(s), essentially aided in their ability to withstand pernicious societal oppression.

Overall, it is my contention that the spirituality of African peoples' did not exactly dissipate upon their arrival on the shores of the New World, as some scholars suggest.[83]

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[82] The slaves stealthily sustained their faith beyond the slave master's view by holding their religious meetings under 'brush arbors' (otherwise known as 'hush arbors'), by praying into jars of water or overturned pots, so as to drown out the sound from being heard, by bending reeds in the field as a means of indicating the spot where the prayer meeting would be held that night, by crowding themselves together behind wet blankets hung up in the form of a room for preaching, singing and prayer meetings – they went to great extremes to avoid being heard, etc. Ibid, pp.215 – 218.

[83] Anthropologist Melville Herskovits and sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier were at odds over the issue of whether African slaves were completely dissociated from their Africanisms (ways of life and culture); or, if amidst their forcible TSCR, those Africanisms were survivable and actually reincorporated into plantation life in the New World. Herskovits argued that Africanisms were survivable and thus permeated throughout almost every aspect of slave culture. Frazier, on the other hand, insisted that since many of the *choice* enslaved Africans were young males, who were intentionally separated from their kinsmen and devoid of social cohesion, they were often 'broken in' to the plantation system by older slaves who were well assimilated into the slave system. Therefore, most of these young males were far too removed generationally to have retained a sense of cultural identity. See Herskovits, Melville. The Myth of the Negro Past. (Boston, MA: Beacon Hill Press, 1958), p.54 and E. Franklin Frazier's, The Negro Church in America (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963). Slave registers like this one reveal just how profitable young African males were during the American Trans-

Although torn from familial, cultural and communal connectivity, Africans in the New World were somehow able to retain particular aspects of their religious heritage whether through traditional African religions, Islam or euro-influenced forms of Christianity. In fact, the continuity of more nuanced forms of African spirituality remains evident in the religious practices of African Americans throughout African American culture today.

I proffer three distinct liberative ritual practices in African American religion, which are particularly influenced by traditional African religion: 1) the act of offering oral praise to God; 2) prayer and/or petition; and, 3) extemporaneous dance, otherwise known in African American religion as 'the shout'.[84] In contemplating the psychic trauma experienced by (enslaved and freed) Africans, as it relates to the compounded stress of having to repetitively suppress their emotions[85] amidst endemic oppression; and, coupled with the constant fear and threat of corporeal punishment stemming from the need to be continually on their guard,[86] I place specific emphasis on these rituals as survival mechanisms symbolic of the type of relief experienced upon releasing a 'primal

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Atlantic Slave Trade - http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/resources/images-detail-expanded.faces. This depiction reveals the marketability of young African males, this child at the tender age of six years old.

[84] The 'shout' in black religion comprises the embodiment of the Holy Spirit resting upon the believer in a manner which provokes a rhythmic physiological response; whether that response is demonstrated by dancing, running, leaping, clapping, spinning, rocking, the lifting and/or waving of the hands, patting of feet, glancing upwards, etc. The 'shout' is not limited to dancing; but, embodies any physically expressive response to the manifestation of the presence of 'God with us' upon the believer. "Despite the prohibition of dancing as heathenish and sinful, the slaves were able to reinterpret and 'sanctify' their African tradition of dance in the 'shout.' While the North American slaves danced under the impulse of the Spirit of a 'new' god, they danced in ways their fathers in Africa would have recognized." Raboteau, ibid, p.72.

[85] Ibid, p.218.

[86] Endemic oppression often fosters the posture of being constantly on guard against it, socially, economically, politically, psychologically, spiritually, et al.

scream.'[87] Oral praise, prayer and/or petition and extemporaneous dance were survival mechanisms used by slaves to obtain uninhibited, transitory relief from the weight of perpetual oppression.

The first traditional African influence on black religion is found in the ritual of offering oral praise to god(s), which can be traced all the way back to the Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, West Africa.[88] The evolution of oral praise as a ritualized practice re-incorporated in contemporary African American religion is a significant aspect of the evangelical worship experience; because it acknowledges the activity of God and reflects a posture of communion with God. The power embedded in oral praise is fundamentally rooted in the belief that oral praise evokes the presence of God.[89]

It is actually quite common to hear sporadic exclamations of oral praise like, 'Hallelujah!', 'Glory!', or 'Thank 'ya!' riddled throughout African American evangelical worship services (i.e., in the preaching moment, during communion, in public prayer, at the altar call, etc). In Black pastoral theology we interpret the hearing of these intermittent exclamations of praise as normative and/or communally understood, because they bespeak the liberating embodiment of a god who *hears* your cries, *sees* your tears and *knows* all about your troubles. Oral praise then, is essentially a spirit-filled response to the presence of God which speaks back to the lived reality of an omnipresent 'God with us' – an *experiential* God, who is at-hand and at work on behalf of his people.

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[87] I reference the utility of Arthur Janov's 'primal scream' for the sole purpose of demonstrating how ritual can bring a measure of therapeutic relief to oppressed individuals suffering with emotional pain. My argument is that re-incorporated traditional African religious ritual practices served as a survival mechanism for the slaves, granting them direct access to a divine power which, in turn, afforded them immediate uninhibited, transitory relief from the burden of perpetual oppression.
[88] Raboteau, ibid, p.37.
[89] Psalm 22:3.

This type of spiritual 'knowing'[90] is further appropriated through the singing of songs, hymns and traditional negro spirituals like 'Come On In My Room', which personifies the lived experience of a God who is personally and collectively at-hand to aid the oppressed in withstanding the vicissitudes of life:

Come on in my room,
Come on in my room.
Jesus is my doctor,
He writes down all of my 'scriptions,
He gives me all of my medicines…
In my room.[91]

The second religious ritual with origins in traditional African religion is the practice of prayer and/or petition. "Occasionally individuals and communities did pray to the High God but sacrifice to him was rare; it was generally the other gods and the spirits of deceased ancestors who received the most attention, since they had been delegated to attend to 'the affairs of mankind'."[92] Like the gods of African religious societies (enslaved and freed) Africans understood that prayer was a part of the spirit realm, whereby human weakness required the power of divine intervention. For (enslaved and freed) Africans, prayer was liberating – it was the distinct opportunity for enslaved Africans to not lose themselves in their suffering, but to gain an assurance of hope to the end. Prayer then, was the mechanism by which they could access God for daily sustenance amidst the rigors and hardship of plantation life. Raboteau speaks of the centrality of prayer in the life of (enslaved and freed) Africans, suggesting that it spoke to

[90] 'Experiential knowing' denotes that an individual has an intimate understanding of and/or relationship with God.
[91] The composer of this Negro Spiritual is unknown. It is a meter hymn, lined out by Carolyn Bolger-Payne; arr. by Eveyln Simpson-Curenton. See "Come On In My Room," (No. 525) in African American Heritage Hymnal. ed. Delores Carpenter and Nolan E. Williams. (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2001), p.838.
[92] Raboteau, ibid, pp.8-9.

the innermost longings of the slaves, as evidenced in the following narrative (and others like it):

> We prayed a lot to be free and the Lord done heered us. We didn't have no song books and the Lord done give us our songs and when we sing them at night it jus' whispering so nobody hear us…[93]

Undoubtedly, (enslaved and freed) Africans went to great lengths in their efforts to commune with God. It was common practice for them to construct 'hidden' prayer rooms for themselves out in the plantation fields, under brush or 'hush' arbors, huddled behind wetted blankets, on their knees in the slave quarters praying over pools of water or into overturned pots – all of this was done as a means of drowning out the sounds of their prayers from reverberating and/or wafting back across the fields, within the slave masters' range of hearing.

The third ritual practice I'd like to introduce as emanating from traditional African religion is extemporaneous dance – chiefly those stylistically similar to the 'ring shout'.[94] This liberative form of ecstatic worship is primarily demonstrated by rhythmic patterns of bodily movement[95] otherwise exhibited through acts like running, leaping, dancing, rocking, spinning, etc.[96] The shout provided a temporary, welcomed relief from the pent-up emotions (enslaved and freed) Africans experienced under the white slave masters' oppression.

> If anyone became animated and cried out, the others would quickly stop the noise by placing their hands over the offender's mouth…When slaves got "happy an' shout[ed]" in their cabins, "couldn't nobody hyar 'em," …

[93] Raboteau, ibid, p.218.
[94] Ibid, p.68.
[95] Ibid, p.65.
[96] Ibid, p.72.

> "caze dey didn't make no fuss on de dirt flo," but just in case, "one stan' in de do' an' watch."[97]

In many traditional African religious societies the ring-shout was often associated with spirit possession. However, while I eschew 'spirit possession' language for the purposes of this work in view of its negative connotation,[98] I ascribe to language more reflective of American revivalism as in the 'manifestation of the Holy Spirit' or indwelling of the Holy Spirit, of Christian belief systems. For some in the Africa American community, the historical significance of the 'shout' tends to be minimized as a ritualized form of worship, being otherwise relegated to 'naive emotionalism' (the designation of which was instilled by white slave owners).[99] These beliefs were adopted by some of the more affluent blacks who considered themselves (intellectually) above engaging in such forms of bodily religious expression; and, who looked condescendingly upon blacks who did. Nonetheless, extemporaneous dance as a ritualized form of worship bears witness to the presence, activity and embodiment of the Holy Spirit to empower, enable and equip individuals for Christian service.[100]

> Ritual, in this perspective, was supposed to bring the divine power tangibly into this world, so that people might be transformed, healed and made whole. The presence of God became manifest in the words, gestures and the bodily movements of the believers. In this ecstatic form of African American worship, the divine was embodied in the faithful.[101]

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[97] Ibid, p.214.
[98] The phenomenon of 'spirit possession' in American Christendom is often associated with demonic activity in persons, objects, etc., as in body hopping; and, is considered to be either useful or harmful in many religious traditions. However, this physical expressiveness in other cultures is indicative of a manifestation of the divine presence.
[99] Raboteau, ibid, p.222.
[100] Ibid, p.61.
[101] Raboteau, Albert J. Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.45.

The essence of Raboteau's work points to the rich cultural heritage entrenched in traditional African and African American religions. Since enslaved Africans were prohibited from engaging in religious practices without supervision, they constructed for themselves hidden symbols, codes, meetings and practices as a means of enduring the weighty burden of endless oppression. I contend that it is from these three liberating ritual practices of oral praise, prayer and/or petition and extemporaneous dance, that (enslaved and freed) Africans were able to endure the psychological effects of oppression causal of depression during slavery. In fact, I believe (enslaved and freed) Africans instinctively utilized religion as a form of social capital[102] to combat the deleterious effects of oppression. "For people from such a world, religious activities were areas of considerable potential creativity and social strength. The slaves in the New World used religion as the central area for the creation and recreation of community."[103] Utilizing religion to re-create a sense of community amongst the slaves is critical to understanding the relational dyad between the preacher and the congregation in the African American religious tradition, as it regards *allegiance to the preacher.* Without the unifying presence of the slave preacher, there was no sense of community.

The Preacher as Pillar: Clarifying
the Role of the Black Preacher During Slavery

[102] 'Social capital' is a term frequently used within the spheres of public health to describe how a group maximizes the strength of its human relationships to form social support networks that provide social control, collective efficacy, cohesion/bonding and trust. Almedom, Astier M. "Social Capital and Mental Health: An Interdisciplinary Review of Primary Evidence." *Social Science and Medicine*, 2005; 61, 943-964. However, little research exists that explores the negative impact of social capital on an 'individual' level.
[103] Rawick, ibid, p.32.

The emergence of the slave preacher is a phenomenon of black religion which also finds its origins in traditional African religion. Once more, I cannot adequately substantiate my claim of African American clergy depression, without first framing the historical context from which this heralded leader emerges. Therefore, the goal of this work is not to provide an exhaustive history of traditional African religion, but, to clarify how particular aspects of traditional African religion help to inform our understandings of the African American religious experience as it regards the efficacy and communal authority bestowed upon the black preacher.

Primarily, the socio-historical context from which the slave preacher evolves can be directly linked to the institution of African chieftaincy or kingship, such as that created by the AKAN in Ghana.[104] The AKAN political system of government posits the chief as the sole, visible representation[105] of the ancestors linked through the bloodline.

> Among freed African Americans, the spirit of African kingship was transmitted to the clergy, whom the community viewed as their primary leaders embued with charismatic powers. Traditionally, the latter always exercised enormous authority and influence, although their powers were always more considerably limited in scope than those of African kings. Yet, from the earliest times to the present day African American clergy have been acknowledged as the titular heads of their local communities and have enjoyed the highest respect and loyalty of their people, who care for their material needs and often bestow lavish gifts on them and their families.[106]

What I find most noteworthy about Paris' claim, is that he provides us with the framework for understanding the historic cultural linkage between African chieftaincy and/or kingship, and the black preacher in America, as it pertains to how the construct of

[104] Awuah-Nyamekye, Samuel. "The Role of Religion in the Institution of Chieftaincy: The Case of the AKAN of Ghana." *Lumina*, 2009 Oct; 20(2), pp.1-17.
[105] Awuah-Nyamekye, ibid, pp.1-17.
[106] Paris, ibid, p.60.

'slave preacher' materialized in the New World. From him, we are able to envision how the customary role of chieftaincy in AKAN society was reincorporated in the context of slave religion in the New World. While AKAN matrilineal connections may not have been apparent as it regards direct blood ties, the following similarities between AKAN chieftaincy and the black preacher, are otherwise consistent: 1) [the structuralization of slave religion prompted] the need for communal governance amongst the slaves; 2) the slave preacher as a source of religious authority in plantation life; 3) the slave preacher as a political catalyst for change amidst oppression; and, 4) the slave preacher as the visible representation of the spiritual embodiment of God.[107] These are four identifiable ways in which the leadership principles attributed to AKAN chieftaincy are distinctively discernible in the person of the slave preacher.

Very little scholarship has been written about the person, function and communal authority of the Negro preacher during slavery. This may perhaps be attributed to several assumptions: 1) a view of the slave preacher as illiterate; 2) a dismissal of the relevancy of the slave preacher amidst structural oppression; 3) the prevalence of charlatans[108] who posed as slave preachers to avoid the drudgery of plantation toil (which was a common occurrence at that time); and, 4) a view of the slave preacher as an instrument of white oppression.[109] In all, there is much to be gained from examining the

[107] Awuah-Nyamekye, ibid, pp.1-17.

[108] It was quite common for some slaves to dub themselves as preachers because it afforded them the opportunity to travel from plantation to plantation to preach to neighboring plantation communities; and, it provided them with the privilege of dressing in more desirable clothing than the other slaves, clothing more befitting of the title 'preacher.' Raboteau, ibid, p.237.

[109] Hamilton suggests, for the most part, the slaves understood the plight of the preacher as it regards his and/or her need to obey the master by preaching messages which reeked of 'docility' to the slaves. Most slaves viewed the vicarious position that the slave

person of the slave preacher and exactly what it was about him/her that aided in holding the fabric of the slave community together, despite the presence of profound racial, social, economic, sexual and spiritual exploitation.

In Raboteau's descriptive of the slave preacher, he suggests the preacher was the most central figure in slave life on the plantation. As such, the slave preacher was constantly inundated with threats of physical violence and often viewed with suspicion by the slave masters. While some slave preachers were allowed to conduct religious services within and amongst slave communities, others were kept under the watchful eye of masters for fear of preaching freedom or equality with whites, and thereby, would be punished severely for doing so.

> Preaching the 'True Word of God' very often called for the preacher to live in two worlds – a kind of prophetic schizophrenia. Such schizophrenia was not pathological, a stereotype of white history, but methodological in view of the dual tasks the slave preachers were called to perform. The ability to function in this dual world of reality proved both a survival mechanism and an insurance policy that would enable the continuance of the needed word of truth.[110]

Whether illiterate or memory-passage versed[111], the slave preacher was subjected to both the constant ridicule and the awe of whites for their god-inspired musings and

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preacher found him/herself in, as not being different from their own. Despite the slaves having to endure the preaching of the white ministers' sermons of 'obedience', they longed for the exceptional preaching they regularly experienced from the person(ality) of the slave preacher. See Hamilton, Charles V. The Black Preacher in America. (New York, NY: William Morrow & Co., Inc, 1972), p.40.

[110] Hicks, H. Beecher. Images of the Black Preacher: The Man Nobody Knows. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1977), p.38.

[111] Some slave preachers were illiterate, but, quite capable of recalling particular verses of scripture read to them by whites; and, they would, in turn, use those scriptural verses to preach to the slaves. While some secretly learned to read, others taught themselves how to read the bible or were often taught (the alphabet) by the slave master's children in exchange for certain allowances that children were forbidden to have such as coffee, etc. See Raboteau, ibid, p.233.

their undeniable oratorical prowess – undoubtedly one of the hallmarks emanating from a rich oral heritage.

> He never learned no real readin' and writin' but he sure knowed his bible and would hold his hand out and make like he was readin' and preach de purtiest preachin' you ever heard.[112]

While the insidious nature of slavery taught the slaves how to suppress their feelings, the liberality of religion taught them how to release the selfsame. Thus, in the context of religious meetings, it was the slave preacher who unified and empowered the slave community by targeting the brokenness of their wearied souls and infusing them with injections of hope to withstand the evils of their present-day oppressive reality.

Many scholars suggest that the slaves, for the most part, did not believe they would live to see freedom in their lifetime. As a result, their prayers were focused heaven-ward and/or were thus, other-worldly. This is further evidenced in the language of some of the Negro spirituals which make repeated references to the theme of *flying away*, "I'll Fly Away" and "Steal Away." These types of songs were multi-purposed communications which were useful in disclosing the slaves' desire to be freed from oppression. The songs served to impart surreptitious communal happenings such as, to indicate that a slave had escaped the plantation, or that a slave disappeared into the night sky or 'flew away' (which was an implicit message meaning a slave committed suicide in an attempt to go home to Africa to be with the ancestors).

To add to this understanding, slaves frequently committed suicide as a means of escaping slavery. For example, the Igbo[113] slaves TSCR[114] from Nigeria, West Africa,

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[112] Ibid, p.234.
[113] Igbo, Ibo or Ebo – describes a population of Africans from Igboland, Nigeria, West Africa.

were known by slave traders as being noncompliant and prone to depression[115], which caused them to be an undesirable breed of African for slave trading. The Igbo were a proud people who refused to be held in captivity in the New World. Upon their arrival at St. Simons Island, Georgia on the slave ship 'Schooner York', in mid-May of 1803, a particular group of Igbo slaves were to be led to the dock for auctioning off. But instead, while still chained together, they turned in unison and followed their chief, by proceeding to walk valiantly together into Dunbar Creek (in pursuit of deliverance). While so doing, they simultaneously chanted the prayer, "The Water Spirit brought us. The Water Spirit will take us home." The slaves' point of entry into Dunbar Creek remains marked today as *Igbo Landing,*[116] signifying their act of bravery; and, dubbing them as 'the flying Africans.'[117] While some scholars proceed to dismiss this event as merely legend, the descendants of the Igbo slaves (the Gullah people) of the Georgia Sea Island plantations, Igbo scholars, and (African) American historians, hold fast to the strength of the oral

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[114] TSCR – traded, sold/stolen, captured, resold.

[115] Knowledge of the Igbo slave's tendency toward despondency was widely known amongst the slave traders. "There tendency to despondency, noted in many parts of the New World, and a tradition of suicide as a way out of difficulties has often been remarked, as, for example, in Haiti, where the old saying [Ibos pend' cor' a yo – the Ibos hang themselves] is still current." See Rawick, ibid, p.26.

[116] The descendants of the Igbo slaves who survived the drowning, ensured that the brave legacy of their ancestors was not forgotten – see Glynn County Georgia documents, www.glynncounty.org/documents/8/8188/542/APPROVED.

[117] Igbo Landing is a landmark off the coast of South Carolina on St. Simons Island, Georgia where Igbo slaves, upon embarking on the shores of the New World, decided that rather than to live as slaves, they would fight for their freedom; and, thus, travel with the Water Spirit, back to their native motherland, Africa. Similar acts of Igbo defiance were reported as having occurred in both Haiti and Belize. See Gomez, Michael. Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p.119.

tradition by concluding this act of Igbo rebellion to be an historic, factual account that is consistent with the tragedies of southern slavery.

It is worth noting that a significant portion of African slaves were extracted from the West African region of Nigeria called the 'Bight of Biafra' where Igbo peoples originated from.[118] Inherent among the Igbo was a strong sense of communal identity. The Igbo people comprised a diverse group of distinct cultural and religious practices:

> …the belief was strong within the African-based community that at death one retuned to the land of one's birth. Thus flying via suicide was a sure way, perhaps the only way, to get back, at which point one could be reincarnated and live in the land of family and relations, far away from the experience called America.[119]

While there is limited scholarship available on the rate and/or prevalence of slave suicide, the legacy of the slaves at Igbo Landing suggests three things: 1) most importantly, the widespread knowledge amongst the slave traders of the presence of depression and suicide among the Igbo slaves; 2) the collective power of the slaves' will, in their determination to transcend the evils of oppression; and, 3) the demonstrative authority by which the Igbo slaves' heralded leader (or chief) directed them towards access to their god(s).

Without a doubt, the role of the slave preacher (and/or the spiritual leader among African peoples, as evidenced in the above-mentioned occurrence at Igbo Landing) has been a substantial one. Despite the overwhelming presence of oppression, the slave

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[118] "…for the first half of the nineteenth century, around seventy-five percent of the captives from Biafra; still came from the Igbo-Ibibio area'…The number of slaves taken from the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra rose to very large numbers after 1730." Gomez, ibid, p.124.

[119] Ibid, p.120.

preacher was able to meet the challenges of leadership[120] by preaching inspiring messages of hope, as a means of unifying the slave community and staving off the dehumanizing psychological affects of chattel slavery. For some, the slave preacher served as a role model and teacher, the one who provided them a direct connection between the human and the divine. The slave preacher enhanced the lived reality of the slaves' daily existence by buffering their experiences of captivity with a sense of communal identity. He/she offered the slaves the regularly portioned spiritual nutrients of encouragement and comfort, which were necessary to fortify their broken spirits. Through the art of powerful story-telling, strategic intercession and a strengthening of the bonds of religious community, the slave preacher provided the slaves with a semblance of personhood, which their enslavement robbed them of.

> …the antebellum Negro preacher was the greatest single factor in determining the spiritual destiny of the slave community. He it was who gave to the masses of his fellows a point of view that became for them a veritable Door of Hope.[121]

Basically, from slavery to freedom, the slave preacher was the only individual who journeyed with (enslaved and freed) Africans throughout the transitory seasons of life. From baptism to burial, it was the preacher who bore the weight of the people by being privy to their reality of societal oppression, steering them through the ebbs and flows of communal life; and, by being a spiritual presence amidst the onslaught of life's circumstances. It is the slave preacher then, who functioned as a pivotal communal component, competent strategic resource and trusted confidante. This is why African Americans so readily lay claim to ownership of the preacher with expressions like, *my*

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[121] Hicks, ibid, p.27.

pastor or *my* preacher.[122] It is because at the most basic human level, the preacher affords African Americans with the kind of mutual respect, care, personhood and leadership, that they fail to receive in the context of the broader white world.

What warrants closer examination of the slave preacher in this work, surrounds the origins of the concept 'allegiance to the preacher.' Over the years, African American Christians have developed a sense of loyalty and trust toward the preacher. This may stem from the fact that (the black church and) the black preacher appear to have been the only bastions of hope remaining in the black community, choosing not to 'sell out'; but rather, to maintain the obligatory stance of ensuring the advancement of the African American community writ-large.

Nevertheless, conferring this level of influence upon any one individual may prove to be a problematic concept for some to grasp, but in following with the cultural tradition of (enslaved and freed) Africans, it is reflective of the broader communal desire of the people.

For example, in W. E. B. DuBois' text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, he alludes to this notion of 'allegiance to the preacher' in his striking depiction of the power and influence held by the preacher within the context of the black community (in both life and death). He writes:

> …Pa Willis was the tall and powerful black Moses who led the Negroes for a generation and led them well. He was a Baptist preacher, and when he died, two thousand black people followed him to the grave; and now they preach his funeral sermon each year.[123]

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[122] Hamilton, ibid, p.19.
[123] DuBois, William E. B. The Souls of Black Folk. (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1995), pp.159 – 160.

From a black pastoral theological perspective, it is clear that the relational dyad between the preacher and the pew fosters an allegiance which stems from an understanding that people will follow the individual who consistently provides for their social, spiritual, emotional, and psychological needs – not blindly, but out of a sense of respect, gratitude and mutual positive regard.[124] Essentially, the development of this type of allegiance was in all probability hinged upon the fact that the slave preacher was keenly aware of the subtleties and intricacies that detailed the everyday existence of the slaves' communal life. The slaves' sense of relatedness and devotedness, coupled with traditional African religious practices whereby great value was bestowed upon spiritual leaders, points to the slaves' visualization of the slave preacher as the sole individual capable of identifying with them in their oppression – not as master or lord, but as one who was particularly situated to identify with and comprehend the depths of their social, emotional and spiritual turmoil.

> By their mere presence and continued leadership, the black preachers offer a steady figure with which people can identify. They represent continuity and, in an important sense, stability – the only stable strand in the lives of many people who have been wracked by instability and abrupt changes.[125]

H. Beecher Hicks refers to this 'allegiance to the preacher' as part of the *romance* of the black pastorate. Here, he suggests that the intimate nature of the relationship between an African American pastor and his/her people involves the supportive development of that relationship over a period of time. The African American church

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[124] Mutual empowerment in Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) suggests "The power-with approach to relationships increases relational connection 'in which each person can feel an increased sense of well-being' through being in touch with others and finding ways to act on thoughts and feelings." Walker, Maureen and Wendy Rosen. How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational Cultural Therapy. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2004), p.230.

[125] Hamilton, ibid, p.36.

remains the sole vestige of hope for the liberation and survival of its people (i.e., as it regards education, economic empowerment, social action, etc.). Historically, the presence of structural oppression in America has for the most part, positioned the African American pastor as having to be the colloquial counselor, psychiatrist, lawyer, physician, advocate, etc., for the majority of his/her people. As such, within the confines of each intimate pastoral encounter, the nucleus of the relationship between the pastor and his/her parishioner is thereby strengthened even the more.[126]

Socioeconomic Implications of Race-Class Oppression

The reality of societal oppression and its physiological impact on the psyche of African Americans (as a whole) is irrefutable. While some scholars may suggest that an argument for oppression as 'causal' of depression, colludes with a type of sentimental victimization in its suggestion of slavery as a tie-in to the state of black America,[127] my

[126] In elucidating the demands of the African American pastorate, Hicks lays out how the development of the connectional encounter within the preacher-pew dyad unfolds. Here, he describes how relationships are fortified through repeated experiences of vulnerability and intimacy. In so doing, he helps us understand how the constancy of oppression and isolation from the dominant white world, positions African Americans to adhere all the more, to what is constant and sure – the mainstay of the black church and the black preacher. "Most black pastors have a telephone which rings day and night. Many are the people who need to hear a reassuring voice, to hear a kind word, to know somebody cares. The counseling event takes place whenever and wherever possible. And it is in the sharing of personal moments and intimate secrets that the romance is all the more deepened and solidified." Hicks, ibid, p.96.

[127] William E. Cross argues the origin of contemporary social conditions among African Americans is racism. He links the history of race discrimination among African Americans to the following: post-slavery denial of reparations, the failure to redistribute land, the enforcement of unethical tenant farm contracts, racist recruitment practices within labor unions positing 'white male only' entry and the "deliberate underdevelopment" of housing, education and employment among poor southern African Americans. See William E. Cross's chapter (twenty-four), 'Black Psychological Functioning and the Legacy of Slavery: Myths and Realities' in Yael Danieli's anthology on stress and coping entitled, International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma. (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1998), pp.391-92.

retort is, not so! I am suggesting there is an undeniable link between systemic oppression and depression among African Americans.[128]

Exactly what is it that has enabled a population of people to sustain the psychological blows of hostile societal disregard for over four hundred years? On the heels of the historic election of the first black president in the White House, I think this is a valid question. How is it that African Americans (on average) continue to struggle in their quest for survival in America?

To begin, there are multiple socioeconomic factors present which perpetuate a pervasive structural exclusion of African Americans from the broader society: poverty, unemployment, broken family systems, illiteracy, crime, substance abuse, food insecurity, homicide, innumerable health disparities and the 'new plantation,' otherwise known as mass incarceration, just to name a few. Each of these societal dilemmas informs for us just how well (the majority of) African Americans continue to fare in the context of the broader white world.

From a public health perspective, I contend that socioeconomic status (SES) is a prime predictor of health/wealth disparities among the African American population. Phelan and Link[129] suggest that socioeconomic status encompasses all of those factors that exceed one's physical health, including those environmental components (i.e., social conditions) that have a marked impact on one's sense of well-being as it pertains to

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[128] "Uninsured minority individuals often lack access to preventive care, particularly mental health services, and often delay seeking treatment for many conditions until they become so severe that emergency care or hospitalization is required." – Boyd-Franklin, Nancy. Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American Experience. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2003), p.262.

[129] Phelan, Jo C., Bruce Link, Ana Diez-Roux, Ichiro Kawachi and Bruce Levin. "Fundamental Causes of Social Inequalities in Mortality: A Test of the Theory." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior.* 2004, Vol. 45 (September): 265-285.

money, power, influence, education, relationships, etc. Essentially, what they are arguing for is socioeconomic status as "causal in mortality" since access to and the "purposive utilization of resources" can have a significant impact on health outcomes.

Given that lower SES African Americans have limited access to or knowledge of preventative health resources, adequate housing and equitable pay they are often hindered in their attempts to overcome the social conditions that permeate their 'lived' reality, which in turn, eventually compromises their health outcomes.

Marmot[130] points to income as an indicator of socioeconomic status, stating "inequalities in health are due to inequalities in society." Unlike those of middle-class African Americans, lower SES African Americans are frequently isolated from the broader society (as it regards wealth and health inequities) in the following manners: 1) they are commonly confined to working in minimum wage jobs which do little to provide a sufficient income for attaining financial stability or security; 2) they are often required to work excessive overtime in an attempt to make financial ends meet, which takes its toll on their physical and emotional health; and, 3) they are regularly subjected to living in substandard housing conditions which are predominantly found in depressed neighborhoods that often invoke concerns around safety, crime, education, food security, health, etc. Marmot also contends that "low control over life circumstances is related to increased risk of poor health."

Marmot does a good job of conceptualizing the validity of the link between SES and health in his reference to research findings on the social organization of macaque monkeys, whereby 'increased levels of artherosclerosis are attributed to rank/hierarchal

[130] Marmot, Michael G. "Understanding Social Inequalities in Health." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine.* 2003, Vol. 46, No.3, (Summer): S9-S23.

associations within groups'.[131] This is useful research for comprehending how socioeconomic status impacts health outcomes in human beings. For the most part, marginalized populations living in the United States are seemingly locked into a trans-generational, cycle of poverty that is nearly impossible to escape.

Another indicator of health/wealth disparity in America is racism. The globalization of America, as it pertains to the influx of differing racial/ethnic groups, posits particular populations in the United States (chiefly, African Americans), as being more susceptible to higher rates of psychosocial stress, than others. Attempting to permeate the clandestine structures of a principally white male-dominated society, proves challenging at best, for culturally different populations. Of this, Williams and Jackson[132] state, "People of disadvantaged social status tend to report elevated levels of stress and may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of stressors." For disadvantaged African Americans, these kinds of oppressive, psychosocial stressors can lead to unhealthy responses to oppression in an attempt to stave off depression.

Further, Williams and Jackson outline three contributory factors associated with chronic stress among marginalized African Americans as it regards structural racism: 1) living in geographically depressed neighborhoods (residential demographics are critical in determining greater accessibility to educational resources and services within communities); 2) unemployment and/or low income; and, 3) healthcare services (for the purposes of this argument, unemployment and healthcare among lower SES individuals

[131] The study reveals an increase in stress levels among macaque monkeys following a hierarchal re-positioning within groups; thereby, creating artherosclerosis in the lower hierarchal group of monkeys, over the dominant group who was in control. See Marmot, p.S9-S23.

[132] Williams, David R. and Pamela Braboy Jackson. "Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health." *Health Affairs.* 2005 (March/April), Vol. 24 (2), 325-334.

are inextricably linked factors, since research shows lower socioeconomic populations like "African American men have the highest rates of unemployment and therefore are less likely to have health insurance"[133].

Without a doubt, Blacks are struggling to survive in America because they repetitively encounter compounded experiences of race-class discrimination which increases their stress levels on a daily basis. The context of their marginalization suggests they are more at-risk for becoming victims of violent crimes, housing discrimination and inequitable labor practices (which increases the likelihood of limited access to adequate healthcare and/or preventative educational health services). Each factor alludes to how structural racism affects health disparities among African Americans by promoting conditions of underlying chronic stress, of which, most blacks may not be aware they are suffering from.

From a socioeconomic perspective, what links racism to health disparities among African Americans, is the undeniable presence of societal structures which perpetually implement the use of power, privilege and wealth inequities against an otherwise marginalized population – in other words, the systematic oppression of African Americans is socially constructed.

It is important to note that higher socioeconomic status (HSES) and/or middle-class blacks have also not fared well amidst this kind of societal dilemma. This is due in large measure to the longstanding assumption that middle and upper-class blacks have very little to complain about as it regards race-class oppression due to their social,

[133] Airhihenbuwa, Collins O. and Leandris Liburd. "Eliminating Health Disparities in the African American Population: The Interface of Culture, Gender and Power." 2006 August, Vol.33(4):488-501.

educational and financial standing.[134] For the most part, upper and middle-class African Americans continue to find themselves besieged by the same psychological frustrations as blacks of lower socioeconomic status – being denied and/or given minimal access to white male-dominated systems.

Notwithstanding, centuries of socioeconomic race-class discrimination, exploitation and oppression, there is a distinctive vibrancy that surrounds the African American cultural tradition in that, it is replete with resources (i.e., literature, music, poetry, art, etc.) from which to draw, that give full expression to black life and thought throughout particular stages in history. For example, in the lyrics of Albert A. Goodson's celebrated hymn "*We've Come This Far By Faith*"[135] Goodson superbly captures the faith-filled determinations of a beleaguered people, whose only *constancy*, was belief in God. He writes:

We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord,
Trusting in his holy Word, he's never failed us yet.
Oh, can't turn around, we've come this far by faith.

Quite similarly, in James Weldon Johnsons' renowned hymn, 'Lift Every Voice and Sing', how apropos are his words in depicting the sentiment and resoluteness of a people during that time. I place particular emphasis on the second and third stanzas:

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet,
Come to the place for which our fathers died

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[134] Cose, Ellis. The Rage of A Privileged Class. (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), p.106.

[135] This hymn was originally written as a poem to be recited by his [Johnson's] students, when he was a school principal in 1900. It was used to introducing Booker T. Washington, who was scheduled to speak at the school in celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday. See Eyerman, Ron. Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.79.

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou Who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou Who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee.
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.[136]

(Enslaved and free) Africans, both pre and post-civil war, were convinced that through the salvific power of a transcendent God, it was possible to derive a semblance of hope for traversing the grueling road of societal injustice that lie ahead.

As appropriate as those lyrics were then, they were just as fitting to hear as Dr. Joseph Lowery used them to pronounce the benediction at the 2009 inauguration of the first African American president in America's history, President Barack Obama. Therefore, I contend that it is the presence of faith amidst this kind of despair that has served as the primary buffer for African Americans, against the psychological brutality of endemic structural oppression. African Americans have had to somehow hold firm to a legacy brimming with eschatological hope – a hope capable of superseding the overwhelming forces of societal oppression.

In light of this reality, when viewing the trans-generational transmission of depression as an historical trauma for African Americans, in conjunction with endemic

[136] Written James Weldon Johnson and composed by J. Rosamond Johnson. See "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (No. 1) in Lift Every Voice and Sing II: An African American Hymnal. ed. Horace Clarence Boyer. (New York, NY: Church Publishing, Inc., 1993), p.xxx.

oppression in contemporary societal, it is easy to envision how this places the African American preacher in a peculiar quandary.

Essentially, the sustaining prominence and communal responsibility of the African American preacher both in the black church and the broader community, sets the context for understanding how the problematic bind of internalized or external expectations arises for the black preacher. Thrusting these kinds of expectations upon the psyche or personhood of the black preacher creates a type of psycho-socio-theological conflict around 'being', versus 'doing'. This inability to live up to personal and/or culturally induced expectations can lead to depression in African American clergy leaders. In the next chapter, I present my research findings on the rate of depression among a population of pastors utilizing the Beck Depression Inventory.

CHAPTER THREE

SIFTING THROUGH THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Method: Employing the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-IITR)

When psychiatrist Aaron T. Beck and his colleagues designed the original Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) in 1961[137] it was to determine the existence and severity of depression symptoms in adult and adolescent (aged thirteen and older) psychiatric patients' and their accounts of their experiences. As such, the patients' responses, coupled with the clinical observations of the staff, prompted the construction of the BDI. The BDI is a twenty-one (21) question self-report instrument that measures the severity of depressive symptoms, utilizing a four-point rating scale of 0 – 3,[138] with three (3) representing the highest rating as it regards severity of mood over a two week period of time.

A revision was made to the original BDI in 1979, offering a new instrument, the BDI-IA, which featured the removal and replacement of four distinct criteria for assessing for depression. Weight loss, body image change, somatic preoccupation and work difficulty, were subsequently replaced by: 1) agitation; 2) worthlessness; 3) concentration difficulty; and, 4) loss of energy. These four items were considered more appropriate for addressing those kinds of symptoms associated with the type of severe depression that may warrant hospitalization. Furthermore, two additional items were subsequently altered to reflect the increases and/or decreases in both appetite and sleep patterns.

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[137] Psychiatrist Aaron Beck designed the original Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) along with C. Ward, M. Mendelson, J. Mock and J. Erbaugh.

[138] Items #16 and #18 comprise a 7 point scale to indicate changes in appetite and sleep.

When the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders (commonly known as the DSM) changed the diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder, it prompted a much needed revision to the BDI-II in 1996.

Sample

In this study, a quasi-random/convenience sampling of thirty-one[139] male and female pastors was taken at two east coast clergy conferences held in Baltimore, Maryland and Princeton, New Jersey, to measure the severity of depressive symptoms among clergy, using the BDI. I emphasize the use of the term 'a quasi-random/convenience' study to indicate the confluence of both the randomness and convenience of: 1) selecting the conference venues to conduct the study; 2) securing approval and/or ecclesiastical endorsement from the sundry governing bodies to implement the survey; and, 3) the availability and willingness on the part of conference attendees to participate in completing the self-report survey instrument. The study recruitment process occurred within a thirty day timeframe.

Sample Characteristics

Participants in the African American Clergy Depression (AACD) study met the following criteria: they were a combination of male and female clergy with 100% of the racial makeup identifying as being persons of African American[140] descent; they were all

[139] At the onset of the study, I established my sample size as (25) participants. However, after gathering the data, I felt as if the representation of female respondents to male respondents was disproportionate. Therefore, I increased the sample size to (31) participants, by including those respondents who omitted answering one of the survey questions.

[140] Despite the fact that eligibility criterion was established, there was one person who raised the issue of nonparticipation. As a result, I will broaden the base of the definition of who is included in future studies.

serving primarily African American congregations; they were all senior, solo or interim pastors; they all had one or more years of pastoral experience; they were all employed in the United States; and, they were all capable of providing informed consent.

The sample size comprised thirty-one (31) study participants, with twenty 20 males (55%) and eleven 11 females (45%). They all met the criterion of being between the ages of 32 and 70 years of age, with the mean age being 50.03 years (SD=49.97); and, with the actual age range being between 36 and 66 years of age.[141] The surveys were completed in a conference room setting.

While I originally indicated drawing data from a sample size of twenty-five study participants, I was unaware that I could include those respondents who omitted answering one of the survey questions, without distorting my data set.[142] As a result, I decided to include those participants in the sample, bringing the total sample size to thirty-one (31) participants.

Although a sample scale of thirty-one participants seems relatively small, I am satisfied that it moderately reflects the larger body of African American pastors; in that, the scale of the sample does not necessarily deviate from the true population mean, relative to the number of male versus female clergy who lead African American congregations in the United States.[143]

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[141] This factor does not capture the age of the one female study participant who omitted indicating her age.

[142] Fowler, Floyd. Survey Research Methods: Applied Social Research Methods Series. 4th Ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), p.158. Fowler suggests that the rate of item nonresponse in well-designed surveys is generally low; and, the potential for those nonresponses to skew the data is minimal.

[143] This speaks to the amount of male clergy in proportion to female clergy who serve in pastoral leadership roles in African American churches.

This is a non-gender based, socio-behavioral study comprising data collected from pastors in attendance at two African American clergy conferences held in Maryland and New Jersey, respectively. The process of collecting data from clergy in this type of conference setting was fairly simple – given the fact that it is quite customary to see pastors meandering around lobby areas, frequenting vendor tables, seeking professional literature, examining congregational resources, reconnecting with former colleagues, and the like. The recruitment process for the study was four-fold: 1) Introducing the study, 2) soliciting eligibility, 3) obtaining oral consent; and, 4) distributing the surveys.

Response Rate

In the process of employing the BDI, participants were fully informed[144] of their right to omit any of the questions they felt uncomfortable responding to, prior to administering the self-report inventory (as mandated by the Institutional Review Board's ethics protocol for conducting research with human subjects.). As a whole, four study participants (one male and three females) omitted answering one survey question each. There was an additional study participant who responded to one survey question twice; and, in this instance, I computed the higher of the two item ratings – one rating being zero and the other rating being one. The missing data consisted of the following variables relative to: age (as in the female study participant mentioned above), sadness, self-criticalness and a loss of interest in sex.

The highest possible score on the BDI per respondent totals sixty-three (63), with the lowest possible score being zero. A total score of zero indicates that a respondent

[144] Participants were also given a hardcopy of the study information indicating the same, including their option to withdraw their information from being included in the study.

circled zeroes for every item on the survey. In all, three (3) study participants (two males and one female) represented this category.

Largely, participants were enthused[145] about taking part in a study designed specifically with them in mind; and, participants walked away with the satisfaction of having contributed to a worthwhile study – namely, one about depression among African American clergy.

Analyzing the Data

One of the first tasks in interpreting the survey data was to compute each study participant's responses to the twenty-one questions outlined in the BDI. Using IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, I defined the variables, entered my data, cleaned up the data sets by double-checking all data entry; and, then I proceeded with computing the data for analysis. In analyzing the data sets for overall participant responses, I began by establishing the frequency and percentages for each of the items that respondents indicated on the BDI. Any items with no respondent values[146] are not reflected in the analysis.

The table below outlines the symptoms of measurement found on the BDI. It shows the frequency (F), standard deviations (SD) and percentages symptomatic (%). The table captures the sum total of study participant responses:

Symptoms of Measurement on the BDI-II Self-Report Inventory
Table 3.1

Item	F	SD	%

[145] These comments were communicated as study participants returned their self-report inventories to me.
[146] Any item on the survey which did not yield a response from any of the study participants was not included in the data.

1. Sadness	9	22	26.6
2. Pessimism	6	25	19.3
3. Past Failure	11	20	23.4
4. Loss of Pleasure	10	21	32.3
5. Guilty Feelings	16	15	51.6
6. Punishment Feelings	7	24	22.6
7. Self-Dislike	9	22	29.0
8. Self-Criticalness	13	18	40.0
9. Suicidal Thoughts or Wishes	2	29	6.5
10. Crying	11	20	35.5
11. Agitation	13	18	41.9
12. Loss of Interest	9	22	29.1
13. Indecisiveness	11	20	35.4
14. Worthlessness	4	27	12.9
15. Loss of Energy	24	7	77.4
16. Changes in Sleeping Pattern	19	12	61.4
17. Irritability	9	22	29.0
18. Changes in Appetite	17	14	54.8
19. Concentration Difficulty	15	16	48.4
20. Tiredness or Fatigue	18	13	58.1
21. Loss of Interest in Sex	14	17	43.3

The first item on the BDI relates to degrees of ‘sadness’ among respondents. The respondents’ options on the 0 – 3 rating scale were as follows:

0 – I do not feel sad
1 – I feel sad much of the time
2 – I am sad all of the time
3 – I am so sad or unhappy that I can’t stand it

In this category over 73% of respondents reported not feeling sad at all. As, the chart below indicates, approximately 23% of survey respondents reported feeling sad much of the time; and, roughly 3% reported experiencing sadness all of the time. None of the respondents reported feeling so sad or unhappy that they could not stand it.

Sadness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I do not feel sad	22	71.0	73.3	73.3
	I feel sad much of the time	7	22.6	23.3	96.7
	I am sad all of the time	1	3.2	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.2		
Total		31	100.0		

On item #2, respondents were asked to circle the statement which best described the way they had been feeling (again, over the past two weeks) as it relates to 'pessimism':

0 – I am not discouraged about my future
1 – I feel more discouraged about my future than I used to
2 – I do not expect things to work out for me
3 – I feel my future is hopeless and will only get worse

As the chart below indicates, just over 80.6% of respondents reported not being discouraged about their future, with 16.1% feeling more discouraged about their future than they used to; and, a little over 3% of pastors reportedly feeling they did not expect things to work out for them. None of the pastors reported feeling their future was hopeless and would only get worse.

Pessimism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am not discouraged about my future	25	80.6	80.6	80.6
	I feel more discouraged about my future than I used to	5	16.1	16.1	96.8
	I do not expect things to work out for me	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #3 consists of 'past failures':

0 – I do not feel like a failure
1 – I have failed more than I should have

2 – As I look back, I see a lot of failures
3 – I feel I am a total failure as a person

Here, 66.7% of respondents reported not feeling like a failure at all, with 26.7% of pastors feeling as if they failed more than they should have; and, approximately 6.7% reporting that as they look back, they see a lot of failures in their lives. No pastors reported feeling like a total failure as a person.

Past Failure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I do not feel like a failure	20	64.5	66.7	66.7
	I have failed more than I should have	8	25.8	26.7	93.3
	As I look back, I see a lot of failures	2	6.5	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.2		
Total		31	100.0		

Item #4 – 'Loss of Pleasure':

0 – I get as much pleasure as I ever did from the things I enjoy
1 – I don't enjoy things as much as I used to
2 – I get very little pleasure from the things I used to enjoy
3 – I can't get any pleasure from the things I used to enjoy

In this chart, over 67.7% of pastors reported getting as much pleasure as they ever did from the things they enjoy. But, 22.6% indicated not enjoying things as much as they used to; and, 9.7% getting very little pleasure from the things they used to enjoy. No pastors reported being unable to get any pleasure from the things they use to enjoy.

Loss of Pleasure

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I get as much pleasure as I ever did from the things I enjoy	21	67.7	67.7	67.7
	I don't enjoy things as much as I used to	7	22.6	22.6	90.3
	I get very little pleasure from the things I used to enjoy	3	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #5 – refers to 'Guilty Feelings':

0 – I don't feel particularly guilty
1 – I feel guilty over many things I have done or should have done
2 – I feel quite guilty most of the time
3 – I feel guilty all of the time

This item scale is particularly interesting, in that, the chart shows that percentages are split almost equally – with 48.4% of pastors reporting they don't feel particularly guilty; and, 51.6% of pastors reportedly feeling guilty over many things they have done or should have done in their lives. The data shows there were no pastors who reported feeling guilty most of the time, or all of the time.

Guilty Feelings

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't feel particularly guilty	15	48.4	48.4	48.4
	I feel guilty over many things I have done or should have done	16	51.6	51.6	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #6 – 'Punishment Feelings':

0 – I don't feel I am being punished
1 – I feel I may be punished
2 – I expect to be punished
3 – I feel I am being punished

In this chart the percentage of pastors who reported not feeling as if they were being punished is 77.4%, with 19.4% feeling as if they may be punished; and, 3.2% of pastors expecting that they would be punished. None of the pastors reported feeling as if they were currently being punished.

Punishment Feelings

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't feel I am being punished	24	77.4	77.4	77.4
	I feel I may be punished	6	19.4	19.4	96.8
	I expect to be punished	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #7 – 'Self-dislike':

0 – I feel the same about myself as ever
1 – I have lost confidence in myself
2 – I am disappointed in myself
3 – I dislike myself

Here the chart indicates the percentage of pastors who felt the same about themselves as ever, totaled 71%. Approximately 16.1% of pastors felt as if they had lost confidence in themselves; and, 12.9% reported experiencing feelings of disappointment with themselves. None of the pastors indicated not liking themselves.

Self-dislike

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I feel the same about myself as ever	22	71.0	71.0	71.0
	I have lost confidence in myself	5	16.1	16.1	87.1
	I am disappointed in myself	4	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #8 – 'Self-criticalness':

0 – I don't criticize or blame myself more than usual
1 – I am more critical of myself than I used to be
2 – I criticize myself for all of my faults

3 – I blame myself for everything bad that happens

On the 'self-criticalness' measure, 60% of pastors did not criticize or blame themselves more than usual, with 36.7% of pastors indicating they are more critical of themselves than they used to be; and, only 3.3% stating they criticize themselves for all of their faults. None of the pastors blamed themselves for everything bad that happens.

Self-criticalness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't criticize or blame myself more than usual	18	58.1	60.0	60.0
	I am more critical of myself than I used to be	11	35.5	36.7	96.7
	I criticize myself for all of my faults	1	3.2	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.2		
Total		31	100.0		

Item #9 – 'Suicidal Thoughts or Wishes':

0 – I don't have any thoughts of killing myself
1 – I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out
2 – I would like to kill myself
3 – I would kill myself if I had the chance

On this chart we see that 93% of the pastors surveyed reported they don't have any thoughts of killing themselves, with 6.5% indicating they have thoughts of killing themselves, but would not carry them out. Not one pastor reported they would like to kill themselves or that they would kill themselves if they had the chance.

Suicidal Thoughts

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't have any thoughts of killing myself	29	93.5	93.5	93.5
	I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would nto carry them out	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #10 – ‘Crying’:

0 – I don’t cry any more than I used to
1 – I cry more than I used to
2 – I cry over every little thing
3 – I feel like crying, but I can’t

Here, over 64.5% of the pastors indicated they don’t cry any more than they used to, with 29% stating they cry more than they used to; and, 6.5% of pastors responding they feel like crying, but can’t. None of the pastors reported crying over every little thing.

Crying

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I don't cry any more than I used to	20	64.5	64.5	64.5
	I cry more than I used to	9	29.0	29.0	93.5
	I feel like crying, but I can't	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #11 – ‘Agitation’:

0 – I am no more restless or wound up than usual
1 – I feel more restless or wound up than usual
2 – I am so restless or agitated that it’s hard to stay still
3 – I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something

As it regards the severity of ‘agitation’ among respondents, 58.1% of pastors reported being no more restless or wound up than usual, with 38.7% of pastors feeling more restless or wound up than usual; and, 3.2% feeling so restless or agitated they felt they had to keep moving or doing something. None of the pastors reported feeling so restless or agitated that they found it hard to stay still.

Agitation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am no more restless or wound up than usual	18	58.1	58.1	58.1
	I feel more restless or wound up than usual	12	38.7	38.7	96.8
	I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #12 – 'Loss of Interest':

0 – I have not lost interest in other people or activities
1 – I am less interested in other people or things than before
2 – I have lost most of my interest in other people or things
3 – It's hard to get interested in anything

In this chart, 71% of pastors indicated they had not lost interest in other people or activities, with 19.4% reportedly less interested in other people or things than before; and, 9.7% of pastors losing most of their interest in other people and things. None of the pastors reported finding it hard to get interested in anything.

Loss of Interest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I have not lost interest in other people or activities	22	71.0	71.0	71.0
	I am less interested in other people or things than before	6	19.4	19.4	90.3
	I have lost most of my interest in other people or things	3	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #13 – 'Indecisiveness':

0 – I make decisions about as well as ever
1 – I find it more difficult to make decisions than usual
2 – I have much greater difficulty in making decisions than I used to
3 – I have trouble making any decisions

The chart shows that 64.5% of respondents indicated making decisions about as well as ever. However, 29% found it more difficult to make decisions than usual, 3.2% felt they had much greater difficulty in making decisions than they used to; and, an additional 3.2% of pastors felt they had trouble making any decisions.

Indecisiveness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I make decisions about as well as ever	20	64.5	64.5	64.5
	I find it more difficult to make decisions than usual	9	29.0	29.0	93.5
	I have much greater difficulty in making decisions than I used to	1	3.2	3.2	96.8
	I have trouble making any decisions	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #14 – 'Worthlessness':

0 – I do not feel I am worthless
1 – I don't consider myself as worthwhile and useful as I used to
2 – I feel more worthless as compared to other people
3 – I feel utterly worthless

This chart shows 87% of respondents did not feel they were worthless. Another 9.7% of respondents reportedly did not consider themselves as worthwhile and useful as they used to; and, 3.2% felt more worthless as compared to other people. None of the respondents reported feeling utterly worthless.

Worthlessness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I do not feel I am worthless	27	87.1	87.1	87.1
	I don't consider myself as worthwhile and useful as I used to	3	9.7	9.7	96.8
	I feel more worthless as compared to other people	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #15 – 'Loss of Energy':

0 – I have as much energy as ever
1 – I have less energy than I used to have
2 – I don't have enough energy to do very much
3 – I don't have enough energy to do anything

On this item, the data reveals 22.6% of pastors reported having as much energy as ever. Conversely, an alarming 74.2% of pastors reported having less energy than they used to have; and, 3.2% of pastors indicated not having enough energy to do very much. None of the pastors reported not having enough energy to do anything.

Loss of Energy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I have as much energy as ever	7	22.6	22.6	22.6
	I have less energy than I used to have	23	74.2	74.2	96.8
	I don't have enough energy to do very much	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #16 – 'Changes in Sleeping Pattern':

0 – I have not experienced any change in my sleeping pattern
1a – I sleep somewhat more than usual
1b – I sleep somewhat less than usual
2a – I sleep a lot more than usual
2b – I sleep a lot less than usual
3a – I sleep most of the day
3b – I wake up 1-2 hours early and can't get back to sleep

This measurement of severity is somewhat different, in that, it has three additional items with the labels 'a' and 'b' assigned to ratings 1, 2, and 3 (to differentiate between increases and decreases). According to respondents' reporting, 38.7% of pastors indicated not experiencing any change in their sleeping patterns, with 32.2% reporting they slept somewhat more than usual. Exactly 19.4% of pastors slept a lot more than usual; and, 9.7% slept most of the day. None of the pastors reported sleeping somewhat less than usual, a lot less than usual or waking up 1-2 hours early and not being able to get back to sleep.

Change in Sleep

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I have not experienced any change in my sleeping pattern	12	38.7	38.7	38.7
	I sleep somewhat more than usual	10	32.3	32.3	71.0
	I sleep a lot more than usual	6	19.4	19.4	90.3
	I sleep most of the day	3	9.7	9.7	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #17 – 'Irritability':

0 – I am no more irritable than usual
1 – I am more irritable than usual
2 – I am much more irritable than usual
3 – I am irritable all the time

In this chart, 71% of pastors felt no more irritable than usual, with 29% reportedly more irritable than usual. None of the pastors reported being much more irritable than usual; and, none reported feeling irritable all the time.

Irritability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am no more irritable than usual	22	71.0	71.0	71.0
	I am more irritable than usual	9	29.0	29.0	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #18 – 'Changes in Appetite':

0 – I have not experienced any change in my appetite
1a – My appetite is somewhat less than usual
1b – My appetite is somewhat greater than usual
2a – Much appetite is much less than before
2b – My appetite is much greater than usual
3a – I have no appetite at all
3b – I crave food all the time

Similar to question #16, this measurement of severity presents three additional items with the labels 'a' and 'b' assigned to ratings 1, 2, and 3 (to differentiate between increases and decreases). According to respondents', 45.2% of pastors indicated not experiencing any change in their appetite. However, 51.6% reported their appetite was somewhat less than usual; and, another 3.2% reported their appetite as being much less than before.

Change in Appetite

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I have not experienced any change in my appetite	14	45.2	45.2	45.2
	My appetite is somewhat less than usual	16	51.6	51.6	96.8
	My appetite is much less than before	1	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #19 – 'Concentration Difficulty':

0 – I can concentrate as well as ever
1 – I can't concentrate as well as usual

2 – It's hard to keep my mind on anything for very long
3 – I find I can't concentrate on anything.

This data indicates 51.6% of pastors felt they were able to concentrate as well as ever, with 35.5% reporting they could not concentrate as well as usual; and, 12.9% of pastors reported it was hard for them to keep their minds on anything for very long. Not one pastor reported being unable to find anything to concentrate on.

Concentration Difficulty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I can concentrate as well as ever	16	51.6	51.6	51.6
	I can't concentrate as well as usual	11	35.5	35.5	87.1
	It's hard to keep my mind on anything for very long	4	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #20 – 'Tiredness or Fatigue':

0 – I am no more tired or fatigued than usual
1 – I get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual
2 – I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things I used to do
3 – I am too tired or fatigued to do most of the things I used to do

In this category, 41.9% of pastors indicated they were no more tired or fatigued than usual, with 51.6% reporting they get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual. A total of 6.5% of pastors felt they were too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things they used to do. None of the pastors reported feeling too tired or fatigued to do most of the things they used to do.

Tiredness or Fatigue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I am no more tired or fatigued than usual	13	41.9	41.9	41.9
	I get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual	16	51.6	51.6	93.5
	I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things I used to do	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

Item #21 – 'Loss of Interest in Sex':

0 – I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex
1 – I am less interested in sex than I used to be
2 – I am much less interested in sex now
3 – I have lost interest in sex completely

This final chart shows 56.7% of pastors had not noticed any recent changes in their interest in sex, with 30% reporting they were less interested in sex than they used to be; and 10% reporting they were much less interested in sex now. The data reflects 3.3% of pastors indicated having lost interest in sex completely.

Loss of Interest in Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex	17	54.8	56.7	56.7
	I am less interested in sex than I used to be	9	29.0	30.0	86.7
	I am much less interested in sex now	3	9.7	10.0	96.7
	I have lost interest in sex completely	1	3.2	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	96.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	3.2		
Total		31	100.0		

The scoring interpretation for the BDI-II is shown in Table 3.2 below. A persistent score of seventeen (17) or higher suggests an individual may require treatment for depression:

BDI-II Scoring Interpretation
Table 3.2

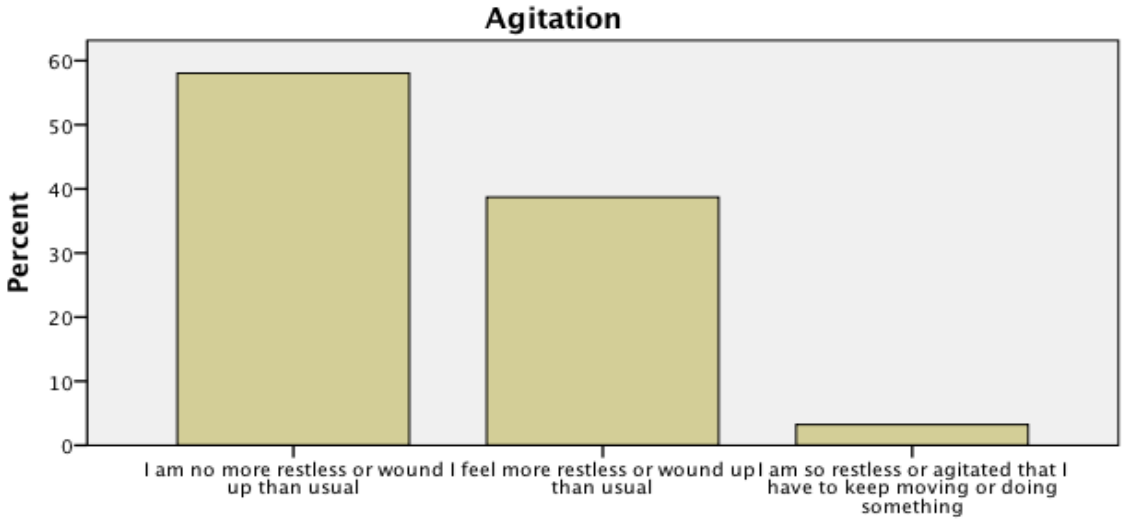
Total Score		Severity
0 – 13	=	Minimal range
14 – 19	=	Mild depression
20 – 28	=	Moderate depression
29 – 63	=	Severe depression

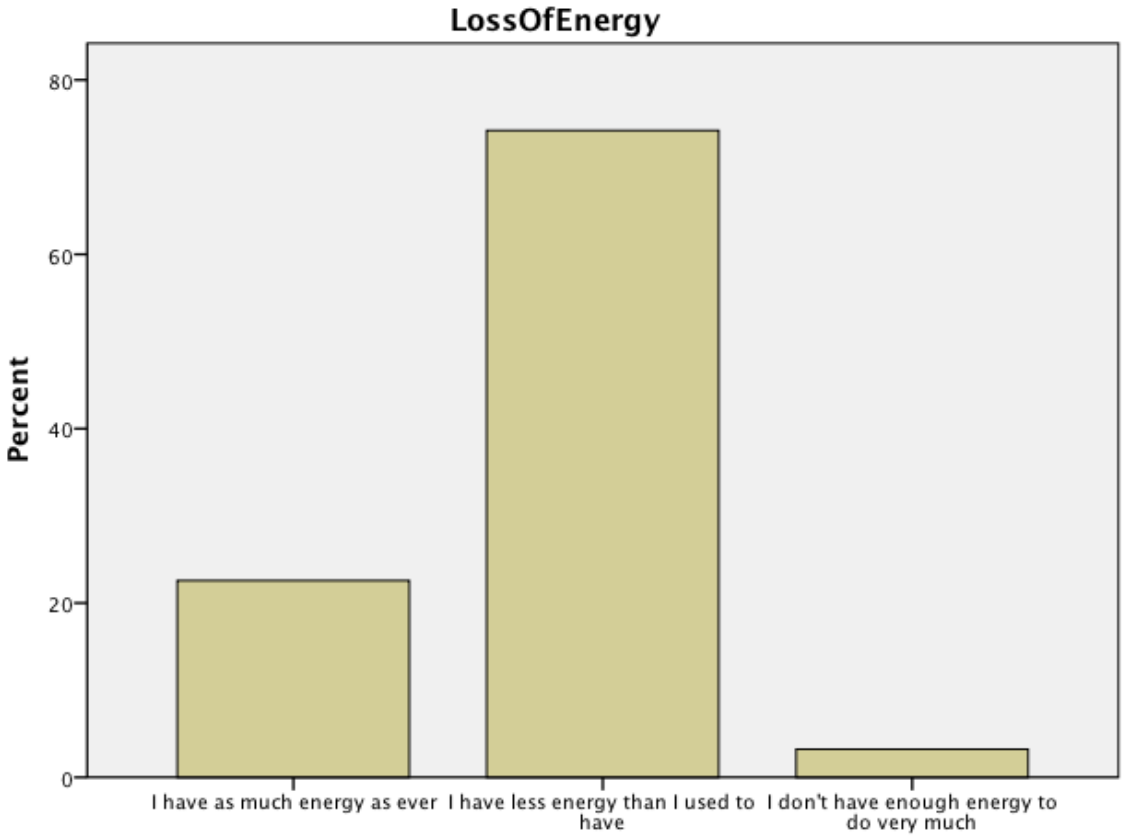
The BDI-II scoring interpretation results for the AACD study conclude the following:

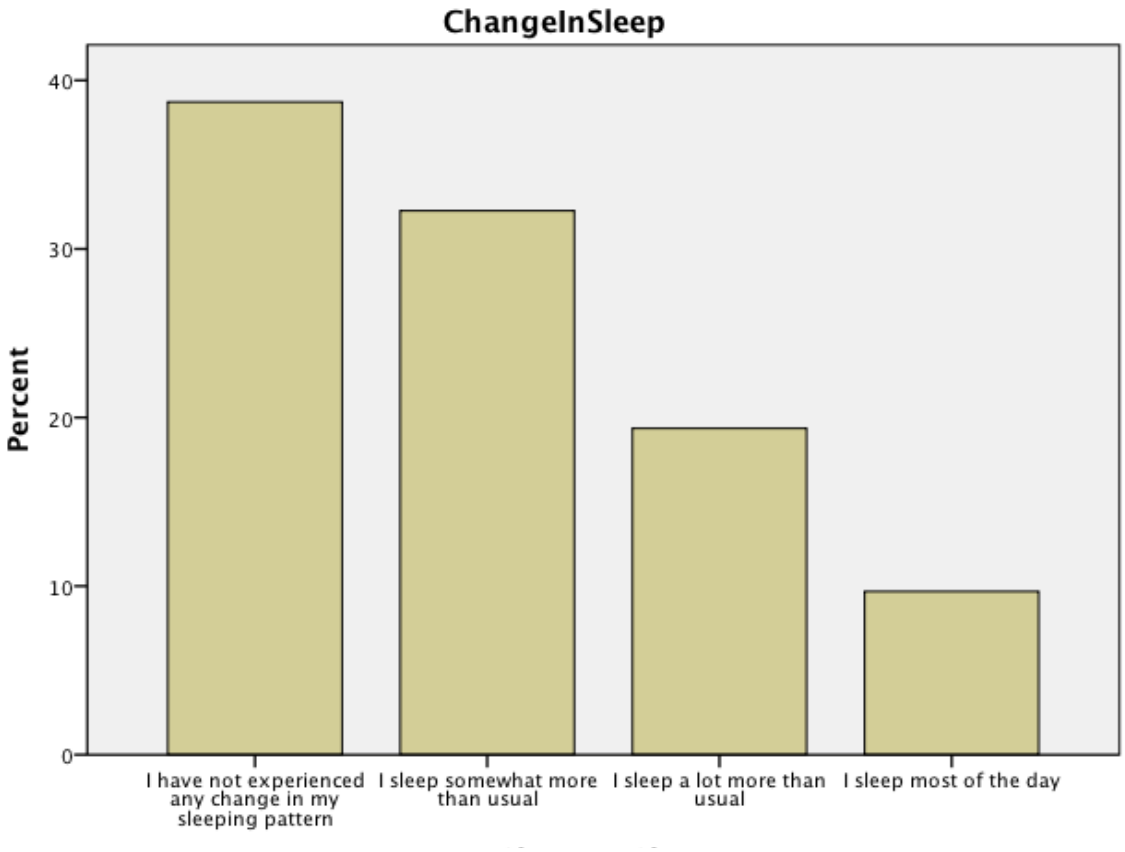
Males	Females		Rate of Severity
14	6	=	Minimal range
4	2	=	Mild depression
2	2	=	Moderate depression
-0-	1	=	Severe depression

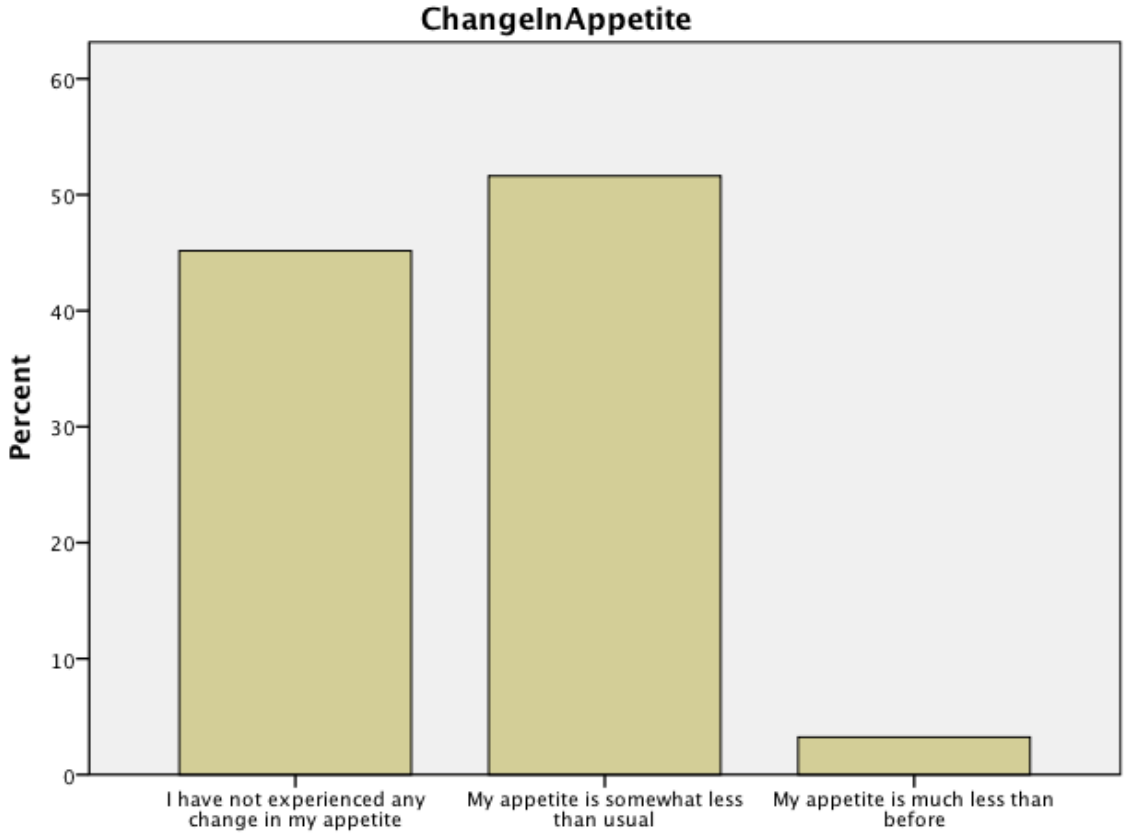
The central focus of the study was to investigate whether or not depressive symptoms were present among African American pastors. Based upon the survey results, study participants scored at, near or over 50% on some of the significant criterion for assessing depression:

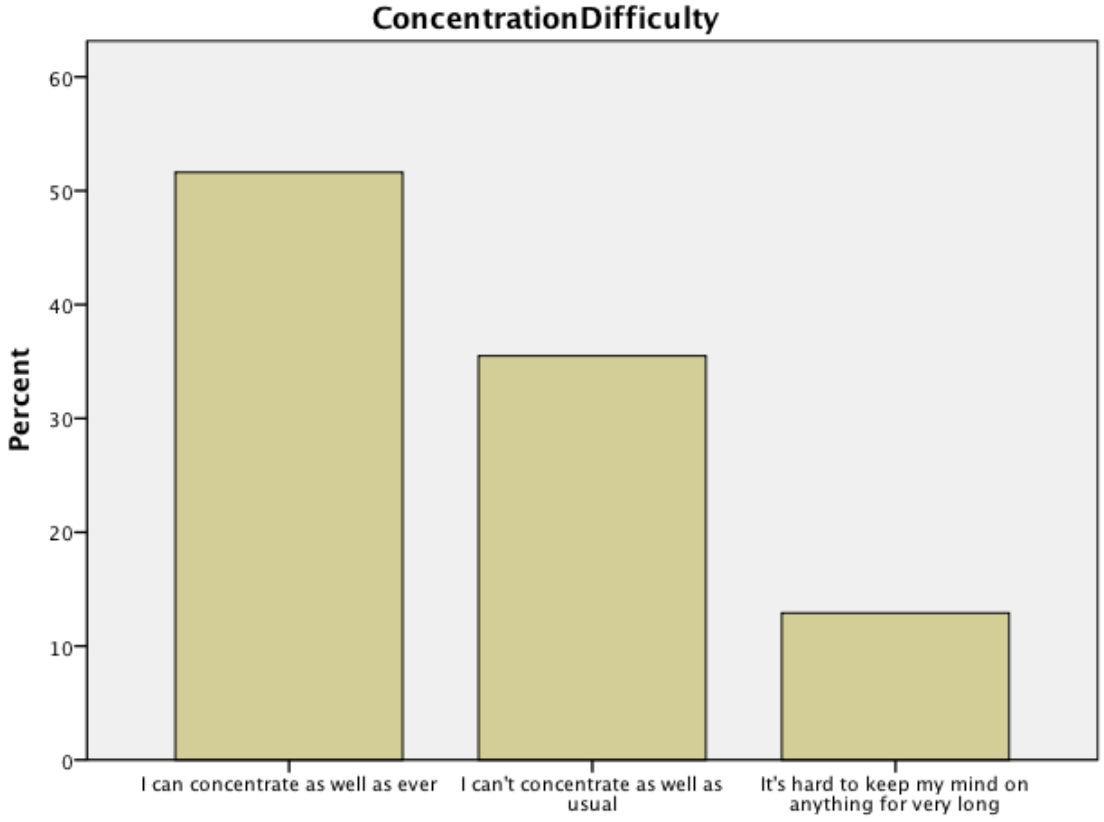
Agitation	41.9%
Loss of Energy	77.4%
Changes in Sleeping Pattern	61.4%
Changes in Appetite	54.8%
Concentration Difficulty	48.4%
Tiredness or Fatigue	58.1%
Loss of Interest in Sex	43.3%

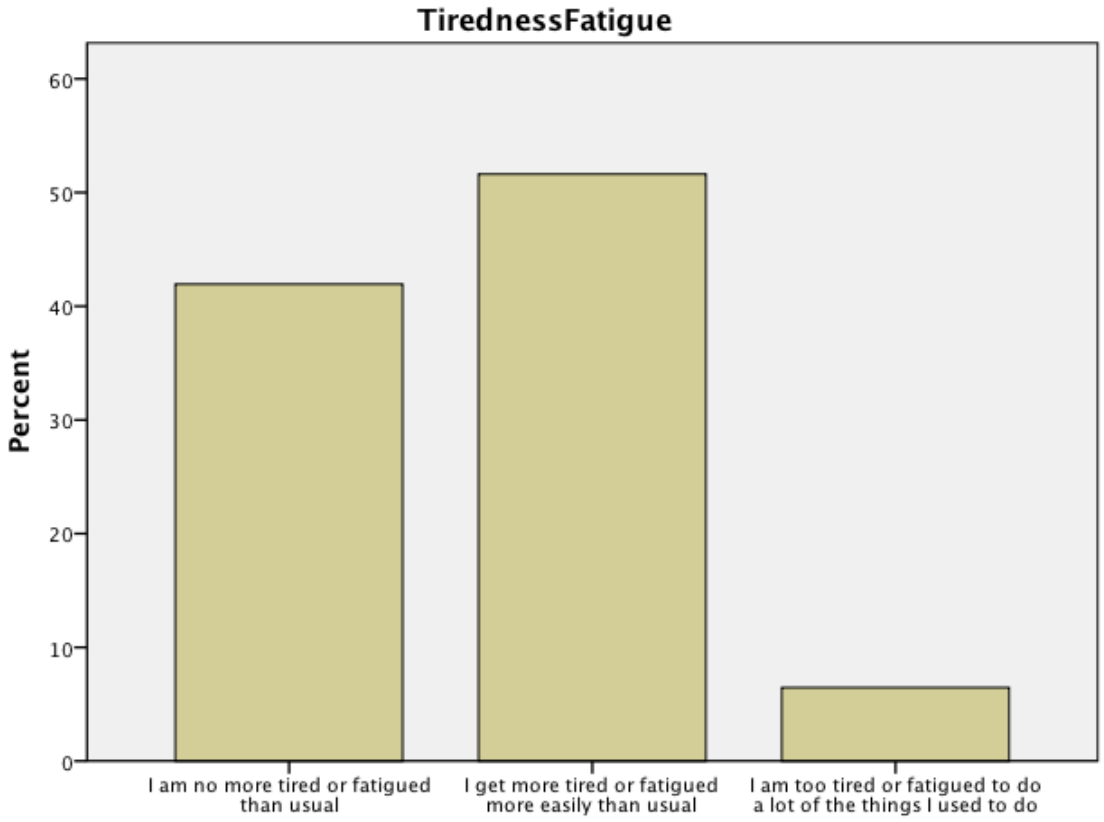

Agitation
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I am no more restless or wound up than usual
I feel more restless or wound up than usual
I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something

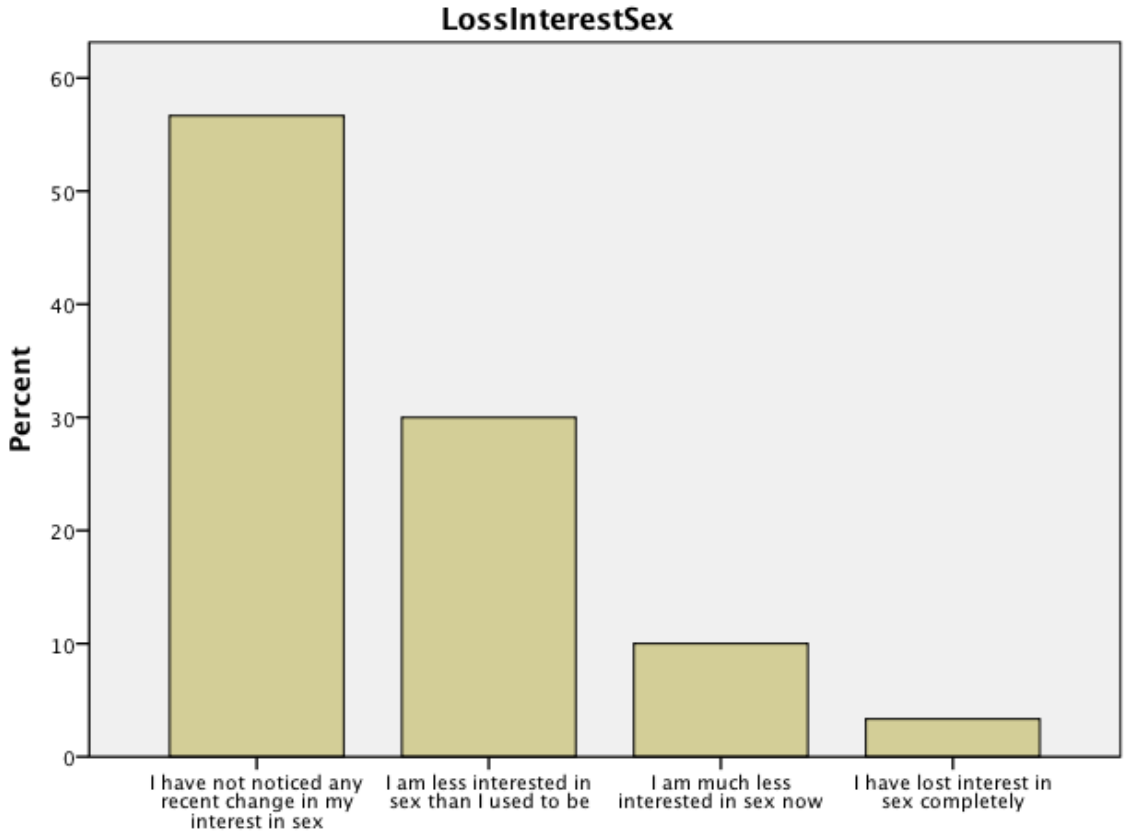

LossOfEnergy
Percent
80
60
40
20
0
I have as much energy as ever
I have less energy than I used to have
I don't have enough energy to do very much


ChangeInSleep
Percent
40
30
20
10
0
I have not experienced any change in my sleeping pattern
I sleep somewhat more than usual
I sleep a lot more than usual
I sleep most of the day


ChangeInAppetite
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I have not experienced any change in my appetite
My appetite is somewhat less than usual
My appetite is much less than before


ConcentrationDifficulty
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I can concentrate as well as ever
I can't concentrate as well as usual
It's hard to keep my mind on anything for very long


TirednessFatigue
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I am no more tired or fatigued than usual
I get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual
I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things I used to do


LossInterestSex
Percent
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex
I am less interested in sex than I used to be
I am much less interested in sex now
I have lost interest in sex completely

Since the criterion for assessing depression suggests that at least 3 out of 5 symptomatic features need to be present, the survey results confirm that among the population surveyed, African American clergy are experiencing varying degrees of depression.

Limitations

In the process of collecting data for this study, initial concerns emerged for me around whether the reality of being situated in a room filled with ones' peers, would affect the participant response rate outcome when utilizing a *self-report* inventory like the BDI-II. Primarily, my concerns were centered around the issue of disclosure, since one of the core limitations in administering any self-report inventory lies in participant response bias. In this case in particular, as it relates to clergy either responding to a question in a manner which would present their individual selves in a more flattering light; or, (in the case of African American preachers and 'image promotion/projection'), feeling too ashamed to express how they genuinely feel.

Another limitation of the study pertains to female respondents, as it regards depression in women, and the ambiguity around menopause (and fluctuating hormone levels). Of the female study participants who may have been at or near menopausal age, consideration had not been given for those characteristic features of menopause that may mimic depressive symptoms in women. I had not considered how these factors might impact my results.

Also:

1) Could the years of pastoral service have directly impacted the respondents' results? If I had set forth years of pastoral service as a criterion, how might the survey outcomes have differed? Do novice pastors (5 years or less) experience depression more

readily (due to perceived dashed hopes) than more seasoned pastors? Or, do more seasoned pastors prove much better positioned and/or conditioned to withstand the ebbs and flows of ministerial life?

2) Would consideration for the size of each pastors' congregation have mattered in examining the rate of depression, since both small and large congregations each have their own particular sets of contextual challenges as it regards congregational needs, performance expectations in relation to people management, crisis intervention, pastoral workload, etc.? For example, a pastor serving a fifty member congregation will not encounter the same types of pastoral demands as a pastor serving a 350 member congregation. While both pastors may experience depression, how might the data have differed if the criteria of congregational size had been a factor?

3) Should consideration have been given to each pastors' social location – i.e., urban (inner city churches) versus suburban church settings? If context had been included in the criterion, how would the severity of depression among pastors surrounded by inner city blight (and underserved populations) have been more readily reflected in the data? Would there have been a substantial difference in the severity of depression among these pastors, when considering experiences like a lack of financial resources, overwhelming community needs, continuous threats to security/property, etc.

4) How might the stressors of a new church plant, differ from those of a pastorate in an historic congregation? For example, in new church plants, pastors often find themselves challenged to meet the budget so as to pay the cost for rental space; and, in some instances, these 'new church plant' pastors have to decide whether or not to accept a full or partial salary for the month if they fail to meet the budget (or when congregational giving is insufficient). In a more historical setting where churches tend to be more established, these kinds of 'new church plant' stress producers would be less prevalent.

These were some of the limitations which constitute issues that I might consider for future work. Despite the successful history of the BDI and its high rate of reliability, I continue to question its suitability as a measureable instrument for African Americans when considering the overall impact of socio-cultural factors like oppression on impairment and cognitive functioning over time. How does the standard two week

criterion[147] for measurement set forth in the BDI, speak to the more chronic cases of depression in African Americans which surpass the two week norm? Next, would another psychological instrument be more suitable – i.e., one which is more expressly given to consideration of socio-cultural and somatic factors associated with depressive symptoms in African Americans. Grothe et al argue "Because racial differences in the expression of depressive symptoms have been found, it cannot be assumed that the reliability and validity for the BDI-II established with primarily Caucasian samples remain accurate for African Americans. Specifically, it has been demonstrated that African Americans evidence more somatic symptoms, in particular, sleep disturbance, and they articulate fewer typical depressive symptoms than depressed Caucasians."[148] This is significant, because over 60% of pastors surveyed in the AACD study reported experiencing a change in their sleeping patterns.

These were some of the questions limiting my study. My hunch was as the data has concluded – African American pastors are indeed experiencing depressive symptoms. They may not necessarily be experiencing Major Depression; but, more along the lines of dysthymia, a more low-grade, chronic form of depression. The BDI as I had hypothesized did support my hunches of mild mood disturbance, my argument for the unsuitability of the BDI in measuring for depression in African Americans for the aforementioned reasons, notwithstanding.

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[147] The BDI-II measures the severity of depressive symptoms in individuals over a two week timeframe, beginning on the date of the self-report and including the two weeks prior.

[148] Grothe, Karen and Gareth Dutton, Jamie Bodenlos, Martin Ancona, Glenn Jones, Phillip Brantley. "Validation of the Beck Depression Inventory–II in A Low-Income African American Sample of Medical Outpatients." *American Psychological Association*, 2005; Vol. 17, No. 1, 100 – 114.

CHAPTER FOUR

BREAKING UP THE FALLOW GROUND: DIGGING DEEP TO MAKE THE SHIFT TOWARDS PSYCHOLOGICAL CLEARING

How Did We Get Here?: Depression As (Indelible?) Cultural Stigma

The cultural trauma[149] of slavery encompassed within it the belief that African Americans were to espouse the characteristics of strength and resilience as a means of honoring the legacy and upholding the dignity of (enslaved and freed) Africans.

Let me first state that I take particular issue with the term and/or notion of 'resilience' in its inference and association to lauding the adaptability of (enslaved and freed) Africans who were forcibly TSCR (traded, sold, captured/stolen, resold) and confined to chattel slavery. Despite the varying definitions of the term 'resilience,' in some respects, assigning this term to pre- and post- slavery Africans appears quasi-dismissive in its attribution and functional association with the psychological and physiological effects of trauma sustained in southern slavery.

In my estimation, it presupposes an ability of (enslaved and freed) Africans' to recover from the initial trauma, without giving careful consideration to the residual effects; of which, the trans-generational transmission of depression asserts that (enslaved and freed) Africans may not have been as 'resilient' as was thought.

This premise of 'honoring the legacy and upholding the dignity' corresponded with a desire to maintain a positive collective identity, as an ongoing counter-active

[149] "Cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all." Eyerman, ibid, p.2.

response to structural oppression.[150] In the (enslaved and freed) African's quest to navigate the dualism of this reality, the quintessence of Dunbar's poem *We Wear the Mask*[151] becomes magnified – "We wear the mask that grins and lies, it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes…this debt we pay to human guile, with torn and bleeding hearts we smile…". Dunbar emphasizes the psychological enigma that (enslaved and freed) Africans had to endure in donning a mask to hide the pain of their lengthy experience of oppression in America. In so doing, he presents what I argue is a culturally induced preemptive response to internalized oppression.

Sociologist, Ron Eyerman suggests the memory of slavery alone demanded that African Americans construct a new identity[152] for themselves as a means of creating a distance between their former state of forced servitude and the freedom they (subsequently) obtained. "…it is not the experience itself that produces traumatic effect, but rather the remembrance of it."[153] In the (trans-generational) collective memory of slavery, African Americans have assumed the characteristics of strength and resilience as

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[150] In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire puts forth the premise that persons who experience oppression can only achieve liberation through actively engaging in it or continually striving for it. See Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000), p.45. The dehumanizing nature of slavery demanded that former African slaves formulate a collective identification that countered the negative imagery postulated by whites (i.e., the bogus image of the happy, passive, simple minded slave, etc.).

[151] Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem, 'We Wear the Mask' encapsulates the quandaried dual reality blacks endured while living in a predominantly white society. See Bontemps, ibid, p.14.

[152] The abolition of slavery forced whites to reckon with the notion that if they were no longer able to physically subjugate blacks, they would certainly not be deemed as equal to blacks. Thus, the emergence of caricature types like 'Sambo', 'Mammy', 'Jezebel' and minstrel shows were promulgated to "…erase the visibility of middle class blacks" in their aspirations and attainment of equal footing with whites, by way of education. See Eyerman, ibid, pp.59-60.

[153] Ibid, p.3.

appropriate behavioral responses to the perpetuity of a linked past and present, plagued by cultural trauma.

> Cultural trauma articulates a membership group as it identifies an event or an experience, a primal scene, that solidifies individual/collective identity. This event, now identified with the formation of the group, must be recollected by later generations who have had no experience of the 'original' event, yet continue to be identified by it and to identify themselves through it.[154]

In the wake of the historical trauma of slavery, a widely held perception in the African American community surrounds the belief that the presence of mental illness (more specifically, depression) is a sign of 'weakness'. This perception is derived in part, from the fact that African Americans hail from such a rich cultural legacy of African rulers, priests, kings and ordinary folk. Consequently, the imagery of such imbues impressions of dignity, strength and honor, from which African Americans, like other respective ethnic populations, draw sources of great ancestral pride.

What is further embedded in the perception of depression as a sign of weakness, is the unspoken cultural understanding among African Americans that suggests upon reviewing the annals of the black experience in America, they reveal a past laden with sundry narratives of foremothers and forefathers who traversed (and overcame) much harsher realities than any present-day African American could ever sustain. As a result, it is communally presumed that if one is not being brutally beaten, chased by dogs, subdued with fire hoses, confined by chains or having to endure the lashing of whips imprinted upon one's back, it would behoove them to 'grin and bear' the weight of *whatever* oppressive reality they are confronted with. To *not* do so, would be synonymous with

[154] Eyerman, ibid, p.15.

bringing shame and/or disgrace upon the entire communal legacy of 'strength and resilience.'

Overall, African Americans have not viewed therapy as an appropriate resource for themselves.[155] For some, therapy is deemed as intrusive – a mandate inculcated by the broader society to further its system of 'checks and balances' which could presumably jeopardize one's social, financial and spiritual standing in the community.

> Many African Americans perceive therapy to be the process of labeling them as "crazy," often fearing the reaction of the extended family members, friends and community. This is compounded by the fact that Black families are often not self-referred, but, are sent for treatment by schools, courts, hospitals, or social welfare agencies, frequently under considerable threat or pressure.[156]

The term 'stigma' is defined as "a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person."[157] The stigmatization of depression as a sign of weakness in the African American community, carries with it the unspoken cultural assumption that one must 'uphold the image' of strength or resilience at the expense of negating one's own psychological and/or emotional self.

Unsurprisingly, the stigmatization of depression by African Americans is challenging to embrace from a black pastoral theological perspective because its presence

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[155] African Americans have a longstanding distrust of Euro-scientific theories around therapeutic treatment, since the selfsame were used to promulgate the pathology (and subjugation) of blacks pre and post slavery. Studies reveal African Americans and Hispanics are less likely than whites to obtain mental health treatment from any source, are more likely to delay seeking treatment, and are particularly less likely to receive treatment from medical providers rather than from social service agencies or other sources. See Probst, Janice C. and Sarah Laditka, Charity G. Moore, Nusrat Harun, M. Paige Powell. "Race and Ethnic Differences in Reporting Depressive Symptoms" *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*. Vol. 34(6), Sept, (2007). Pps. 519-529.

[156] Boyd-Franklin, ibid, p.23.

[157] "Stigma." In *OxfordDictionaries.com.* 2013. http//:www.oxforddictionaries.com. (8 July 2013).

divulges a type of intra-communal oppression.[158] As a result, I question what becomes of those individuals within the confines of community, whose constitution fails to measure up to the broader communal posture of strength and resilience?'[159] It is from this framework that I contend the paradoxical nature of the stigmatization of depression has left an indelible impression on the psyche of the African American community, collectively.

Within the African American community, there is a subliminal risk associated with acknowledging that one suffers with depression; and, it is experienced on three distinct levels – personally, socially and spiritually. An acknowledgment of depression can pose a threat to one's personal identity, prompting questions like 'what's wrong with me?' It can foster feelings of low self-worth/esteem such as 'why am I not strong enough?' From a socio-cultural context, a depression diagnosis can trigger anxieties with thoughts like 'Who else knows? What will they think of me? Will they treat me differently? Or, on a more spiritual level the question may surface, 'Why don't I have enough faith?' This supports psychological claims that depression symptoms in African Americans are viewed "…not as depression but as lacking spiritual connection to God."[160]

Therefore, acknowledging the presence of depression is often viewed as being spiritually *weak* in one's faith. "Some may hold the view that emotional difficulties are a reflection of a failure to believe and practice biblical principles…to seek relief from a

[158] This speaks to the ways in which some African Americans respond oppressively in their beliefs, reactions and behaviors towards one another.
[159] I reference those individuals who struggle with depression and are incapable of donning a façade of strength for the benefit of, or at the implied insistence of the larger community.
[160] Franklin, ibid, p.287.

mental health professional rather than through prayer may signify an absence of trust in God."[161] This is a challenging stance to undertake when one is grounded in a bible-based[162] communal ethos and bombarded by scriptural references intimating the selfsame – "Arise, go your way, your faith has made you whole."[163] Explicitly, in view of the fact that African Americans have historically been characterized as very spiritual people, religion in and of itself, can produce stigmatizing affects in a community where faith in God is the primary default response to life's impromptu predicaments.

For some, the risk associated with acknowledging the presence of depression, far outweighs its treatable nature, since one of the prevailing fears around a depression diagnosis in the African American community is isolation or a perceived 'loss of community'.

> African Americans may hold more stigmatizing beliefs than do whites, which typically consist of viewing oneself as crazy or weak if diagnosed with or seeking treatment for a mental illness. Low income African Americans may believe that once one seeks treatment for mental illness one gains a permanent label that could hinder future opportunities within the community.[164]

By far, African Americans have consistently held firm to a common commitment to group identification. Adhering to a collective identity stems from an African ancestral heritage rooted in an ethos positing community as central to all of life. "African values

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[161] McGoldrick, Monica, John Pearce and Joseph Giordano. Ethnicity and Family Therapy. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1982), p.100.

[162] African Americans have a religious worldview – and tend to use scripture as a weapon against and/or in response to oppression (.i.e., references to the bible as being the 'Sword of Truth", etc.)

[163] (Luke 17:19), American King James Version.

[164] Rusch, Laura C. and Jonathan W. Kanter, Rachel C. Manos and Cristal E. Weeks. "Depression Stigma in a Predominantly Low Income African American Sample with Elevated Depressive Symptoms." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 2008 December; Vol. 196, No. 12, 919 – 922.

stress collectivity, sharing, affiliation, obedience to authority, belief in spirituality, and respect for the elderly and the past."[165] What I find particularly distinctive about the African American community, is its regard for communal influence upon one's behavior, and/or responses to life circumstances; more specifically, the decision-making process (i.e., how one reaches the conclusion to either 'conform to' or 'go against the grain' of culturally established group norms, in relation to ways of life, etc.).

From a socio-cultural standpoint, I contend one of the most devastating threats to the psychological well-being of African Americans who receive a depression diagnosis is a perceived 'loss of community.' This is due in large measure to the prevailing themes of interdependence, relationality, and extended kinship networks extant within the black community. Each entity reinforces the notion that African Americans achieve self-identity within the confines of community; because (in the black church and community), African Americans have a tendency to draw sources of healing through relationships with one another. What makes the religious community so significant in the lives of African Americans is the black church has historically been the place where the origins of a black identity were constructed.[166] In this regard, I am arguing that the stigma of depression being viewed as a sign of weakness, exacerbates feelings of isolation which can otherwise be considered causal of non-conformance to communally established beliefs (around strength and/or resilience).

From a communal vantage point, this threat of social isolation places additional strain upon individuals with already limited webs of human connection. Pastoral

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[165] McGoldrick, ibid, p.101.
[166] Tucker, David M. Black Pastors and Leaders: Memphis 1819 – 1972. (Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Press, 1975), pp.139-140.

psychologist, Lee Butler alludes to this in his assertion that "…our self finds meaning and significance through relationship…"[167] Fundamentally, Butler roots his claim in a collective identity expressly evident in the African adage – 'I am, because we are.' Without a semblance of community, African Americans are void of a sense of identity, self-esteem, cohesion and shared purpose. The absence of these factors proves injurious to the psyche, when coupled with a depression diagnosis.

For some, an acknowledgement of depression is deemed tantamount to ensuring one's isolation and further marginalization, given that, African Americans frequently experience feelings of exclusion from the broader white world. Self-stigma and communal stigmas around depression, serve to hinder blacks from empowering themselves through an acceptance of the diagnosis and from proactively engaging in preventative education and/or therapeutic treatment.

> Depressed African Americans, however, display low rates of treatment seeking, often terminate treatment prematurely, and often present with somatic rather than emotional complaints resulting in the under detection of depression.[168]

A fundamental proposition for the stigmatization of depression can be attributed to its somatic manifestation in African Americans. Depression symptoms in African Americans tend to be less associated with emotional distress or changes in mood, more frequently presenting as fatigue, lethargy and/or physical exertion. Additionally, an increase or decrease in sleep, an increase or decrease in appetite, etc., and other diagnostic criterion are present. Due to the somatic nature of its presentation, many African Americans may not even be aware they are depressed.

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[167] Butler, ibid, p.82.
[168] Rusch, ibid, p.919.

For example, an African American who is overwhelmed by experiences of discrimination in the workplace, may find it difficult to garner up enough energy to participate in an after hours bowling league; since the degree of mental energy expended in opposing workplace discrimination during the day, may well result in a diminished capacity for physical exertion after work hours. Excessive stress may be a possible indicator as to why some African Americans may feel indifferent about participating in ancillary physical activities outside of the workplace. It can also help dispel assumptive views which characterize African Americans as 'lazy' when it comes to regular physical activity, and/or exercise.[169]

The experience of oppression bears with it an express degree of physical exhaustion. What I am implying here is that there is a lack of understanding in the association between the nature of ongoing oppression as physically (emotionally and spiritually) 'exhausting', and the somatic manifestation of depression. It takes a concerted effort to maintain a daily stance of resistance to endemic oppression. I contend, if the tables were turned and whites were the oppressed group with African Americans poised in positions of power, privilege and prestige, void of the daily onslaught of systemic oppression, the numbers would prove convincingly in favor of African Americans as the more energetic, blithe, carefree, relaxed group, completely

[169] "American society was founded on the Protestant ethic, which equated poverty with sinfulness, idleness, vice, and a belief that the poor are sexually indulgent." As it regards the many failings of the Protestant ethic, I consider it a ridiculous assertion to presume that (enslaved and freed) Africans be required to live by an ethic which denied them a level playing field from the beginning. How does one proceed to pull ones' self up from ones' own boot straps when one doesn't have boots to begin with? See Johnson, Leanor Boulin and Robert Staples. Black Families At the Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), p.93.

unaffected by structural oppression and more apt to *want to play* another round of golf, per se.

By virtue of the fact that depression in African Americans tends to be under-detected and more chronic,[170] dysthymia[171] appears to be a more appropriate diagnosis for this population. As additional research on the rate of depression among African Americans becomes known, dysthymia will prove a more fitting diagnosis because its symptoms are low-grade, present for two years or less without a major depressive episode (MDE) and are void of suicidal ideation.

What further adds to the stigmatization of depression, is the fact that African Americans do not readily accept a depression diagnosis because they do not actually 'feel' depressed (their symptoms are psychosomatic) – i.e., they report feeling 'tired' or 'run down', so to speak.

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[170] Clemmont Vontress argues that depression among African Americans tends to be more chronic. He proposes dysthymia, a lower grade form of depression, is more fitting with this population, "After more than 250 years of enslavement, prejudice and discrimination, dysthymia is reflected in chronic sadness, anger, hostility, aggression, self-hatred, hopelessness, and self-destructive behaviors." While I agree with the association Vontress makes between dysthymia and nihilism among African Americans who are depressed, I am at odds with his linkage of dysthymia with aggression and self-destructive behavior. See Vontress, Clemmont E. (2007). "Cultural Dysthymia: An Unrecognized Disorder Among African Americans." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*. 35. pp.130 – 141.

[171] Dysthymic patients are chronically depressed and present many of the same symptoms found in Major Depressive Episodes, including low mood, fatigue, hopelessness, trouble concentrating, and problems with appetite and sleep. Absent from the criteria are thoughts of death or suicidal ideas. Since dysthymia patients suffer quietly and are not severely disabled, such individuals often don't come to light until a Major Depressive Episode materializes. See Morrison, James. DSM-IV Made Easy: The Clinician's Guide to Diagnosis. (New York, NY: Guilford Press), 2006, p.223.

> African Americans may be more likely to exhibit somatic and neurovegetative symptoms of depression than mood or cognitive symptoms, which may complicate detection and diagnosis.[172]

Unfortunately, there is limited data which gives full expression to the degree of emotional fortitude required to withstand structural oppression – there are no viable means to measure for it. The emotional capacity required to resist oppressive societal forces is an intangible, enduring struggle for African Americans.[173] I contend that the cumulative psychological, emotional and physiological stressors upon the body in response to oppression, often induces the etiology of depression in African Americans.[174] In all, espousing characteristics like 'strength' and 'resilience', the sense of a feared loss of community, and the somatic manifestation of depression, are each key factors that promote the stigmatization of depression – making diagnosing depression in African Americans, a much more elusive reality.

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[172] Das, Amar, Mark Olfson, Henry McCurtis and Myrna Weissman. "Depression in African Americans: Breaking Barriers to Detection and Treatment." *The Journal of Family Practice.* Vol.55, No.1, (2006): p.30-39. http//:www.jfponline.com. Web. 8 July 2013.

[173] Oppression as depressive is a public health issue only now being explored as it relates to decreased levels of physical activity among those of lower socioeconomic status; namely, African American and Latina populations.

[174] Emergent research in the social sciences shows that stress increases vulnerability to depression. Furthermore, being black in America places one at higher risk for stress and depression. "There are two explanations for the increased risk for stress-related depression among blacks. One explanation purports that the prejudice and discrimination faced by blacks are themselves stressful since feelings of frustration and powerlessness may result from denigrating experiences. Similarly, being a member of a minority group in American society is generally associated with a greater likelihood of being poor and in the lower socioeconomic strata, despite capability and effort. Moreover, research has consistently reported higher rates of depression and psychological distress among persons of lower socioeconomic status." See Ruiz, Dorothy S. Handbook of Mental Health and Mental Disorder Among Black Americans. (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990), p.83.

Cracks In the Pillar: Airing the 'Dirty Laundry' of Depression in African American Clergy

Certainly one of the hallmarks of the African American religious experience surrounds its leadership; more specifically, the personality, charisma and authority of the black preacher. However, this heralded leader has not been without controversy. Since the turn of the nineteenth century, there has been a concerted effort towards 'uplifting the race' through a reinforcement of positive images of black identity, which suffered repetitive attacks in the ongoing struggle against race oppression in North America. In light of this, H. Beecher Hicks points to the plethora of negative imagery[175] cast upon the black preacher specifically by the broader society; but, Hicks stops short of explaining the ways in which these negative images are proliferated and substantiated by black preachers themselves,[176] and how the selfsame images serve to undermine the overall integrity of the socio-religious community writ large. Maya Angelou states that in order to grow, persons need to look at what is behind them and allow what they see to assist them as they move forward. As it pertains to the state of the black church, prior to moving forward, an honest self-examination needs to occur; and, this self-examination necessitates standing on the periphery of the black religious tradition, and acknowledging as a community, what part we have played in our own predicament. Sociologist bell hooks speaks to this issue of self-sabotage by blacks when she writes, "…often we have

[175] Hicks references the negative imagery cast upon the black preacher as a means of highlighting the pervasiveness of charlatan preachers in the African American community and how their presence served to discredit the legitimacy of the pastoral function from within and beyond the black community.

[176] hooks, bell. Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-esteem. (New York, NY: Atria Books, 2003), Introduction.

focused so much on how others wound our self-esteem that we have overlooked the wounds that are self-inflicted."

In view of this negative imagery, I contend there are cultural indicators which point to the ways depression materializes in the lives of black pastors.

First and foremost, due to the high regard and esteem placed upon pastors in the African American community, the reverence and adulation black pastors receive subliminally isolates them from the broader community. As I mentioned in chapter two, African Americans tend to be extremely loyal to their pastors, affording them much spiritual authority as it regards exercising influence in their lives. I attribute this unwavering devotion to the historical influence of African chiefs and/or kings and the allegiance their leadership proposed.

As a result, it is not difficult to understand the precarious predicament that black clergy often find themselves in, as it regards being isolated, yet attempting to seek help for personal struggles that may arise during ones' tenure in ministry. This reverence and/or adulation, coupled with communal stigmas and cultural hermeneutics around mental health treatment in the African American community, demonstrates how black clergy are particularly vulnerable when it comes to proactively formulating adequate support systems for themselves in the practice of ministry.

Secondly, since African Americans tend to utilize extended family network constructs as a primary means of support, black pastors are placed at a greater disadvantage for seeking assistance, when considering their historic role of being the 'go to' persons in the community for ensuring the nurture, direction and spiritual welfare of others.

> Blacks are more likely to turn to their families, neighbors, friends, ministers, and church members in times of crisis. These persons are accorded trust that is not easily won by 'outsiders.' Also there may be strong feelings against airing the family's "dirty laundry" in public…the pattern of using the extended family network as the primary helping agent exists among the upwardly mobile as well as among low-income black families. It is likely that reliance on natural support systems stimulates fewer feelings of guilt, defeat, humiliation, and powerlessness, than turning to an institution.[177]

If black pastors are deemed the trusted confidantes of their parishioners, then where do they turn to obtain relief from their own personal struggles? Who are their confidantes?

Thirdly, I use the analogy 'airing dirty laundry' to underscore the cultural secrecy[178] and or 'code of silence' around the troubling personal lives of some black clergy leaders. I am proposing that there is an unspoken cultural behavioral code at work within the black community which suggests that the personal struggles of the pastor are not up for communal discussion. There is an overwhelming reluctance to even engage conversation around a pastor's personal crises; and, attempts at doing so, are often met with biblical idioms like "….touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm."[179]

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[177] McGoldrick, Monica, John Pierce and Joseph Giordano. Ethnicity and Family Therapy. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1982), p.100.

[178] Cultural secrecy is a broadened construct of 'family secrets,' which are common in black family systems. Jackson and Greene argue that renouncing and controlling unhealthy components of family is a means of ensuring the preservation of both biological and ethnic health, "…a failure to identify, acknowledge and accept unhealthy toxic elements …leads many African Americans to simply deny whatever behavior that is perceived to be toxic." See Jackson, ibid, p.114. With black clergy often being viewed as part of the extended family system, this complicates the dynamic since pastors are also viewed as being the mouthpiece of God. From an African American religious standpoint, the mere thought of renouncing someone presumed to be Gods' 'mouthpiece' proves problematic.

[179] This references the biblical passage found in 1 Chronicles 16:22 (NIV).

In most instances, making a pastor's personal crisis a matter of communal concern is considered synonymous with 'airing dirty laundry.' Since literal interpretations of scripture in black evangelical communities posit these attempts as taboo, many react to their pastor's personal crises by attempting to 'cover the nakedness' of black clergy leaders. I attribute this unconscious cultural hermeneutic of *covering* as being analogous to the narrative found in Genesis 9:18-27, where Noah's sons Shem and Japeth, upon hearing their father was drunk and lying naked in his tent, proceed to enter the tent backwards with their shoulders draped by a garment, so as to hide their faces from their fathers' nakedness. I am proposing that this is how we often react to a pastor's personal crisis in the black church. Rather than respond in a way that demonstrates communal care, we tend to hide our faces from the nakedness of our black clergy leaders.

Lastly, I would argue that in African American congregations, the pervasiveness of internalized or external expectations, as it regards image promotion/projection often supersedes the humanity of the pastor, when congregations (as well as pastors themselves) fail to acknowledge a pastor's need for communal care.[180]

The issue of image promotion/projection in the black religious community is to some extent connected to group self-esteem and group identity. African Americans pastors have long been role models of leadership as a whole. Black congregants take great pride in their pastors (and churches) and tend to find a sense of significance and

[180] Communal care requires cognizance of the other, not solely as an individualized other, but as a core component in the practice of the giving and receiving care. John Patton argues, "…the power of pastoral care rests in the fact that it is the care given by the community, not by the individual pastoral care giver alone…care of self and care of others go together, and perhaps most important, are somehow together in the memory of God." See Patton, John. Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p.35.

identity through the black church. For some, the black church is the only place to experience a sense of empowerment, ownership, belonging, etc., through participation in something larger than ones' self. The black church affords this right to individuals who find a sense of fulfillment in knowing they are effecting change in their community through the church. African Americans also take pride in their pastors' credentials, affiliations and educational accomplishments, especially if they have not attained as much themselves. Hamilton suggests this is why black people so readily lay claim to the black preacher as being their own, as belonging to them, as an intimate aspect of their communal life, whereby they can draw sources of self-esteem and dignity.

In the African American community, pastors are looked upon to reflect positive images[181] of masculinity/femininity because they are often viewed as one of the very few models of leadership that the community experiences. Thus, image promotion and/or projection among black pastors, has a lot to do with countering the negative images of black masculinity/femininity in the broader society. African American pastors are therefore, expected to maintain a degree of decorum, to exhibit theological intellect and to exemplify charisma in their interactions with the church (and the wider community). For the most part, black pastors have historically endeavored to take the charge of the pastorate seriously by upholding the primacy of scripture as sacred. Much of the sober minded approach to the pastoral calling is likely traced back to the puritanical views of

[181] Psychologist Nancy Boyd-Franklin elaborates on the felt pressure to conform to certain images when in positions of leadership in the African American community. She notes, as leaders (and the more prominent members of the community), there is an expectation to uphold a degree of 'respectability' for the sake of the community at large. "There is often a tremendous sense of shame or guilt when families who are viewed as the pillars of their communities or as the backbone of their congregations seek help." See Franklin, ibid, p.315.

earlier protestant pastors like Richard Baxter. In his text, *The Reformed Pastor*,[182] Baxter underscores the gravity of the pastoral call in his passionate plea regarding the shepherding of both the self and the flock. His treatise was birthed out of his own desire to see the church of Christ handled with excellence, as opposed to haphazard neglect. He attempts to call attention to the undisciplined mind over and against one tempered with self-control. While discipline and temperance have their place in pastoral ministry, I would venture to propose authenticity and self-awareness do as well.

In fact, there are pastors in the black community who place enormous expectations upon themselves in attempts to live up to perceived images of: 1) those pastors they admire,[183] who predate them or who have mentored them; 2) congregational expectations of who the pastor ought to be; and, 3) the ideal pastoral persona pastors envisage themselves becoming.

However, upon closer inspection, I contend the demise of some of these pastors reflects the broader issue of black masculinity in America, coupled with psychological implications of the economic marginalization imposed upon black men. I think it is important to point out the ongoing struggle of black masculinity in America, in relation to the black (male) preacher – the two are not mutually exclusive. African American men

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[182] While some may consider Baxter's proposal to young pastors as it regards spiritual discipline in carrying out the pastoral task, as a largely unattainable goal, the essence of his argument denotes the necessity of a continual striving towards excellence in ones' personal decorum and pastoral practice. Baxter, Richard. The Reformed Pastor: Showing the Nature of Pastoral Work. (New York, NY: T. Mason and G. Lane), p.58.

[183] It is commonplace to hear younger (and older) preachers in the African American community attempt to emulate Dr. King in their oratory as a means of identifying with his oratorical prowess. Likewise, as it regards female pastors, many black women who have not discovered their own pastoral identity (and voice), often assume masculine mannerisms (and preaching voices) as a means of obtaining broad-based acceptance as a preacher, and in exercising authority as a pastor.

continue to vie for their masculinity amidst the macro/micro aggressions hurled against them by the dominant society. Some of the obvious struggles black men face are: 1) withholding their feelings through emotional dissociation in the belief that intimacy proves costly[184]; 2) deeming sexual achievement as an ongoing affirmation of manhood; and, 3) a pre-occupation with American consumerism in their quest to 'get ahead,' and/or a marked fixation on America's prosperity-laden value systems.[185] These and other issues surrounding black masculinity are factors that have repeated themselves in subsequent generations of young black men, as they struggle to gain footing (and/or social standing) in American culture, despite economic marginality and race discrimination.

For example, the popular young hip hop group A$AP Mob[186] (an acronym for *Always Strive And Prosper*) bears this sentiment out in the brazen lyricism of their rap

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[184] An ongoing dilemma of black masculinity surrounds the black male's tendency to struggle with intimacy and connectedness. This struggle is trans-generational in that, it can be attributed to the American slave trade industry, and its intentional destruction of the African family system. The perpetual exploitation of Africans in the American transatlantic slave trade industry involved the deliberate separation of families, which had a significant (and unbearable) impact on the psyche of African males specifically, when considering their powerlessness to protect, defend and provide for their families. The calculated emasculation of the African male involved stripping him of his communal (and familial) power and positioning which was used to reinforce his obeisance. The psychological impact of this deliberate practice conveyed to the (enslaved and freed) African male that intimacy and/or connectedness were both painful and dangerous.

[185] Each issue is indicative of the ongoing dilemma around African American masculinity in the context of the broader society.

[186] See A$AP Mob's BET cipher video 'My yute, dem boys, dem a flex – clap with the nine, better aim for your chest (Lawd),' meaning: "A$AP Mob's young members are as ruthless as the older ones and are not afraid to aim at a straight chest shot." www.youtube.com/wtch?v=rWoBW67H5DQ. I intentionally use the hip hop group A$AP Mob (Always Strive And Prosper) as an example of how young black males' preoccupation with prosperity and a determination to get ahead, has resulted in this group's acquisition of lucrative deals in the fashion industry and beyond, evidenced by

cipher idealizing Black Panther party leaders, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale; and, further deeming themselves the *new* generation of activists anointed to carry out the mandate of 'fighting the system,' with the help of God:

Dear Mr. President, I'm the shit, Hello white America, suck my ____.
My father, our father, God father – Glocks in the air, Hiii power…
Seems like Martin been dreaming for the longest….

Notwithstanding its descriptive vulgarity, the essence of this cryptograph elucidates the intense frustration young black males experience in relation to the dominant society. Collectively, their contemporary, clarion cry to race oppression has been, "I know your historical attempts at subjugating me come from a deep-seated place of envy.[187] In fact, you secretly desire to be me – to possess my masculine mystique." I would argue this is a contemporary version of the 'cool pose'[188] stance Majors refers to in his work on the dilemma of black masculinity. Once decoded, the cipher reads:

All due respect, Mr. President, I'm just as significant as you are.
Hey, white America, I know you want my power,[189] I see you salivating for it.[190]
Lord, our revolutionary stance postures us to fight[191] this oppressive regime daily.
But, as a new generation, we *will not* turn the other cheek like Martin[192] did,
…we've been down for too long.

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international magazine spreads advertising the haute couture of renowned designers like Donna Karan, and the like.

[187] This kind of envy is indicative of the loathing J. Edgar Hoover had for Dr. King in his relentless pursuit for evidence that would substantiate his claim that Dr. King had communist associations.

[188] 'Cool pose' is a method of self-preservation used by black males which is masked in indifference and detachment, as a means of countering race oppression. See Majors, ibid, p.61.

[189] This references America's ongoing preoccupation (and/or fascination) with the black masculine mystique.

[190] This is an obvious reference to African American masculine notions of phallic power.

[191] 'Glocks in the air, Hiii power' – the Glock is a semi-automatic handgun.

[192] Here, the rapper/writer references his preference for the kind of radicalism promulgated by the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, who after hearing Malcolm X speak, were moved toward this kind of black radicalism.

Finally, African American congregations also contribute to image promotion/projection when they disregard the humanity of their pastors by failing to consider the pastor's human limitations. In so doing, the pastor-pew relationship becomes unbalanced. When a pastor dutifully 'pours into' the lives of congregants through nurture, direction and care, and congregants benefit from that Christian regard, it is presumed that congregants are to continue flourishing as beneficiaries of the relationship, without consideration given to the humanity of the pastor, as it regards reciprocal communal care. I am certainly not suggesting pastors should 'bleed' on their congregants, devoid of supervised ministry practice: however, what I am arguing for is a reciprocal communal response to pastors in crisis which demonstrates regard for the other, as an ethic of Christian care.

The communal repercussions associated with adhering to a 'hands-off' and/or noninterference approach to black pastors in crisis, are that it: 1) propagates an air of secrecy; 2) alienates pastors from within the context of community, 3) stifles holistic growth; and, 4) escalates de-compensation in crisis-laden pastors. Some may argue this 'hands-off' and/or noninterference approach is culturally linked to the deference bestowed upon African chiefs[193] and kings. However, even within the AKAN society's institution of chieftancy, amidst reverence and esteem for (spiritual) leaders, there were systems in place to ensure that when a selected chief's leadership ability came into question, or if there was a failure to exercise proper spiritual authority, the chief or king's subjects were protected from harm. "One of the responsibilities of the Council of Elders is to make sure that the chief does not abuse his office….actions constituting abuse of

[193] Awuah-Nyamekye, ibid, p.4.

office may include: disrespectfulness toward the Council of Elders and the King-makers, breaking the oath of office or committing adultery particularly with the wives of his subjects…the Ohemaa may advise the chief and if necessary scold him, but if he proves recalcitrant, official charges are preferred against him and if he is found culpable, a destoolment process follows."[194]

By and large, positive representations of blackness were useful in putting forth the beginnings of a black cultural identity at a time when African peoples were continually being defined through the lens of a Protestant ethic of purity. Historian, Curtis Evans explains that even DuBois proved somewhat duplicitous in his theorizing of black culture from within the academy, as he found himself apologizing for what were widely considered the "moral failings" of the black community."[195] DuBois was attempting to rationalize black religion amidst broader theoretical understandings which did not view religion and morality as being "epistemologically and ethically singular."[196] Despite blacks having achieved a measure of distance from longstanding anthropological hypotheses and scientific conjectures made by white scholars in their attempts at pathologizing black intellect, morality and religious worldviews, contemporary understandings of black identity and culture (and the distinctiveness they espouse) continue to be shrouded in mystique. Moreover, the image of the black preacher has not emerged unscathed.

To date, publicly accessible information sources point to the psychological unraveling of several prominent African American evangelical pastors, dating back to

[194] Awuah-Nyamekye, ibid, p.4.
[195] Evans, Curtis J. The Burden of Black Religion. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.145.
[196] Ibid, p.144.

Bishop Charles H. Mason of the Church of God in Christ and reports of him being found (during his latter years), walking the streets of Memphis naked, while preaching.[197] The private lives of very prominent clergy in the black community piqued public interest long before Dr. Martin Luther King's alleged predilection for extramarital affairs[198] became known.

The current climate of contemporary black religion has caused African Americans to question both the integrity and morality of black pastoral leadership going forward. As a means of acknowledging this dilemma, several black clergy have come forward about the struggles they have encountered in their personal lives, while others continue to languish in controversy.

For example, Bishop Paul S. Morton of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship publicly acknowledged a diagnosis of bipolar disorder after experiencing a very "breakdown"[199] during a ministry engagement in the Bahamas. Bishop George Bloomer[200] shared (during a sermon) that he was taking the prescription medication Prozac, prescribed to him when he had (what he describes as) 'a nervous breakdown'. On the contrary, an unwillingness to publicly address allegations of sexual abuse and

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[197] Bishop Paul Morton refers to an incident whereby Bishop Charles H. Mason suffered some form of mental breakdown in his later years; and, Morton likens this breakdown as resultant of Mason's failure to discern for himself when to resign his leadership position as head of the Church of God in Christ. Morton intimates Mason yielded to the promptings of others for him to maintain his leadership position for the sake of the organization, despite his age and mental acuity. Mason led the organization for fifty seven years, until his death in 1961 at the age of ninety-five. During his latter years there were hints of mental illness. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqTh23r6MBi.

[198] Dyson, Michael E. I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2000), pp.156-163.

[199] See www.cbn.com/700club/guests/bios/bishop_morton_042104.aspx.

[200] Bishop George Bloomer discloses his account of what he identifies as having a 'nervous breakdown.' See www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0NMCZ2lv3Q.

coercion with young male followers, prompted Bishop Eddie Long[201] to settle out-of court, granting restitution to the young male mentees under his charge; which undoubtedly sent shockwaves throughout the African American religious community.

Furthermore, domestic violence charges filed against Bishop Thomas Weeks III by his wife Juanita Bynum landed him in jail[202] causing irreparable harm to their ministries; and, ultimately destroying their marriage. The arrest of mega church pastor Creflo Dollar, following his violent physical assault upon his teenage daughter[203] was viewed as domestic violence (and child abuse) by some and simply homespun parenting by others. Likewise, the tragic death of renowned pastor Zachery Tims,[204] whose body was found in an upscale New York hotel, with drug paraphernalia (allegedly)[205] on his possession, has left the African American religious community dazed and confused as to the problematic lives of its very public leaders.

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[201] Mega church pastor Bishop Eddie Long was accused of sexually coercing several young men who looked to him for mentorship. See www.christianpost.com/news/bishop-eddie-long-reaches-settlement-in-sex-lawsuit-50561/.

[202] Bishop Thomas Weeks appeared in court on charges that he beat his wife Juanita Bynum-Weeks www.ajc.com/photo/news/local/c024901855b79ba961d5412a6a3cc93/pdqTz/.

[203] Prominent mega church pastor Creflo Dollar is arrested and charged with battery and cruelty to children following his physical attack on his 15-year old daughter. See www.11alive.com/News/Crime/244082/445/Creflo-Dollar-arrested-fir-assaulting-daughter.

[204] Florida mega church pastor Zachery Tims was found dead in one of the rooms at the W Hotel in Times Square, where he was staying enroute to a preaching engagement. See www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/16/pastor-zachery-tims-found-_n_9280000.html#s330986title=Zachery_Tims.

[205] Tims' mother fought to have his autopsy results sealed as a means of honoring the life, memory and privacy of her son's legacy, in light of the national media scandal surrounding his death.

Although each of these instances of pastoral crisis have played themselves out through some form of media, I shudder to think of the myriad of daily occurrences frequenting the private lives of lesser known black clergy leaders.

We Wear the Mask: Winnicottian Notions of the 'True' and the 'False' Self

I selected Donald Winnicott as the theorist most fitting for my work, for several reasons. As Brooke Hopkins suggests, "Winnicott's work tends to be far more sympathetic to the role played by cultural and religious phenomena in human development."[206] Principally, coming from a second generation analytic thinker, Winnicottian theory is useful because its chief concern is centered around the quality of the subjective experience. Like many psychoanalysts of his day, Winnicott's interest in the field of psychoanalysis grew out of his own early childhood experiences of family dysfunction. He understood first-hand the impact of mental illness upon individuals and family systems because he watched his own mother[207] suffer through bouts of depression.

In his (early) career as a pediatrician, Winnicott apprenticed under a physician[208] who taught him the value of developing sympathetic relationships with patients, in addition to, extrapolating their detailed histories by way of attentive listening. I find this particularly useful for therapeutic practice with pastors, because the isolation they

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[206] Capps, Donald. Freud and Freudians On Religion: A Reader. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), p.230.

[207] Donald Winnicott's father was a workaholic who he felt subconsciously left him at home to tend to his mother's mental illness. See Kahr, Brett. D. W. Winnicott: A Biographical Sketch. (London: Karnac Books, 1996), p.10. Despite his mothers' inattentiveness, Winnicott benefited from the strong presence of other females figures which impacted his young life (i.e., two sisters, a nanny, two aunts and several other household servants. See Monte, Christopher. Beneath the Mask: An Introduction to Personality Theories. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), p.299.

[208] Thomas Horder taught Winnicott the value of subjectivity, by allowing patients to tell their stories as a means of obtaining a detailed case history – ibid, p.34.

experience limits them opportunities to be heard and to express how they genuinely feel. Since by virtue of their profession, pastors are uniquely situated to be the 'hearers' or 'bearers' of everyone else's narrative, they require their own sympathetic relationships' whereby protective spaces,[209] are intentionally created for them to draw them out of isolation and into relationships which grant them freedom to articulate their narratives in ways that are meaningful and life-giving.

Based upon the survey results[210] presented in Chapter Three, the two Winnicottian theories most applicable to my work are: 1) his theory of the 'holding environment'[211] (or mother's womb) as the initial place of human development that cannot be penetrated by external forces; and, 2) his concept of 'false self disorder'[212] where he asserts that when the authentic self feels threatened the false self appears. I emphasize the 'false self' as it relates to the inauthentic presentation of the self and the ways in which black pastors adopt internalized/externalized expectations as a means of promoting and/or projecting a certain type of pastoral image.

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[209] Winnicott primarily concerned himself with the pre-oedipal phase of infant development and drew great insight from his comparisons between early patterns of mother-infant interactional deprivation and his work with adult patients. From this he determined the quality of an infant's earliest phases of subjective experience, had a significant impact upon the infant's emerging sense of self.

[210] Study participants scored at, near or over fifty percent on seven of the significant criterion for assessing depression: agitation (41.9%), loss of energy (77.4%), changes in sleep (61.4%), changes in appetite (54.8%), concentration difficulty (48.4%), tiredness or fatigue (58.1%) and loss of interest in sex (43.3%).

[211] Winnicott describes the 'holding environment' as a physical and spatial psychical space within which the infant is protected without knowing he/she is being protected. See Mitchell, Stephen and Margaret Black. Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalyic Thought. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995), p.126.

[212] A person who is deemed as possessing a 'false' self looks to others for significance and personal meaning. Mitchell, ibid, p.127.

First, Winnicott proposes that the subjective omnipotence of the child forces the child to believe its desire for the object (mother) makes her appear. This notion of being 'all-powerful' is stimulated by the mothers' responsiveness towards the child. Her responsiveness creates the 'holding environment' in which the child receives a continual source of atmospheric support and protection for its spontaneous emergent experiences. Winnicott argues within the holding environment, the mother suspends her own subjectivity for the sake of the developing child, which implies the child's reality is influenced by the mother's facilitation of it.[213] According to Winnicott, the mother's ability to create this 'protective space' amidst the mother-infant interactional dyad is facilitated by the broader community, who grants the mother the privilege to do so by attending to her existential needs. Here, Winnicott alludes to the similarities between effective psychoanalytic therapy over a substantial period of time, and the concept of 'good enough' mothering.[214] In this regard, the therapist endures the same kinds of vulnerabilities new mothers encounter with their infants, in that, the 'protective space' which enables the continuity of the infant's development, is the same type of *contained* environment therapists must create to foster a client's growth and development.

This is what I am proposing as a viable response to African American clergy depression – the creation of an intentional, protective space whereby clergy feel the liberty to express themselves authentically without the fear of judgment, denominational retribution or the imposition of congregational expectations which pastors may be unable

[213] Winnicott, Donald W. Babies and Their Mothers. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publications, 1987), p.11.
[214] Winnicott posits the 'good enough' mother provides an atmosphere of encouragement and support which protects against external experiences that would threaten the infant's existence and emerging sense of self.

to fulfill. "The patient is offered refuge from the demands of the outside world; nothing is expected except to 'be' in the analytic situation, to connect with and express what one is experiencing. No continuity or order is demanded; un-integration and discontinuity are expected and accepted. The analyst and the analytic situation provide a holding environment in which aborted self-development can be reanimated, safe enough for the true self to begin to emerge."[215] Here, Winnicott links the therapists' vulnerabilities to new mothers' early experiences with their infants, as it regards the ability to impact ones' psyche. For him, therapeutic relationships denote a type of 'dependence' on the part of the patient – a borrowing of the therapists' ego strength, until enough ego strength is developed within the patients' self.

The concept of a holding environment is also useful in conveying how congregations can facilitate protective spaces for new pastors by instituting psychodynamic psychotherapy as an optional feature of the healthcare packages for new pastors during the negotiation and/or search process. Doing so would demonstrate a congregation's commitment towards establishing preventative mental health measures which may significantly reduce the likelihood of isolation, and the subsequent etiology of depression in African American evangelical pastors. Additionally, it would give entrée to communal conversations around mental health advocacy amongst a population mired by a culturally-based stigmatization of depression.

Some would argue that it is difficult to conceive of African American pastors as experiencing feelings of isolation, given their situational context involves providing leadership to a congregation (and broader community) of people. Nonetheless, I am

[215] Mitchell, ibid, p.133.

proposing isolation is a common experience of black pastors; and, the catalyst for that isolation is embedded within the pastoral function.

For example, when African American pastors are looked upon to provide leadership in their communities, the internal/external expectation is that he/she will do whatever is necessary to fulfill the role of pastor[216] (and resident theologian). However, these parameters are disproportionately magnified in the black community due to the propensity for African American evangelical pastors to be thrust into the roles of 'messiah,' 'father' and/or 'mother' by their congregants.

> …historically the black church has always been a family church…The majority of people whom black preachers serve have dependency needs – to be loved, wanted and appreciated….A great number of children who fill the church schools of black churches have no father or no significant relationship with their physical fathers, which makes the father figure all the more important in their lives. Children as well as husbandless wives need and want to see the projection of a strong, responsible black male image and very often the only possible source is resident with the black preacher.[217]

[216] Theologian J. Deotis Roberts speaks to the intrinsic dualism resident in black pastoral theology which acknowledges the relevance of both profound intellect and a 'feet on the ground' sense of prophetic urgency as a viable (and, I would dare say, ethical) black pastoral theology. "…we must see the roles of the theologian and pastor with mutual dependence." See Roberts, J. Deotis. The Prophethood of Black Believers: An African American Political Theology for Ministry. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p.15.

[217] Quite obviously the dating of this text posits Hicks as speaking primarily from a patriarchal perspective; however, his writing has since evolved and is more reflective of being inclusive of black women in pastoral ministry. Hence, 'mother' imagery and/or maternal images are equally as significant in the lives of African Americans, in that, generationally, the emergence of the emotionally detached mother appears to be gaining resonance in the field of psychotherapy – prompting the need to counter negative images of 'maternal' care. Hicks, ibid, p.86.

The problem with 'projective identification'[218] within black congregations is that pastors are often oblivious to the unconscious assumptions being projected onto them by congregants' early family of origin experiences. This is the inherent burden associated with attempting to fulfill deific and/or parental roles in the context of congregational life. Candace Benyei[219] states that congregations are much like family systems and comprise an integrated web of human connections whose primary means of functioning are attributed to their positioning within the system. I find this especially relevant for the black church since it is often one of the few places where African Americans experience a sense of autonomy and power. Benyei claims the fragile nature of covenant in religious systems prompts members to avoid conflict for the sake of maintaining position. I agree (and maintain this applies to both pastor and congregant as members of the worshipping community) and have witnessed this dynamic interchange in the black church more frequently than I would like to admit. From a pastoral theological perspective, her assertion holds true – when the parental needs of congregants have not been appropriately satisfied during childhood, their dysfunctionality manifests within the life of the congregation.

> The black pastor, namely the male, became the spiritual father and leader of the black people, and was expected to guide the congregation…In personal matters of pastoral concern, the pastor was expected to take charge and provide answers and solutions. Many people looked to the minister as a father in pastoral concerns, and this included elderly people[220]

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[218] Projective identification is a Kleinian term used to describe a process whereby particular aspects of ones' self are unconsciously imposed upon and/or located in another with whom one is in some form of interpersonal relationship with or identifies with.
[219] Benyei, ibid, pp.8-13.
[220] Wimberly, Edward P. Pastoral Care in the Black Church. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), pp.36-37.

Such is my argument against utilizing 'father' or 'mother' language (and/or imagery) among congregants, because it serves as a double-edged sword in African American evangelical congregations. When pastors use these types of metaphoric designations they can evoke powerful mental representations of parental experiences in congregants (whether fantasy or memory), including all of the fueled emotions associated therewith – i.e., fear, rage, love, shame, hate, guilt, etc.

Deified and/or parental designations serve to do one of two things, either: 1) drive a psychological wedge of distance between pastor and people; or 2) create unhealthy relationship attachments and/or 'loyalty binds' between pastor and pew. Each proves problematic due to the power differential inherent in creature-creator and parent-child designations, in addition to the punitive attributes associated therewith (which Jim Poling touches upon in regard to the clinical, theological and social dimensions of the relational[221] abuse of power enacted against children in families).

Fundamentally, internalized and/or external expectations divulge an implied line of demarcation which separates the pastor from the pew. Lenora Tubbs Tisdale speaks to this peculiarity in her explanation of how pastors experience a type of liminality or insider/outsider status in the process of exegeting congregations:

> Pastors – especially new pastors – can find the tension disconcerting. On the one hand, they are immediately welcomed and afforded a place of belonging within the life of the congregation and its structures. On the other hand, they are also warned (by other pastors and peers) about the dangers involved if they ever completely settle in and become too much 'at home' in congregational life. ("Don't look within the congregation to

[221] Loyalty binds emerge when victims lack affirmation or emotional support from within their family of origin. These binds stem from depleted emotional constructs, making the victim appreciative of any basis of relationally connective functioning. This kind of loyalty is deeply rooted in a fear of abandonment. See James Poling. The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), p.26.

> find your best friends." "Take care that you don't become so comfortable with your people that you lose your 'cutting edge' in ministry." "Remember that in any social setting with congregation members you are still the 'pastor'").[222]

This is a useful analogy for understanding how the process of isolation can unfold in the lives of some black clergy leaders. For the most part, Tisdale is pointing to an all too familiar practice among pastors whereby experienced pastors commonly convey the above-mentioned sentiments as a 'rite of passage' into pastoral ministry. Unfortunately, what these well-intentioned recommendations often do is create a distance between ones' pastoral self and the worshipping community; and, can be misconstrued as inaccessibility or aloofness on the part of the pastor, by congregants. Furthermore, it can prove crippling to new pastors in their attempts at formulating a sense of cohesiveness amidst their new member status in the worshipping community (relative to communal belonging). In the black community, this type of 'pastoral distancing' seemingly locks pastors into behavioral responses which do not allow for a bifurcation of the pastor's individual and pastoral self.

A clear example of this is found in Michael Eric Dyson's text, "*I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King."*[223] Here, Dyson alludes to a kind of fusion of King's two selves when he states the pressures of the Civil Rights movement, coupled with Kings' absence from his family for extended periods of time, resulted in

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[222] Tisdale, Lenora Tubbs. Preaching As Local Theology and Folk Art. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), p.50.

[223] I think it is important to note that a great deal of thought went into framing this aspect of Dr. King's private life in a way that honors his legacy without besmirching his character. My intention is to point to his and other clergy leaders' profoundly flawed humanity, in light of the demands of the pastoral position of leadership within the African American community.

what he describes as King's repetitive adulterous encounters with other women.[224] Dyson refers to a particular incident[225] whereby amidst a sexual act, King reportedly says "I'm f___-ing for God!" Dyson writes:

> …in the lowest moment of moral alienation from his personal values, and when he was furthest from his vows of fidelity, King could not shake the consciousness of his representative duties: to his race, to the civil rights movement, and above all to God. Instead of bringing his duties and desires into conflict, King momentarily fused them. His attempt at such a union symbolized his temporary rejection of the idea that his duties and desires were incompatible.[226]

What this demonstrates is King's inability to distinguish between his two selves – his individual self and his pastoral self. I would argue that King's internal wrestling is representative of the same kinds of internal struggles African American pastors face when feeling compelled to live up to self-imposed, internalized or external expectations. This obvious fusion of King's two selves is a clear example of how isolation, internalized or external expectations, and a loss of self-awareness can set pastors up for failure.

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[224] Ralph Abernathy presents the same kinds of conclusions as Dyson as it regards to Dr. King's "weakness for women" as being resultant of the demands of the Civil Rights movement, and his absence from his home for long periods of time. Both men agree these were primary factors in Dr. King's indulgences with other women. However, Abernathy prefaces his public airing of this aspect of King's private life as a necessary outgrowth of others' comments about King's extramarital relations, of which, Abernathy insists would have gone with King "to the grave". See Abernathy, Ralph David. And the Walls Came Tumbling Down: Ralph David Abernathy, An Autobiography. (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1989), pp.470 - 473.

[225] It is a well-known fact that at Robert Kennedy's request and J. Edgar Hoover's pursuit, Dr. King was wiretapped by the US government. As head of the FBI, Hoover's relentlessness was fueled by his attempts to silence the influence of Dr. King as an African American leader. Dr. King was under the constant surveillance of the FBI, as a means of substantiating Hoover's claims that King was "under the influence of communists." So much so, that FBI wiretaps were set up in his home, offices and the hotel rooms he frequented during his travels for the Civil Rights movement. In the end, while the tapes failed to provide any evidence of communist activity, the recordings did contain "embarrassing details about King's sex life." See www.cnn.com/2008/US/03/31/mlk.fbi.conspiracy/index.html.

[226] Dyson, ibid, p.162.

In Winnicott's theory of false self disorder, he focuses on those individuals who present as functional, yet lacking in their capacity to experience a sense of personhood. He posits the 'true' self as that creative, feeling self who is connected to a sense of authenticity and views life as being pregnant with meaning. The false self is a disordered self – a self that is detached from the vitality the world brings. I contend it is a self that can become easily entangled with notions of image promotion/projection, self-importance and the need to borrow character traits that are not ones' own, as a means of obtaining a sense of significance and/or personhood. In addition, image promotion/projection causes pastors to hide behind their pastoral role in the hopes that no one will find out who they really are.

Pastors who do not envision authenticity as a viable, liberative pastoral practice, can set themselves up for failure in the pastorate. I would imagine King may have (to some degree) experienced a loss of selfhood upon being thrust to the forefront of the Civil Rights movement. The weightiness of being designated as the spokesperson for the masses of African Americans, living under the constant threat of violence and death, being isolated from familial networks, navigating the frustration of attempting to evoke change in a racially segregated society – all of this makes it easy to envision how a disordering of King's true self caused his compliant false self to appear.

Quite similarly, when Pastor Jamal Harrison Bryant publicly described the spiraling downward of his successful pastorate following his admission of an extramarital affair, he states had he not gone through the divorce, he would have continued in his destructive behavior. Why? Bryant's self-image became fused with his pastoral role – in that, saving the church amidst the scandal became synonymous with saving himself. He

goes on to say his ex-wife told him, "I did not divorce you because of the infidelity I divorced you because I no longer recognized you."[227] In other words, infidelity among pastors is rarely about the act itself (or the other individual); on the contrary, it points more specifically to the unmet psychological and emotional needs of the pastor and what the absence of those needs evokes within the constitution of emotionally depleted pastors.

In his discussion about sexual attraction in pastoral ministry, Charles Rassieur suggests pastors with unsatisfying interpersonal relationships are more easily drawn into sexual encounters with others. "If a pastor feels isolated from such human contact, or if he feels isolated from persons who genuinely care for him, unwittingly he may be drawn by those needs into an intimate relationship with an attractive parishioner."[228] Whether parishioner or non-parishioner, the essence of Bryant's self-disclosure[229] provides pertinent clues as to what can happen when pastors fail to distinguish between their humanity as being separate from their pastoral role.

To that end, Winnicott's theories surrounding both the 'holding environment' and the 'false self disorder' are useful in conveying the applicability of engaging psychodynamic psychotherapeutic practice with African American pastors suffering with depression.

Views from A Womanist Lens:
De-Constructing 'Strong Black Woman' (SBW)

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[227] This is former CNN journalist Roland Martin's candid interview with Pastor Jamal Bryant following Bryant's experience with sexual temptation in pastoral ministry. See – www.rolandmartinreports.com/blog/2013/05/drama-in-the-church-temptation-ended-the-marriage-nearl-destroyed-the-ministry-of-pastor-jamal-bryant-video/

[228] Rassieur, Charles L. The Problem Clergymen Don't Talk About. (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), p.39.

[229] Bryant asserts that through the painstaking process of therapy, self-reflection and hard work he has since rebounded and has begun to thrive again in his personal life and pastoral ministry.

As A Dangerous Motif for African American Female Clergy

I cannot adequately engage a discussion around depression in black clergy without exploring its impact upon African American women, specifically. To begin, depression is not an anomaly for black women. The contextual realities of race, class and gender place African American women at an extreme disadvantage for combating the depressive realities that define their existence. For most, the lived experience of depression spans an entire lifetime, often related to early experiences of abuse, loss, grief, dysfunctional relationship patterns with significant others; and, it can also be attributed to nihilism and suffering extant within a lifetime of poverty.

Statistics reveal that on average, African American women often delay seeking treatment for depression out of fear of being diagnosed as clinically depressed (in addition to other socioeconomic factors).[230] This fear is understandable from a socio-cultural viewpoint, since African American women are locked in a battle to survive in a society that has systematically devalued their identity and worth. Pastoral theologian, Teresa Snorton argues that black women struggle with notions of vulnerability. She writes , "…it is extremely risky for the womanist, who, outside the pastoral care moment, must continue to contend with sexism, racism, and classism."[231] As a result, black women often present façades of strength to mask the pain and as a means of retaining a measure of emotional control. In their demonstrative resolve to mask strength, African

[230] As it regards the diagnosis of depression, (often) as the primary caregiver in the household, African American women believe they simply cannot afford to be sick – literally, due to a lack of healthcare or otherwise; and, figuratively, because being sick would cost them too much (i.e., a weeks' pay, their job, the few days they may have set aside to stay at home caring for a sick child, etc.).

[231] Moessner, Jeanne Stevenson. Through the Eyes of Women: Insight for Pastoral Care. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996), p.60.

American women rush to extract notions of resilience and survival from their narrative histories (of mothers/foremothers) to the negation of their own need for emotional and psychological healing.

When Sojourner Truth[232] delivered her extemporaneous address at a women's convention in Akron, Ohio in 1851, she poignantly encapsulated the predicament of (enslaved and freed) African women; and, in so doing, she ushered in the black woman's manifesto to the New World.

> Well, children, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o' kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de women at de Norf all a talking 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talking 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best places…and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm!...I have plowed, and planted and, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me – and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well – and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and seen 'em mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear – and ain't I a woman?[233]

Her prophetic address gives voice to the travail of countless black women throughout American history. The ongoing struggle against systemic oppression warrants that African American women do what they must to survive the realities of their daily confrontations with oppression – (i.e., earnestly hoping your name is called while waiting at the unemployment office; wondering if there will be enough to live on after paying the electricity bill; standing in the middle of aisle #7 counting food stamps to determine what needs to be put back on the shelf; praying that the doctor will provide

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[232] Sojourner Truth was an itinerant preacher, abolitionist and feminist who voiced the cry of (enslaved and freed) African women in their plight to be acknowledged in mainstream American society.

[233] hooks, bell. Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981), p.160.

enough sample medications for your child, that will last until the next pay period; frantically checking the mailbox, in hopes that he will send that child support check like the court demanded; clutching a Hefty garbage bag filled with all of your personal belongings, as you escort your children through the doors of the local homeless shelter, etc.).

For many black women, the enduring battle for survival is readily apparent because if one were to look closely enough, the strain of oppression is evident on their faces – prompting the question from the broader, more privileged society, 'Why do African American women always look so *angry*?' Whether in the confines of the boardroom or waiting at the bus stop, African American women are locked in and focused upon a battle to survive, on three levels – race, class and gender.

Part of this press to survive is resultant of African American women's inherited legacy of placing the needs of others over and above their own.[234] In so doing, they often suppress their own needs, under the assumption that if they ignore their own needs long enough, they will somehow disappear. These kinds of responses to self, lead to frustration, depression and an exacerbation of their health outcomes. Moreover, a

[234] Within the historical constructs of the slave trade industry, we find imagery of (enslaved and freed) African women's reinforced negation of self. Keeping all things in perspective, I am by no means dismissing the journey of (enslaved and freed) African foremothers who paved the way for African (American) liberation. However, in the present-day lives of African American women, many remain bound to cultural legacies of self-sacrifice, placing family, community and religious activity over and above their individual necessity to engage in regular practices of self-care. Psychologist Nancy Boyd-Frank states "The role of care-giver is perhaps the most clearly defined and accepted role of the African American woman…we expect African American women to be responsible care-gives in the community, while we provide men with a firmer sense of unconditional love. For the African American woman, then, being perceived as loveable becomes intricately tied to her ability to take care of others. Such caretaking requires a level of selflessness that involves suppressing one's own needs." See Boyd-Franklin, ibid, pp.230-31.

disregard for self or the lack of self-care among African American women, colludes with the stereotypical image of 'Mammy' "…a selfless caretaker, the epitome of trustworthiness, but also not very smart and often a buffoon."[235]

The dominant society (including some in the African American community) is culpable in expecting African American women to place the needs of others, over and above caring for themselves'.[236] This intrusive and oppressive demand causes resentment and frustration in black women because it presupposes that 'the needs of the other' will always be more important than the black woman's own need. Society, in large part, continually limits African American women by cornering/thrusting them into these selfsame 'fixed' and/or predefined roles that killed their foremothers. "Stereotypes portray African American women as sub- and superhuman beings who have their place; that is, they are not to hold any authentic power or to be taken seriously, they are to be used and discarded, and they are fundamentally unacceptable." [237]

These 'fixed' and/or predefined roles are assigned to African American women by their families, their communities, religious institutions, by the broader white world and by black women themselves. What proves equally as damaging is the global response to these stereotypical images of African American women. As a result, we now

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[235] This stereotype reinforces an understanding that African American women are selfless caretakers who should not be taken seriously in regards to their own immediate needs, desires, hopes and aspirations for themselves. Society postulates that 'the other' (whoever that other might be – i.e, white women, black men, white children, the immigrant, etc.) will always be considered more significant than the African American women. See Jackson, ibid, p.73.

[236] African American women who "juggle multiple roles" which require them to place another's need over and above their own, are prone to depression. See Marilyn Hughes Gaston and Gale Porter. Prime Time: The African American Woman's Complete Guide to Midlife, Health and Wellness. (New York, NY: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 2001), p.368.

[237] Jackson, ibid, p.73.

see how other immigrant populations embrace these stereotypes by presuming to define African American women on the same terms. I liken the adoption of this practice as akin to acculturation – as a means of immigrants gaining access to and acceptance from the broader white world. It appears to be a proliferation of the class distinction encountered in their countries of origin. By conforming to widely-held Western beliefs about black women, they too reduce African American women to servile roles, believing it will validate entrée into, and the acceptance[238] of the dominant society.

This sheds light on some of the ongoing angst between African American women and Korean (and/or Asian) women.[239] On the whole, African American women's experience of Korean (and/or Asian) women has not been favorable; but, often one of condescension and derision. In these relational encounters, some black women have experienced themselves as being relegated to positions of inferiority and/or servitude by Korean (and Asian) women; who, for the most part, have seemingly bought into this 'servitudinal' typecasting (of African American women) as part of their acculturation process in America. In a collection of essays on womanism, Womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher speaks to this hypocrisy when she writes, "Other women of color

[238] This is evidenced in Korean (and/or Asian) women's quest to assimilate into Western culture. For example, undergoing popular surgeries to realign their eyes so they look less Korean (Asian) and more American. This is similar to African (more specifically, Nigerian) women's attempts at bleaching their skin so as to look more European.

[239] Although Korean (and/or Asian) women present themselves as an oppressed population in their adoption of the term Womanist, if one were to draw the proverbial line of class distinction, African American women would say Korean (and/or Asian) women tend to view themselves as superior to African American women.

claiming the womanist nomenclature and identity must be in authentic relationships of mutuality, equality, and respect with black women."[240]

Clearly, the emergence of a Womanist'[241] theology has given voice to the countless individual experiences of race, class and gender oppression embedded within the African American woman's experience here in America. Womanist theology has provided the world a lens into the particularities of African American women's lived experience as told via countless narratives of courageous women who have historically struggled[242] and continue to endure structural race, class and gender oppression, while dogmatically clinging to the lived reality of an experiential God who can and will 'make a way out of no way'.

Black women have had to counter unconscionable degrees of emotional, psychological, physical and social violence enacted upon them. These patterns of violence are clearly linked through slavery up to present-day life in America. They have had to shoulder the cultural burden of the black male as it regards being overly responsible for the problems that African American men face. They have upheld the charge of keeping the family together despite the black males' quest to get ahead by buying into the dominant society's cultural value system. Black women have over-

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[240] Floyd-Thomas, Stacey M. Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society. (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), p.163.

[241] Womanist theology is a form of liberation theology which encompasses a view of theology as being constructed from the unique contextual perspective of the African American woman's religious experience in America. It is extracted from the cultural idiom 'womanish' used to describe a young black female who is behaving in a sagacious manner beyond her years. For Walker, a Womanist is "…audacious and courageous. She is aware that the colored race is like a flower garden." Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), ix.

[242] Morrison, Toni. The Bluest Eye. (Bronxville, NY: Pocket Books, 1972), p.109.

extended themselves in their commitment to the black church and oftentimes, the black community.

In the *Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison demonstrates a semblance of the burgeoning African American female identity. She writes, "Edging into life from the back door. Becoming. Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, 'do this.' White children said, 'give me that'. White men said, 'come here'. Black men said, 'lay down.' The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other. But they took all of that and created it in their own image. They ran the houses of white people, and knew it. When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other."[243] Here Morrison captures the idiosyncratic complexity of black women's existential reality.

The field of pastoral theology (along with mental health and social work practice) has been richly enhanced by the distinctiveness that a Womanist perspective postulates in its unearthing of the African American woman's religious experiences; nonetheless, there remains much work to be done.

As I consider Womanism[244] and the theology it proposes, juxtaposed with engaging in therapeutic practices of care with African American female clergy, I find

[243] Morrison, Toni. The Bluest Eye. (New York, NY: Random House, 2007), p.138.
[244] Womanist theology proposes that feminist theology is inadequate for two reasons: 1) it is white in its orientation; and, 2) it is racist as it regards its sources. Therefore, in view of oppression, a feminist theology is limited, in that it is solely rooted in gender oppression. Womanist theology wholly addresses the particularities of the African American women's experiences of race, class and gender oppression in America. See Grant, Jacqueline. White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response. (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), pp.195-99.

myself repeatedly frustrated by the longstanding descriptive 'strong black woman' (SBW) in its association with African American womanhood.

> Strong refers less to its physical strength than to emotional resilience. Ironically, it is often the physical kind of strength and caring for one's body that is neglected by those who try to live up to the 'SBW' paradigm. Society expects the African American woman to handle losses, traumas, failed relationships, and the dual oppressions of racism and sexism. Falling short of this expectation is viewed by many African American women as personal failure. This may bring about intense feelings of shame that they work hard to contain.[245]

In my own therapeutic practice with black female clergy, I have encountered numerous accounts of (often, compounded) experiences of violence and oppression as comprising substantive aspects of their narratives. To be clear, African American women have countered the negative labels thrust upon them for years. Therefore, in this regard, I view the term 'strong' as yet another designation which needs to be challenged.

I contend that assigning the label 'strong' (pejoratively[246] or otherwise) to black women, sets them up for failure as it regards the development of their sense of professional identity and personhood; because it prohibits black women from discovering, identifying and proclaiming for themselves, who or what they desire to be. "A complicated by-product of the multiracial history for African Americans has been the reality of dealing with multiple identities both within and outside the African American

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[245] Jackson, Leslie C. and Beverly Greene. Psychotherapy with African American Women: Innovations in Psychodynamic Perspectives and Practice. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000), p.227.

[246] Here, I reference the historic objectification of the black female body, as yet again, exampled in America's fascination with First Lady Michelle Obama's arms. This is another example of how subtle innuendos of 'strength' are associated with African American women, prompted by America's longstanding pre-occupation with and exploitation of the black female body.

community."[247] African American women deserve the right to identify themselves in terms of who they are or want to be, without being intruded upon by external and intra-communal forces presuming to know better.

What I find most injurious about the SBW motif is that it leaves African American women void of conceptualizing any other way of being. From a black pastoral theological perspective, I find that there are nuances to the term 'strength' that bind African American women to 'over-functioning' within the confines of their familial, communal and professional relationships. The very nomenclature 'strong black woman' seemingly binds African American women to postures of performance[248] that provide very few spaces in their lives to experience, express or engage themselves in practices of vulnerability. The task of engaging African American women in therapeutic practices around notions of vulnerability is huge, since history has taught black women that there is no room or space for them to uncover and/or discover their true and authentic selves.

African American women have had to learn about womanhood in relation to their emergent sense of self through the shared experiences of other prominent women in their lives. These experiential '*learnings*' have often been handed down to them from

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[247] Jackson, ibid, p.9.

[248] "The slave woman was first a full-time worker for her owner and only incidentally a wife, mother, and homemaker. She was allowed to spend only a small fraction of her time in her quarters, she often did no cooking or sewing, and she was not allowed to nurse her children during their illnesses. If she was a field slave, she performed hard labor daily in the fields even when she was pregnant and shortly after childbirth. Since the children were the master's property and did not belong to the parents, slave women frequently were breeding instruments for children who were later sold. During this period of slavery, the Black woman's body was forcibly subjected to the carnal desires of any male who took a fancy to her, including slave masters, overseers, their sons, or any male slave." See Johnson, ibid, pp.20-21. With the advancement of research in sociology, psychology, public health and women's health specifically, the cost of maintaining this 'false self', is crippling for African American women everywhere.

generations of women who essentially '…had already been where they were going.' As such, ideas around self-care were superseded by the daily concern for the survival of the broader family/community.

With all due respect to the preceding era of African American womanhood and those who trudged the paths before us, I counter that former cultural understanding with, 'when you know better, you do better'. I am not suggesting that '…the way we got over' is wrong, quite the contrary, it was comprehensible based on the cultural milieu. However, what I am suggesting is, from a psychological (and holistic) perspective *that* way, was not healthy. To date, this negation of ones' self has resulted in the promotion of a culturally dilapidated gender-based understanding of self, masked as African American womanhood. Unfortunately, this 'false self' has translated into the notion that African American women should be at work constantly placing the needs of others over and above caring for themselves in ways that are life-giving.

Some may pose the question, 'Why talk about vulnerability?' Well, it is my contention that vulnerability is a building block of self-identity. When one is aware of where their vulnerabilities lie, they are much more attuned to who they really are.

Jackson contends, "One difficulty inherent in presenting a strong face to the world is that the SBW often inherits other people's problems. She may appear to be quire relational. Family and friends, colleagues and associates seek her out for counsel. It is very hard for her to say no. Yet she isolates herself when she is feeling particularly vulnerable."[249]

[249] Jackson, ibid, p.228.

Vulnerability is a useful asset in pastoral identity formation because it points to an awareness of human limitations; and, it thoroughly grounds individuals in a sense of self. To be grounded in an authentic self, is to view life's circumstances as challenges to be met and overcome, rather than, being overwhelmed by them. For me, the difference is agency. This is especially critical in the pastoral formation and/or re-formation of African American female pastors, whose legacies of strength were presumably 'handed-down' to them by their foremothers; and, further appropriated in the church by adapting to masculine personas as a means of gaining acceptance as a pastor, in a male-dominated profession. The implication for black women is that they can either walk in the awkwardness of donning the façade of an *assumed* strength, or otherwise be empowered by having grown accustomed to walking in the rhythmic stride of a strength they have amassed for themselves.

By this I mean that black female clergy become self-aware when they have amassed for themselves a collection of experiences which comprise their own pastoral formation; and, they are able to subsequently point out for themselves those areas of limitation and success that makeup their narrative over a period of time.

Historically, black women have been socialized to be self-reliant and to present façades of 'strength' in the face of adversity, as a means of overcoming difficult life situations. However, in the process of donning the mask of strength, black women have discovered there are no concrete identifiable spaces to articulate how they genuinely feel amidst their 'overly responsible' selves. As such, they are encumbered with matriarchal legacies that reinforce reminders of foremothers who survived much harsher fates. At the crux of these legacies lie unspoken cultural expectations, which psychologically

immobilize black women, as it regards their capacity to acknowledge and embrace their vulnerable selves.

This trans-generational cyclic notion of strength is oppressive in that it exacerbates depression in African American women by binding them to behaviors that promote frustration, emotional exhaustion and underlying resentment. It becomes a perpetual practice of over-extending ones' self for the benefit of the other; and, this over-extension of self is demonstrated in the family, church and community – the end result of which leads to depression. This practice becomes magnified in the context of pastoral ministry.

In her sermon "Why Are You Here?" Pastor Claudette Anderson Copeland sheds light on the plight of black female pastors while preaching at a conference for them in Los Angeles in 2000. Copeland exhorts:

> Listen! There is a secret legacy of depression among women who preach. It's acted out in private moments when we cry alone. It tells on us in public opportunities as we try to outrun and out-perform and out-succeed and obscure our personal sorrows. We make extravagant demands on our congregations so they can buy us bigger toys and bigger things, so we can feel like we're loved because of what "our peoples" did for us…You make demands in private so you can feel better to make another public appearance….We're here because nobody told us how *not* to get here.[250]

Here, Copeland posits African America female pastors as being at a crossroads between second and third generation understandings of womanism, as it regards the significance of care for self, over and against care for others. Copeland offers liberative empowerment to female pastors who may be experiencing isolation and emotional depletion while navigating the rigors of ministry.

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[250] Simmons, Martha and Frank A. Thomas. Preaching With Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), pp.642 – 649.

I've dubbed this particularity among African American female pastors as a type of 'Womanist binding[251]' which impacts black (clergy) women in ways that foster resistance to unmasking their vulnerable selves. For lack of a better example for women, in John 11:38, Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the cave and at Jesus' command, Lazarus emerges completely resurrected. However, he is bound in his physical body, restrained by the burial wrappings. Lazarus comes forth leaping, breathing and responsive; but, limited in his capacity to fully function in both articulation and movement. As such, Lazarus is alive, but constrained by a tight situation – muddled, entangled and possibly bewildered by his predicament.

This is how I experience the African American female clergy I have had the privilege to engage in therapeutic practice with. They are alive, yet (like Lazarus) fundamentally entangled in the conundrum of past and present-day expectations around identity. And although, they have been freed from one aspect of oppression, they remain impeded in their emotional capacity to identify a sense of self as they situate themselves in pastoral ministry. There is an overriding resistance to 'self-awareness'; which leaves these women functional, but, fundamentally limited in their capacity to experience 'abundant life'.[252]

From a therapeutic perspective, I find myself engaging in the painstaking process of 'unbinding' black clergywomen – in other words, engaging them in a deliberate

[251] John 11:38 – in reference to the resurrection of Lazarus.

[252] Belgrave and Allison report that overall statistics on depression "… among most employment status groups, African Americans reported higher levels of depression than their White counterparts. African American women who were unemployed and looking for work had the highest levels of depression among African American women…those working part-time and satisfied with their jobs were lowest in depression…more years of education were associated with lower levels of depression for Whites and for African American men, but not for African American women." See Belgrave, ibid, p.465.

process of systematically deconstructing the 'strong black woman' (SBW) motif, in a manner that is respectful of their individual cultural narratives.

The cultural implications embedded in a Womanist theology which postulates strength as one of its chief components is dangerous because it promulgates the necessity for black women to 'bear the burden' of their existential realities. Terms like strength and resilience become extremely problematic for black women who have endured systematic oppression, in that, the weightiness of the terminology gives leeway for black women to wear strength and resiliency like a badge of honor, which is a stance they cannot possibly maintain – (eventually thrusting them into a posture of depression).

When the promotion of strength and resilience are not coupled with self-care and vulnerability, we run the risk of enacting a type of 'culturally induced oppression', which compounds black women's experience.

I contend there needs to be a revision to the Womanist descriptive 'strong black woman.' A revision that is more reflective of a 'grace-filled' motif, beckoning black women toward re-envisioning a new space for themselves; and, one that allows room for the expression of vulnerability, in light of the demands of ones' cultural context. It is admittedly a progressive move, one which would shift the view of African American womanhood from 'survival strategist' to a more nuanced understanding of grace for black women – perhaps as 'grace-filled recipients of care'.

CHAPTER FIVE

'…NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME': THE ARDUOUS TASK OF DISMANTLING CULTURALLY-EMBEDDED ALTARS

'You Betta' Talk Preacha!': The Black Church as A Cultural Hermeneutic

Based upon the survey results outlined in Chapter Three, we have established that African American clergy are experiencing depression. What we do not know is how ritual practices embedded in the African American worship experience contribute to this dilemma. There is a trans-generational mystique[253] surrounding the function and role of the black preacher; and, although many encounter varying degrees of frustration in their quest to pin the black preacher to a specific role or function, the reality (and oftentimes, legitimacy) of the contemporary black preacher remains under scrutiny. However, the cultural hermeneutics surrounding the black worship experience may offer clues as to how God representations[254] of the preacher manifest.

In this brief passage, DuBois provides a glimpse into the complex function of the slave preacher in plantation life:

> He early appeared on the plantation and found his function as the healer of the sick, the interpreter of the Unknown, the comforter of the sorrowing, the supernatural avenger of wrong, and the one who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people. Thus, as bard, physician, judge, and priest, within the narrow limits allowed by the slave system, rose the Negro

[253] I attribute an aspect of this mystique as somewhat associated with the ongoing mystique surrounding African American males in North America – which I speak about in Chapter Four.

[254] Rizzuto speaks of "objects and the person representing them in dynamic interaction with one another." It is Rizzuto's reference to 'felt disharmony' that I find useful in understanding the ritual act of cultural sacramentalization within the preacher-pew dyad. More specifically, as it relates to the perspective of the pew and the desire for a connection with God. See Ana-Maria Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.54.

> preacher, and under him the first church was not at first by any means Christian…[255]

I cannot begin to discuss the '*cultural sacramentalization of the black preacher*' without first speaking to the function of ritual engagement and narrative interpretation in the black church; and, how they may prompt the internal/external setup for deification and/or pedestallization within the preacher-pew dyad.

In Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley's text *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*, the authors put forth the premise that rituals are the "essential constructs of reality," given that they aid in our understandings of the self and others in our attempts at navigating the world. They explain ritual to be "…ordered, patterned and shared behavior…an imaginative and interpretive act in which we express and create meaning in our lives."[256] From this description we are able to conceptualize how religious ritual can be just as contextually specific as family rituals, in regard to the development of communal identity. More importantly, I'm suggesting that it is through the process of ritual engagement that we discover how interpretive acts can inform both our capacity to survive and the enduring process of spiritual development over time.

As was mentioned in my discussion on 'survivable African origins' in chapter two, when enslaved Africans arrived on the shores of the New World, their customs and ritual practices were not exactly extinguished (at least not internally and/or instinctually) by the American transatlantic slave trade industry. In order to navigate the tragic

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[255] DuBois, ibid, p.218.
[256] Anderson, Herbert and Edward Foley, Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine. (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), p.26.

brutality of the New World, I am convinced that enslaved (and freed) Africans found themselves drawing from the wealth of (instinctive) ritual practices of African spirituality as a means of survival. In this sense, the rituals of African traditional religion provided a semblance of cohesion for enslaved (and freed) Africans, amidst their kidnapping and forcible servitude. Furthermore, I would argue that the relevance of African ritual practices was more customary than was originally thought.

Pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey points to recent developments in the field of black Christianity which support this understanding of Africa's cultural influence in shaping the nature of black Christianity as we experience it today:

> Scholars and students of the Black Church can now study African religions and cultural values more carefully, with a view to gaining insight into aspects of what sustained their forebears who founded the Black Church not only in the expressive and performative forms of culture but also in the nature of belief and the formation of institutional life.[257]

As it regards the import of African culture, Estrelda Alexander argues that the African worldview of religion is quite different from the Western worldview, in that, in African traditional religion, God's presence permeates every aspect of creation:

> African spirituality infuses all of life with a ritual component. It is concerned with not only the well-being of the eternal soul but also the totality of life's experiences. Still, all religious practice contains a profanely secular element; nothing is done purely for the sake of ritual. Every ritual act has practical implications, and every secular, life-sustaining act has a religious aspect. God's name is invoked in everyday situations, not just reserved for worship, ritual or prayer. What white missionaries saw as taking Gods name in vain was, for the African, invoking the name of God in the presence of lived reality.[258]

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[257] Lartey, Emmanuel Y. A. Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology. (London, England: SCM Press, 2013), p.21.

[258] Alexander, Estrelda Y. Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011), p.33.

This is a significant point to lift up, considering the longstanding argument about survivable Africanisms; and, the prevailing question as to whether or not African rituals were reincorporated into plantation life (and beyond). Simply stated, the fact that enslaved Africans were prohibited from engaging in African religious practices, it does not infer that they renounced their ritual acts[259] – but rather, it suggests enslaved (and freed) Africans were evermore judicious at keeping their rituals hidden from view of the slave master, in light of their social context.

For the purposes of this work, it is Anderson and Foley's presentation of ritual as possessing the capacity to be both 'mighty and dangerous' which bodes well for my argument for the *cultural sacramentalization* of the black preacher.

First, it can be challenging to articulate the ritualized components of any communal system, let alone the multifarious rituals at work in the black church. This may well speak to the idiosyncratic nature of the black worship experience as it regards ritual. As such, I offer my diminutive attempt in the hopes of communicating the same.

Taking into account Anderson and Foley's view of ritual as being both 'mighty and dangerous', there are two discernible rituals that occur in the African American

[259] "While Anglo-American Christians utilized a colorful language of 'wonder' and 'remarkable providences' to bear witness to the proximity of the supernatural in their lives, Africans depicted the universe in myth and beckoned the timeless inhabitants of the spiritual world with ritual...Africans adapted their beliefs to the specific circumstances of their status as an enslaved people and utilized their traditions toward these ends for personal or collective empowerment…blacks in America transformed the handmade charms, amulets, and figurines that were so necessary to African religious ritual into objects of security and resistance." See Yvonne Chireau, Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Ltd, 2003), p.45.

worship experience (during the preaching moment) that are of import here – the first ritual is 'call and response'[260] and the second is 'conjuring.'

"Call and response" involves the interjection of sporadic, ritualized refrains by the congregation during the sermon, in response to the preached word. It is essentially the communal dance of worship that occurs within the preacher-pew dyad, whereby ritualized refrains like 'Talk preacha!" are 'called out' amidst the preaching moment in a talk back fashion. This dialogical event of black preaching is where the language of both the preacher and the pew occur under the auspices of the Holy Spirit.

Practical theologian Dale Andrews, writes, "Participation in the preaching event becomes a communal activity shaping the worship experience. This worship style reflects the larger dialogical, West African oral culture. Black congregations feel free to express themselves, which is seen as meaningful participation in the preaching event."[261]

It is my assertion that the 'call and response' ritual takes on the nature of 'conjuring' as it pertains to intentionality of purpose, that is to say, to invoke the 'Spiritual Presence' (in the preacher) during the preaching moment. Moreover, both 'call and response' and conjuring are more broadly linked to traditional African religious practices.[262]

To begin, the phrase 'You betta talk preacha!' is a common (religious) colloquialism heard on any given Sunday mornings during the preaching moment in the

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[260] Andrews, Dale P., Practical Theology for Black Churches. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p.22.
[261] Ibid, p.22.
[262] Primarily, in West African culture, the 'griot' or 'bard' is the resident historian, storyteller, poet, musician in the community. Like the preacher in the African American religious tradition, the griot occupies the task of functioning as a repositor of the oral tradition.

African Ameican church. It demonstrates that the Spirit of God which is resonant in the preacher bears witness within that of the hearer, through the 'talk back' ritual of 'call and response.'[263] The 'call and response' event is a particularity that is rooted in African traditional religion and comprises a series of vocal responses from the pew during the sermon, like "Well!", "Amen!" or "Help Lord!" all of which are offered as a means of confirming or bearing witness to the presence of the Spirit of God at work in both the hearts of the people and in the person of the preacher, ultimately personifying a fused and/or integrated response to the Word of God.

Historically, preaching in the African American tradition has placed great value on the orality of the preaching moment; more specifically, the preacher's ability to tell a story. Of this methodological proclamation, homiletics professor Cleophus LaRue writes:

> Unlike many European and mainline American denominations, where architecture and classical music inspire a sense of the holy, blacks seek to accomplish this act through the display of well-crafted rhetoric. The listening ear becomes the privileged sensual organ as the preacher attempts through careful and precise rhetoric to embody the Word.[264]

What LaRue is essentially contending here, is that in the context of the black church, the power of story becomes relative, in that, it was through the hearing, telling

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[263] 'Call and response' is an oral event which occurs between the preacher and the pew during the preaching moment. It holds that "…the sermon belongs not only to the preacher, but also to the entire congregation, which joins in with their oral responses." See Crawford, Evans E. The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), p37. Theologian Estrelda Alexander describes the 'call and response' event as "…an antiphonal structure in which the preacher and the audience form a joint choir, with the preacher becoming the lead singer…the longer and louder the preacher goes on, the more the audience talks back, and the rhythm of the preaching forms a cadence of its own." See Estrelda Alexander, ibid, p.52.

[264] Larue, Cleophus J., The Heart of Black Preaching. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), p.10.

and rehearsing of biblical narratives that slaves were able to experience a semblance of community, after having been prohibited from reading or engaging in any type of formal 'book learnin.' For that reason, there was and *is* an historical significance attached to the power of the oral tradition for the African American community. This is especially relevant for the black church since the oral tradition is 1) biblically rooted,[265] 2) easily interpretable and; 3) readily applicable by its hearers in their endeavor to extract meaning for their social context; and, to empower them to link that meaning to their existential reality.[266]

Effective preaching then, (in the context of black pastoral theology) is an 'oral event,'[267] one which beckons the hearer by inviting him/her into the creative (dialogical) ground of sermonic thought. Here, the aesthetic ritual of 'call and response' serves as a tripartite cultural hermeneutic which utilizes the Word, the preacher, and the 'participant proclamations'[268] of the hearers (as witnesses to the Spiritual Presence), to emphasize the fact that all are integral parts of the worship experience, eventually culminating in a unanimous praise offering unto God. Consequently, when ritual is viewed from this

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[265] In the African American church Scripture is held in high regard. "…it is no secret that the Bible occupies a central place in the religious life of black Americans. More than a mere source for texts, in black preaching the Bible is the single most important source of language , imagery, and story for the sermon." See Cleophus LaRue, ibid, p.10.

[266] Here Crawford speaks of the tension African Americans experience in their daily encounters in society. He mimics DuBois' "felt-twoness" or theme of "double-consciousness" by offering his own coined term *'biformity'* as the essence of what he believes blacks' have historically experienced in America. He writes, "Moving back and forth between recognition and non-recognition results in an 'either-or' experience – either I am or I am not. African Americans feel this tension in the day-to-day existential conflicts that extend into the social and economic conditions of their community." See Evans Crawford, p.29.

[267] Crawford, ibid, p.17.

[268] Ibid, p.37.

perspective, the invoking element of 'call and response' calls to mind the nature of conjuring.

Although conjuring can take on a variety of forms,[269] I find Yvonne Chireau's description of conjuring –"...a magical tradition in which spiritual power is invoked for various purposes such as healing, protection and self defense,"[270] in relation to its ritual function of calling forth an element of the supernatural (to intervene), as most appropriate. She highlights both the parallels and the ambiguities of the relationship between Christianity and conjuring[271] in the African American community.

> Conjuring can take the form of a prayer or petition for a particular god or force to make itself present. Dance or some form of ritual movement can be the medium through which conjuring occurs. Conjuring can include allowing one's self to be taken over by a spirit or force.[272]

In this respect, when I consider conjuring as a medium used to invoke the presence of the supernatural, I am reminded of renowned figures in black religion like Father Divine (and his spiritualized appropriation of existing spaces), Reverend Ike, Sweet Daddy Grace, and the like. More specifically, as was mentioned in Chapter Four, I reference Bishop Charles Harrison Mason,[273] the founder and spiritual leader of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) and his predilection toward conducting ritual practices

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[269] Here I reference the varying forms of conjure as a supernatural or magical experience – i.e., hoodoo, voodoo, etc. Chireau speaks of conjure as a strategic tool used by enslaved (and freed) Africans to resist oppressive forces.

[270] Chireau, ibid, p.12.

[271] "…black Americans were able to move between Conjure and Christianity because both were perceived as viable systems for accessing the supernatural world, and each met needs that the other did not." Chireau, ibid, p.25.

[272] Ashby, Homer U. Our Home is Over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press), 2003, p.17.

[273] "Mason possessed an uncommon fascination with strangely formed natural objects – objects reminiscent of the 'roots' or magical artifacts used by black conjurers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.' See Chireau, ibid, p.7.

with misshaped fruit, tree limbs and other oddly formed inanimate objects that he drew inspiration from to preach his messages.

Furthermore, in Homer Ashby's text, *Our Home is Over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology,* he also argues for the use of conjuring as a supernatural resource for intervention – a viable means of countering the threat to the survival of African American peoples. In so doing, he posits the Joshua narrative as a useful resource for inciting a 'Joshua people,' an appropriate pastoral theological response for addressing the lack of identity, connectedness and nihilism in the African American community.

Ashby contends that (in addition to advancing the Gospel message) the historic role of the black church[274] has been to connect people to a realized sense of purpose through notions of self-identity which, in turn, reinforce both survival[275] and liberation – hence, the orality of the black preacher during the preaching moment becomes somewhat of a cultural imperative.

Here is where I envision the talk back ritual of 'call and response' (when being viewed as a form of conjuring), comes into play. The dynamic interchange of the preacher-pew dyad denotes that the pew requires a connection with the Spirit of God that is resident within the preacher – in other words, an experiential encounter with the Spiritual Presence. Since preaching is a common form of pastoral care (especially in the black church), as the vessel which embodies the Spirit's Presence, there is a type of

[274] Ashby's suggestion that African Americans come to appreciate their sense of worth through being 'rooted' in the church appears idyllic and leaves much to be desired. For the throngs of African Americans who have never entered a sanctuary, who have never heard the gospel preached, or who refuse to identify with the concept of a blond haired, blue-eyed Savior, Ashby's theme of 'rootedness' becomes extremely problematic.

[275] This is not to suggest that survival and liberation metaphors are the sole metaphors which warrant attention in the African American community. There are other metaphors that are of equal import as it regards politics, education, economics, etc.

spiritual tugging or pulling on the gift of God from the pew, which occurs in the preacher. This spiritual tugging or pulling (when actualized) creates the atmosphere for 'call and response'.

Some might argue that the purpose of 'call and response' solely benefits the preacher by aiding him/her in advancing the sermon to the place where the Spirit desires for it to go in order to meet the needs of the people. Others may argue that the 'call and response' ritual solely benefits the pew by virtue of its ability to provide a ripe atmosphere of divine connection for the hearers. Whichever perspective is taken, the ultimate conclusion of the matter lies in the fact that the ritual of 'call and response' (within the preacher-pew dyad) is generally[276] acquiesced to by both entities, at the Spirit's leading.

> Typically, African American congregations view their preachers as special representatives from God, or even more, as manifestations of the divine presence and thus worthy of great reverence and admiration. Black congregations tend to bestow great authority upon their preachers, and their preachers, in turn, feel a certain freedom to say and do what they wish while preaching the gospel.[277]

Overall, the ability of the preacher to make a connection with the hearer, becomes paramount in the context of the black pastoral theology when considering the hearers are in need of a liberating message to aid in transitioning them from a 'state of brokenness'

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[276] This has a lot to do with the spiritual sensitivities of both entities in the preacher-pew dyad. Gardner C. Taylor suggests that the heart of black pastoral theology requires that pastors become intimately familiar with their congregations. This type of 'familiarity' and/or pastoral 'knowing' allows for congregational needs to be met in genuine form. Although there are some preachers who go to the extreme in acquiescing 'to the flesh' during the preaching moment, by strewing in flippant comments and outlandish exhibitionism; for the most part, the preacher-pew dyad denotes a level of intimacy between the two (which further bolsters notions of intimacy). See Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor's We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press), 1999, p.54.

[277] Larue, ibid, p.12.

or oppression, to one of wholeness and liberation – from a state of alienation, to one whereby they are affirmed in their status as 'children of God'. For some, the preached Word serves as a form of relief[278] in its capacity to connect the biblical narrative to the exigencies of social existence. The preacher must be skilled at oration, discernment and communal sensitivities – he/she must be spiritually astute enough to produce the kind salve that the hearers need.

> The preacher has to know and be able to communicate in this modality. Accordingly, to be effective, the black preacher must construct sermons that resonate to the congregation's spiritual sensibilities and social strivings.[279]

In the context of black pastoral theology, the ability to discern the need for this type of fluidity is critical. I contend that this is why the black preacher and the preaching moment are so central in the black religious experience. There is a fundamental sense of urgency on the part of the hearers, to garner a message of hope for their present (and future) reality. A message of 'hope' serves as a type of momentary and/or futuristic sustenance, amidst the veritable threats of brutality pummeled upon the psyche, the body and the (subliminal or) conscious effects of societal oppression.

In his attempt to explain the constitution of this hermeneutic, LaRue posits the essence of black religion as being a religion of personal piety, a religion that is reflective of an individual having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Black religion is a

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[278] Wimberly speaks to this need for relief in his articulation of the significance of caring resources within the black church. "Healing did exist for some, but for others sustenance was all that could be accomplished. For many, the burden of oppression made the love of God which transformed the self a distant hope; for them, God's love as mediated through the resources of the church prevented and lessened the impact of oppression." See Edward Wimberly. Pastoral Care in the Black Church. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), p.21.

[279] Noel, Joel A. Black Religion and the Imagination of Matter in the Atlantic World. (Palgrave Macmillan, 20), p.153.

religion of the heart which endeavors towards a morality of 'righteous living' with self and among community. "The black attraction to personal piety can be traced in this country to the evangelical revivalism…In this era of religious fervor, the evangelicals' demands for clean hearts and righteous personal lives became the hallmarks of African American religion in the south."[280]

When viewing black religion from the stance of personal piety and maintaining a degree of intimacy with Christ, we can readily connect with the 'religion of Jesus' that Howard Thurman purported. For Thurman, the Jesus of the bible instructs believers to desire inward change as a means of survival[281] – and it was this kind of 'heart religion' (and/or inward change) that would determine the believer's destiny in Jesus Christ. Thurman's articulation of Jesus' concern for the inner life of the individual produces the kind of liberating spirituality that encouraged African Americans in their quest toward hope. This eschatological hope[282] was strengthened by having encountered 'lived experiences' with Jesus Christ.

James Cone has also argued for a theology of liberation. In *God of the Oppressed*, he asserts that black theology not only acknowledges the centrality of Jesus in black religious life, but envisages Jesus as epitomizing the "eternal event of liberation" for blacks:

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[280] LaRue argues that there are five 'domains of experience' which comprise the hermeneutic of black life: personal piety, care of the soul, social justice, corporate concerns and maintenance of the institutional church. LaRue, ibid, p.21.

[281] Thurman writes, "…Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus." See Howard Thurman. Jesus and the Disinherited. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), p.29.

[282] Andrews, ibid, p.48.

> Therefore, where human beings struggle for freedom and refused to be defined by unauthorized earthly authorities, there Jesus Christ is present among them. His presence is the sustaining and liberating event in the lives of the oppressed that makes possible the continued struggle for freedom.[283]

Cone is implying that within the context of black theology, there is an inherent capacity for the biblical narrative to assuage the gloom of oppression that encompasses the narratives of sundry African Americans. It was only through the interpretative lens of Jesus as 'Liberator', 'Sustainer' and 'Healer' (God) that many were empowered to resist the oppressive forces in their quest for liberation. The presence of Jesus as Sustainer, Liberator and Healer (God) served as a source of empowerment for the oppressed. When understood from the vantage point of black's social existence in North America, Christ becomes the great hope and transcendent archetype who has the capacity to supersede the limitations of human evil.

An invaluable feature of black liberation theology then, is the idea that it dares to articulate the validity of black peoples' experiences of faith in Jesus as being *present* in the 'here and now' (right in the midst of suffering and the human condition). In light of Jesus' historical identity, blacks had the capacity to envision Jesus as both a 'very present help' in times of trouble and a 'soon coming King' who aptly considers the poor and suffering.

I agree with Cone's assertion of the distinct difference between holding literal interpretations of the historical Jesus, juxtaposed with the reality of a 'lived experience' of Christ's presence today. I contend African Americans' experience of faith in Jesus

[283] Cone, James H. God of the Oppressed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1975), p.35.

Christ is sophisticated enough to embrace the relevance of both the human and the divine natures of Jesus Christ – both the historical and the transcendent Jesus.

Consequently, when Howard Thurman speaks of the plight of the disinherited as those "standing with their backs against the wall' he confronts a communal imperative, which warrants black preachers (as pillars of the community) to deliver messages reflective of this same sense of urgency.

For Thurman, 'the religion of Jesus' encompasses a 'backs against the wall' kind of theology; and, from a black pastoral theological perspective, when these types of messages are preached with urgency, they often create the kind of frenzy that DuBois describes when he references the development of slave religion through to Emancipation:

> …when the Spirit of the Lord passed by, and, seizing the devotee, made him mad with supernatural joy, was the last essential of Negro religion and the one more devoutly believed in than all the rest. It varied in expression from the silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan to the mad abandon of physical fervor, - the stamping, shrieking, and shouting, the rushing to and from…all this is nothing new in the world but old as religion…and so firm a hold it have on the Negro, that many generations firmly believed that without this visible manifestation of the God there could be no true communion with the Invisible. [284]

Thus, in the end, one of most fundamental rituals of the African American religious experience involves always pointing the people toward (eschatological hope in) Christ – whether that hope manifests through ritual acts like rehearsing the biblical narrative or through the prophetic use of oratorical prowess – the crux of black preaching should always point the people toward hope in Christ.

In his discussion of the distinctiveness of black preaching, LaRe provides clues as to how the creative use of language can prompt a connection in the hearer. He offers up a

[284] DuBois, ibid, p.212.

cherished adage which aptly summarizes the methodology required for effective preaching in the African American tradition:

Start slow,
rise high,
strike fire.
Sit down in a storm.[285]

Liberating black preaching concerns itself with the daily struggle for survival in the lives of African American people. The value inherent in ritual practices like 'call and response' in the black church, is that it creates a connection with the hearers which better aids them in interpreting the biblical narratives as fully engaged members of the worshipping community. African American preaching requires the ability to tell the biblical story in a manner that paints the picture for the hearers, using creative imagery, in conjunction with the power of the Holy Spirit. We will now move to a discussion on significance of the Spiritual Presence during the preaching moment in the African American experience.

Re-Calling Tillich: Paul Tillich and His Notion of Spiritual Presence

Before embarking on a discussion of Paul Tillich's notion of the Spiritual Presence, I think it is important to briefly set the context for how the presence of the Holy Spirit is interpreted in the African American religious tradition. African Americans, in an historic sense, have viewed God as being *sovereign*. In keeping with this ideology of the supremacy of God, Scripture has generally been viewed as 'the infallible' Word of God. Thus, literal interpretations of the bible are what help to inform the (emotive) responses to the Spirit that occur during the preaching moment.

[285] LaRue, ibid, p.11.

Worship in the African American tradition reflects an express love toward the three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit then, as the "Lord, the giver of life"[286] suggests that the Holy Spirit leads the believer into intimate, transforming union with God – i.e., dwelling within us at salvation and drawing us into participation in the life of the triune God. The Person of the Holy Spirit serves as a 'paraclete', the one called alongside of another to aid in the development of an intimate relationship with God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit as a loving presence is at work to bring a lost humanity, into personal relationship with the Father and the Son.

This is how the Holy Spirit is generally understood in the black church – the Spirit is at work within us, continuously conforming persons into the image of Christ. I emphasize use of the term 'personal' and/or 'intimate' relationship as a means of underscoring the significance of intimacy in the divine-human connection in the black church tradition. Only those who have been disinherited (as Thurman purports in his 'backs against the wall' theology), oppressed and without options or resources, can fully understand the breadth of necessity for envisaging a relationship with God as being *personal* or a relationship that one can readily claim ownership of in relation to Jesus as being – i.e., "My Jesus", "My Healer", "My Deliverer," or "My Provider", etc.

This is an important concept in the context of black pastoral theology, as it regards the ability of a historically oppressed people to gain a sense of identity and belonging in Christ, amidst a population beset by hostile societal disregard.

> The use of a dedicated mind and the openness of a spirit to *the* Spirit can, thus, be expected to yield conditions which appear best to be used of God toward the wholeness and growth of persons. One can accumulate awareness of climates in which the Holy Spirit works best and blesses

[286] As referred to in the Nicene Creed.

> most. Souls and psyches are hard to separate, and the knowledge of the latter may at times be used by the Holy Spirit to gain access to the former.[287]

Black religion holds a distinct appreciation for such an all-encompassing and divinely inspired love; and, this appreciation is evidenced in the joy, warmth, vibrancy and spiritedness that so often accompany worship in the African American tradition. It is the Person of the Holy Spirit who bolsters this kind of liberating worship – hence, the familiar passage, "…*the Spirit of the Lord brings life*."[288]

Accordingly, in black pastoral theology, the preaching moment is considered to be an activity of worship and not necessarily an intellectual event. In Matthew 27:37, Jesus replied "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all you mind."[289] Unfortunately, the liberty of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated in African American worship, is often relegated to emotionalism by those on the periphery of (and sometimes within) the black religious community.

Dr. Henry Mitchell speaks to this tendency to quickly discount the activity of the Spirit in black preaching. He states, "…a mind's activity is focused by a heart's emotions."[290] In other words, since feelings are deemed to be "an aspect of human consciousness" the content of human emotion "is not the result of intellectual effort." Mitchell further adds that the emotive response of joy, which is a prevalent feature of African American worship points to the liberating power of the Holy Spirit at work – demonstrating an outward expression of an inward grace.

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[287] Mitchell, Henry H. Celebration and Experience in Preaching. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), p.146.
[288] II Corinthians 3:6, New International Version (NIV).
[289] New International Version of the bible (NIV).
[290] Mitchell, Henry H. "The Holy Spirit, Human Emotion and Black Preaching." 2011 Baylor University, George W. Truett Theological Seminary. 22 March 2011.

> Worship in the black church is more often than not a joyful experience. It is joyful because blacks experience a sense of freedom seldom felt in the everyday struggles of dealing with racism and various forms of injustice. One is free to be himself or herself because the church experience fosters a kindred spirit that enables "everybody to be somebody."[291]

Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor also adds his voice to the discourse in his communication of the function of the Spirit's presence in black preaching. "Preaching is not a recitation or a declamation; it is a proclamation, alive and touched with the finger of God."[292] In African American religion, anything that is touched by the Spirit of God bears witness to the presence of God in the midst. This helps to articulate why black preachers (et al) rely so heavily upon the centrality of the Spirit's presence in both proclaiming and receiving the Word of God.

Since I have laid the foundation for the primacy of the Spirit in African American worship, I will now move to a discussion on Paul Tillich's concept of the sacrament and its relationship to the Spiritual Presence. Here is where I argue the setup occurs by which, through the ritual process of cultural sacramentalization, the preacher becomes pedestallized and/or deified (both internally and/or externally) in the African American worship experience. The consequences of cultural sacramentalization (for the preacher) are isolation, unfulfilled expectations and a loss of self-awareness – each of which, I argue, can lead to depression in black clergy.

The Cultural Sacramentalization of the Black Preacher

I find Paul Tillich's theology to be of import in my work because he primarily concerns himself with the contemporary issues of life in regard to the human condition.

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[291] Harris, James H. Pastoral Theology: A Black Perspective. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), p.93.
[292] Proctor, Samuel DeWitt. The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting A Sermon of Authority. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994), p.9.

More specifically, it is Tillich's concept of the sacrament that I find most suitable for articulating the ritual practice embedded in the African American worship experience that I am referencing. I contend that within the confines of African American worship, the preacher takes on the form of a sacrament during the preaching moment.

In Systematic Theology, Volume III, Tillich outlines his theology for what he considers to be sacramental:

> The term 'sacramental,' in the larger sense, needs to be freed from its narrower connotations. The Christian churches, in their controversies over the meaning and number of the particular sacraments, have disregarded the fact that the concept 'sacramental' embraces more than the seven, five or two sacraments that may be accepted as such by a Christian church.[293]

What Tillich describes as sacramental here is of particular relevance for black pastoral theology because couched within his explication of the term *sacrament* he provides a contextualized understanding of what occurs within the preacher-pew dyad, during the preaching moment in the black church.

Essentially, Tillich clears the theological pathway for consideration as to how within the context of the African American cultural hermeneutic, the black preacher, in concert with the Spiritual Presence, becomes an embodied 'sacrament' for the worshipping community.

> The largest sense of the term denotes everything in which the Spiritual Presence has been experienced; in a narrower sense, it denotes particular objects and acts in which a Spiritual community experiences the Spiritual Presence; and in the narrowest sense, it merely refers to some 'great' sacraments in the performance of which the Spiritual Community actualizes itself.[294]

[293] Tillich, ibid, p.121.
[294] Ibid, p.121.

Since the 'preaching moment' tends to function as an opportunity for pastoral care in the black church, this time of communal worship personifies the actualization of the presence of 'God with us'. The embodiment of the Spiritual Presence in the preacher during the preaching moment, in particular, becomes sacred in the minds, hearts and sight of the worshipping community. This embodiment becomes even more prominent in the African American church whereby biblical interpretation, revelation and concrete experience are so closely wed.

Cultural sacramentalization is a term I have coined to articulate the hermeneutic at work in the black church, whereby the visual representation of the preacher (during the preaching moment), becomes the embodiment of 'God with us.'

This theme of embodiment (during the preaching moment) is central to understanding the ritual of cultural sacramentalization. In fact, I consider cultural sacramentalization to be an aspect of the hermeneutical process in African American religion. For example, it is from the interpretive lens of the pew, that congregants are able to visibly bear witness to the power of God at work in the person of the preacher (during the preaching moment); and, through this lens, they can also anticipate receiving biblical revelation that is applicable to their lives.

In black pastoral theology, biblical revelation is viewed as being a gift from God, in that it is believed to be God's own personal self-disclosure of God's self. The manifestation of revelation serves as a constant reminder that God is ever-present throughout all of life's situations; and, that God's historical self-disclosure through Jesus Christ, Scripture and through the preaching event, encourages believers to depend on God's perpetual trustworthiness.

When we hold biblical revelation in tension with the prevalence of personal piety in black religion, we understand how a heart which has been pierced by the Word of God, produces awe, gratitude and a sense of vulnerability[295] (all of which point to the 'heart religion' or 'inward reflection' that Thurman speaks of). In this sense, a connection to the Holy has been established through biblical revelation – and, not simply a connection to the historical and transcendent Jesus, but a connection to the representative of Christ, embodied in the person of the preacher. This is what I refer to as 'cultural sacramentalization.'

It is when the orality and visual embodiment of the Holy in the preacher, connects with the pew. Harold Dean Trulear argues, "The oratory of the prophets, men such as Elijah and Jeremiah, whose pronouncements disclosed 'what thus saith the Lord,' has been known to provide the model for the preaching task of the pastor.…It is not surprising that the stories of individual leaders in the bible serve as primary data for black pastoral theology, for blacks have historically read the bible from the hermeneutical perspective of story."[296] The fact that biblical revelation is so highly regarded in evangelical circles has much to do with its capacity to speak to the ongoing spiritual growth of the inward person. Understandably, the impact of revelation alone holds within it a desire to become veritably connected to the preacher (as one who embodies and/or exemplifies Christ in a manner more pronounced than the pew considers

[295] That is to say, in the process of seeking to know God, we conclude that we cannot enter into the depths of the knowledge of the love of God, without fully absorbing ourselves in Him.

[296] Trulear, Harold Dean. "Reshaping Black Pastoral Theology: The Vision of Bishop Ida B. Robinson." *The Journal of Religious Thought,* 1989 – Sum-Fall; Vol. 46, No l, p.17.

themselves to be) – especially since black pastoral theology tends to be modeled after the prophetic witness of scripture.

This is where ritual act becomes dangerous. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, African Americans tend to hold their pastors in high regard, largely, due to an acknowledgment of, and belief in, the actualized presence of the Holy in their lives. In the context of establishing a more personal relationship with Christ, the preacher becomes for the pew, a manifest presence of the Holy – one capable of speaking directly into their existential reality. I contend the problematic 'allegiance to the preacher' motif occurs (during the preaching moment) when the orality of the Holy which emanates from the preacher, is mistakenly transferred onto the person of the preacher, in the minds of the pew. Further, I believe this transfer also occurs internally, in the minds of the preachers themselves. When the power of God is relegated to the fallibility of man, concepts of theology can become skewed.

It is not difficult to conceptualize how embodiment (in the preacher) and the power of God (in the Holy Spirit) become fused. Although cognitively understood, it becomes difficult to separate the interpretation of revelation from the visible manifestation of it, once it becomes actualized in human form before you. Due to the imbalance of power inherent within the preacher-pew dyad, the notion of allegiance to the preacher becomes dangerous (when viewed as allegiance to and/or a connection to God).

The Black Church As Wandering in the Wilderness: But Who Sinned?

In the early stages of my research, I recall several conversational encounters with key scholars in African American religious thought. More specifically, Vincent Harding

who, on a shuttle bus ride in Montreal (during the AAR[297] meeting in 2009), upon hearing of my work, proceeded to ask the question, "You *will* address the sin problem, won't you?" At that same meeting, later in the day, Old Testament scholar, Randall C. Bailey essentially posed the same question. I would argue that their challenges to me were directly reflective of the tendency for cultural and/or religious ritual to take precedence over the need to think through theologically, the implications of such for the faith. Conversely, yet another theologian posed the question, "Why must you start at the place of sin – why not begin your discussion from the standpoint of 'grace'?"

These conversations challenged me to think about holding in tandem, the swinging pendulum that exists between sin and grace. On the one hand, there is a theological mandate to deconstruct what appears to be a 'mighty and dangerous' ritual practice; and, on the other, there is a need to acknowledge the airing of the proverbial 'dirty laundry' of depression in the black church. How does one contend with the ambiguity of living in the tension of the two?

In *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, theologian Alistair McFadyen states there is a propensity in post-modernity to circumvent discourse around the subject of sin. He suggests that our resistance to "sin-talk" reflects a sort God-lessness in society:

> Losing our ability to speak of the world's pathologies in relation to God represents a serious, concrete form of the loss of God that is a general characteristic of contemporary, Western culture.[298]

[297] The American Academy of Religion.
[298] McFadyen, Alistair. Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000,), p.4.

I would further add that some of the cultural resistance around sin-talk has much to do with the concept of shaming as it does with Godlessness. However, I believe McFayden puts it best when he suggests, "Sin is living out an active mis-relation to God."[299] It is an "energized disorientation in relationships." I would argue that this aptly describes the process of 'cultural sacramentalizaton' in the black church – a dis-orientation in relationship to self, to God and to the community. I think this understanding leaves room for grace to enter the dialogue.

From Where We Stand: Power and
Phallic Imagery in the African American Pulpit

In this final portion of the chapter, I broach the subject of phallic imagery in the black church as a means of highlighting yet another component of ritual that permeates the black church (seemingly unnoticed). Keeping in mind Anderson and Foley's designations 'mighty and dangerous rituals', I am drawn to how the internalization of ritual symbols has the capacity to highlight those contradictions that we refuse to acknowledge and/or reconcile about ourselves.

> Ritual's capacity for expressing and creating meaning also renders it a potentially dangerous endeavor…rituals can bring to light truths we would rather ignore or expose contradictions in our relationships that we would rather not admit.[300]

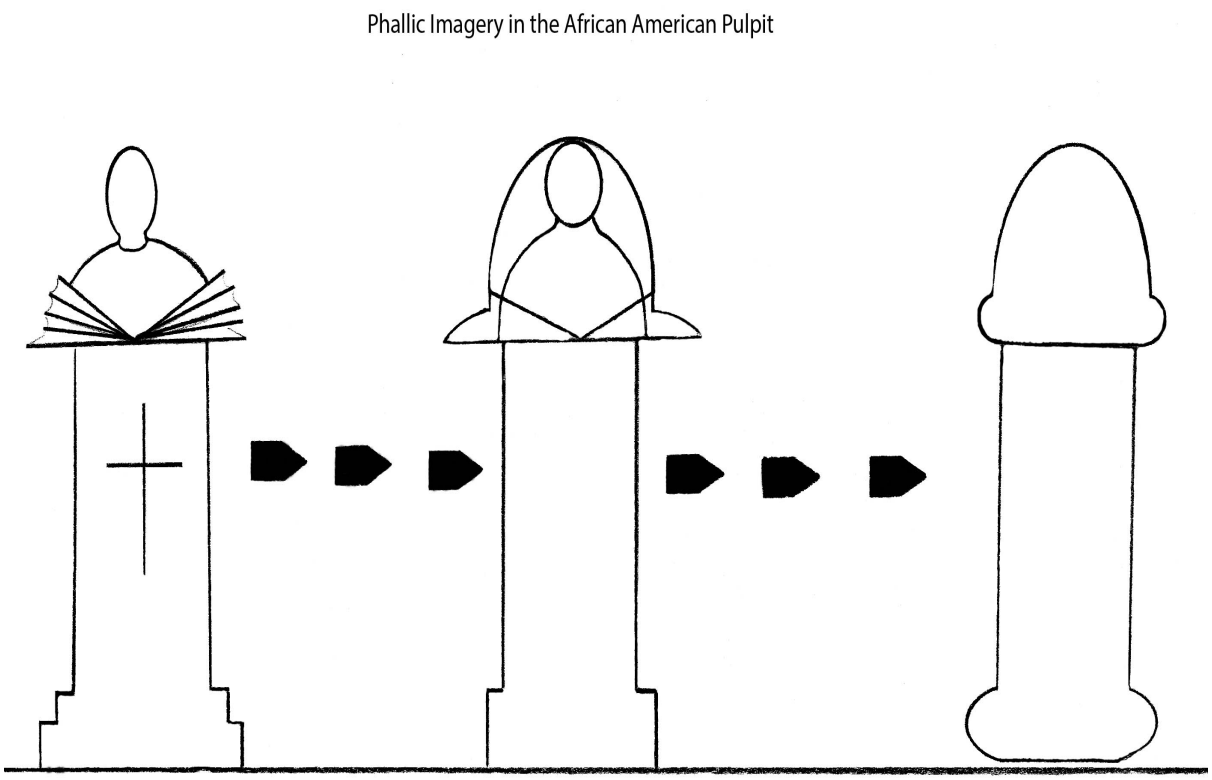
In the African American church (et al), the pulpit has long been established as the place where the source of power[301] dwells. Notwithstanding the significance of patriarchal power, the symbolic representation of the pulpit alone represents the embodiment of generative power. Even amidst the absence of vociferous declarations

[299] Ibid, p.223.
[300] Anderson, ibid, p.24.
[301] By this I mean religious and/or spiritual authority.

against women preaching (and/or pastoring), the hyper-masculine symbolism of the African American pulpit continues to reflect this unspoken sentiment in 2014.

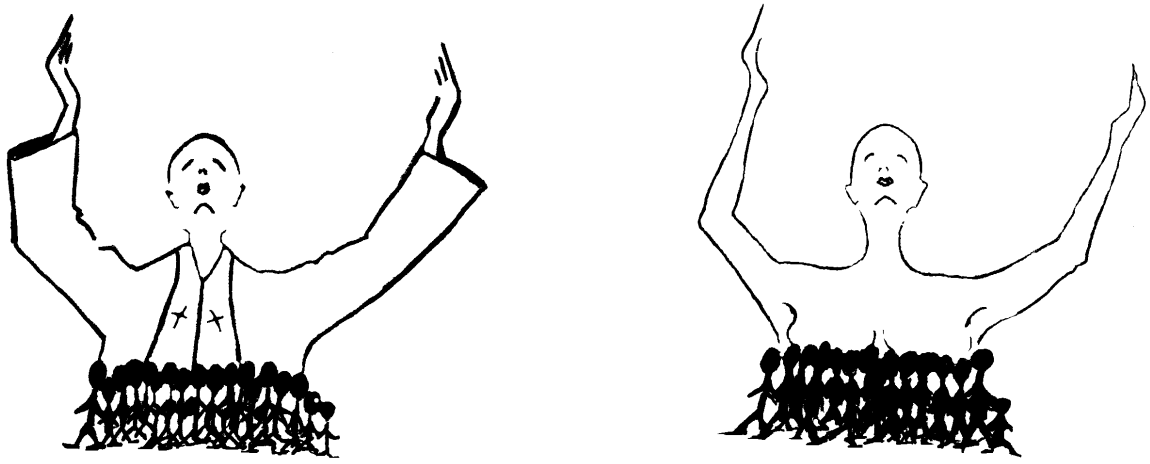
More specifically, I argue that the physical structure of the pulpit takes on phallic form during the preaching moment (and beyond). In the context of black preaching, the power of phallic imagery becomes magnified during the preaching moment when the frenzy of proclamation reaches an ecstatic height. In these moments, I contend that masculine power is repetitively (though subliminally) reinforced in the minds of the worshipping community.

Figure 5.1 – Phallic Imagery



I will go further by adding, that of those women who have gained entrée into this male-dominated field, some appear to be acquiescing to the established masculine power paradigms. Consequently, I am suggesting that an emergence and use of breastfeeding or suckling imagery in the black church, as it regards nurturance, subtly reinforces the promotion of feminine (nurturing) power as well. This rendering of a well-known African American female pastors' church website, is highly suggestive of feminine (nurturing) power.

Figure 5.2 – Breastfeeding/Suckling Imagery



When I think of the hyper-masculine imagery evoked from the African American pulpit, as it regards power and symbol, I contend that the black church is indeed confronted with some of the same kinds of power dynamics as the secular world. The difference is, in the black church, these dynamics are guised under the auspices of religious authority.

> Those who fence the pulpit and ban women from it have asserted an authority that they do not have. It is God alone who calls humans, male

> and female, to minister in his redemptive cause. All humans, female and male, bear the same image bestowed upon them by the Creator. They are redeemed by the same grace. In the context of divine love, no gender distinctions are valid.[302]

While there are many opportunities for shared power among male and females within the hierarchal confines of the black church, the challenge involves those males (and in some instances females)[303] who hold positions of power, being progressive enough in their theological stance to explore what these opportunities might look like from a differently gendered lens.

> The anecdotal traditions of the black pastoral office, the counsel of 'fathers in the ministry' to the young Timothys in their charge, and the prevailing wisdom of black pastoral practice that some have come to term 'Negro-ology' have evolved primarily in 'male only' quarters, such as ministerial meetings and pastor's studies. The traditions concerning women's leadership roles have been largely confined to women's organizations and the family.[304]

A more recent trend that has developed over the past several years in larger black churches involves a 'team approach' to ministry whereby solo pastorates are evolving into multi-staffed pastorates as a means of alleviating some of the occupational demands that solo pastorates bring. While the African American church has a long way to go in terms of working out some of its problematic binds, I would argue that there is promise embedded in the 'multi-staff' approach to ministry.

> Single-person leadership has lost its attractiveness to pastors who are secure in their ministry and understand the old saying that "two heads are

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[302] Roberts, ibid, p.88.

[303] The majority of black churches in America are programmatically run (at least, from behind the scenes) by women. While males hold the primary positions of pastoral leadership, it is black women who ensure that the programming, missions and administrative functions of the church run effectively.

[304] Trulear, Harold Dean. "Reshaping Black Pastoral Theology: The Vision of Bishop Ida B. Robinson." *Journal of Religious Thought,* 1989 Sum-Fall; Vol. 46, No. 1, p.18.

> better than one. A large church also will work one person to death, so necessity often demands staff development and expansion.[305]

Multi-staffed pastorates allow for flexibility and growth of the church, in that they leave room for innovative thinking; and, they allow for the interjection of diverse skill sets (and/or expertise), leadership styles and distinct areas of giftedness. However, even within this newly established paradigm, the paradox of the 'new' among obdurate minds keep the gender dynamics of ministry tenuous.

For those larger black churches (with membership of two hundred or more) it has become common practice for the male pastor to maintain his 'senior' status role, while employing a female as second-in-command, dubbing her as an 'executive' or 'assistant' pastor. In these instances, the female pastor takes on the role of administering what are commonly viewed as being the more ancillary[306] duties of the church, like Christian education, pastoral counseling, church administration, evangelism, youth, etc.

As it regards gender dynamics in the black pulpit, while black women may be heralded as significant contributors to the life and sustainability of the black church, they are often solely limited by virtue of gender, to engaging in those areas of ministry which do not involve preaching.

> Any denial of the dignity and quality of persons in the divine creative act is a sin against creation. It is a form of self-glorification or idolatry. Humans who consider themselves to be superior to others because they are 'male' seek as it were, to become as gods. As creatures, they would usurp the prerogative of the Creator…Sexism, like racism, is a collective manifestation of evil. [307]

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[305] Harris, ibid, p.81.
[306] This is not to suggest that these areas of ministry are insignificant, but rather, to highlight the fact that they are considered secondary in precedence to the preaching function.
[307] Roberts, ibid, p.79.

Unfortunately, sexism in the African American pulpit remains a paradoxical reality for both genders. On one hand, the community is bombarded with gender stereotyping which posits that women should not preach; and, on the other hand, there are male leaders who argue that they affirm women in ministry, but cannot find females who are qualified to preach in their pulpits. What this suggests is that women are being affirmed for the gifts they bring to ministry so long as those gifts do not include and/or disrupt the sacredness of the preaching moment.

What I find equally troubling is the willingness on the part of some female clergy to assume these 'task oriented' roles in exchange for intermittent opportunities to preach. I would argue that one of the most authentic determinants of the affirmation of women in ministry by their male counterparts surrounds *who* eventually ends up holding the microphone at on Sunday morning at the eleven o'clock hour.

Throughout the history of the black church we have heard references to black women as being 'the backbone of the black church' – and this may be true from an historical perspective. But more importantly, it points to present-day Womanist strivings relative to concerns around the preservation of family, church and community amidst race, class and gender oppression.

In *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective*, pastoral theologian James Harris argues that black theology and the black church must confront the double-bind it endorses by way of the systematic oppression of women in both church and society. Harris challenges the black church at-large on its use of exclusive language; and, also on its ecclesiastical practices which promote (and maintain) structural discrimination against women.

> Women in black churches outnumber men by more than two to one, but in positions of authority and responsibility the ratio is reversed. Although women are gradually entering seminary as bishops, pastors, deacons, and elders, many men and women still resist and fear that development.[308]

The more the black church allows narrow-mindedness and theological misinterpretation of scripture to relegate women to 'subservient' roles in the church, the more readily our congregations accept gender inequity as normative. As responsible practitioners, there must be continual reminders of this ethic evidenced throughout the fabric of our theological methodology – i.e., where ever new building campaigns are launched, educational programming is being promoted, curriculum is designed, or youth intensives are planned.

The black church must commit herself to understanding that in order for the congregation to 'grab hold' of the vision of gender equity, constant reminders must be kept before them (i.e., in the worship, in programming, in literature, on banners around the church, etc.) so that the pew can transition towards a new reality. Pastors must evoke the same kinds of affirmation when it comes to progressively ushering their members toward concepts of gender equality in the church. So, that from the pews congregants are able to more readily embrace the gifts and graces women bring to ministry; thereby, enabling them to envision healthy relational functioning between black women and men in the church.

There are tremendous possibilities for healthy gender relationality in the church; however, much work needs to be done to close the gap. Closing the gap involves an intentional reshaping of the hearts and minds of congregations, prospective clergy and

[308] Harris, ibid, p.66.

those persons involved in the work of the church in its moves toward inclusivity and more liberative theological praxis.

> If experience plays a significant role in building a pastoral theology, whether it be organized primarily in psychological terms, as has been the case in pastoral theology in the American academy, or sociologically, as is the case in the black church tradition, then we must find a way for women's experience to be central in the constructive process of developing a black pastoral theology that cares for the work of women in ministry.[309]

Essentially, healthy gender relationality among black men and women in ministry begins in the church, by way of extending the same kinds affirmation, authority and responsibility to women as is given their male counterparts. Women are more than qualified to serve as pastors (who actually get in the water and baptize). Young women are capable of serving as acolytes, junior deacons, and the like; and, women should be presented before congregations as capable of administering the Word and sacrament (or as we Bapti-costals say, to "marry, bury, dunk and feed").

The Womanist tradition *has* (and continues) to aid in fostering healthy relational dynamics between genders by engaging each other in dialogue across the table, as it regards gender inequity in the church. Womanism consistently challenges patriarchal paradigms toward re-envisioning understandings of socio-cultural liberation, in light of the Gospel narrative. It aids in holding African American male leadership accountable for theological misinterpretations and assumptions that posit black women as inferior, incompetent and insignificant, as it regards ministry in the black church. Within the context of community, the Womanist tradition has held her hands to the plough in fostering dialogues (of commonality) to banish underlying suspicions that have plagued

[309] Trulear, ibid, p.18.

black male-female relationships since the destruction of the black family was initiated during slavery.

CHAPTER SIX

'…AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?': MERGING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RELIGION, PSYCHOLOGY AND CULTURE TO PROFFER AN APPROPRIATE PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO DEPRESSION IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CLERGY

'Do You Want to Be Made Whole?': Utilizing the Old Testament Prophetess Huldah as a Constructive Metaphor for Pastoral Praxis

One of the many things I find useful about the Old Testament is that it is replete with similes and metaphors from which to extract significance and meaning for the problems associated with contemporary life. The bible on the whole, sets the parameters for Christian living and provides rules of conduct regarding the same. There are many passages of scripture throughout the bible that elicit the type of 'care and/or concern for the other' that proves to be a fundamental ethic of Christian community. I would argue that there is an ethical responsibility on the part of those members within community, to ensure that the collective well-being of communal life is maintained. I find the following passage of scripture to be reflective of this premise, in that, God's aim is to elicit a confession from one member of community, regarding the well-being the other:

> Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground."[310]

In this passage of scripture, the issue of *well-being* is of principal concern. I envision the development of my research on clergy depression as being resultant of four things: 1) my penchant for clergy self-care; 2) my love and concern for the welfare of the black church and its vital role in the African American community; 3) more than a decade-long compilation of informal conversations with emotionally depleted clergy;

[310] Genesis 4:9-10, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the bible.

and, 4) my desire to generate much needed dialogue around the issue of depression in the black pastorate. As someone who has been uniquely positioned to be a listening ear[311] for hurting clergy, after having reflected on their narratives, each hearing was experienced by me as if 'crying out to me from the ground' of isolation and deep despair amidst the pastoral function.

Considering the outcome of my research findings on African American clergy depression, I view a communal-contextual model of pastoral care as the most appropriate pastoral theological response to African American clergy who suffer with depression. A communal-contextual model of pastoral care allows for the particularities of a specific group to be considered in light of their cultural context. Communal-contextual pastoral care suggests, "The pastoral carer goes out with the strength and blessing of the caring community and with a conviction that because she, the carer, is cared about, she can offer the community's care to others."[312]

It is important to note here, that as a Christian community, there is a moral imperative which obligates one to have concern for the other, since morality by definition includes the concept of community. Morality attempts to determine the standards of human conduct in light of revelation. The fundamental basis for morality has a lot to do with human needs, intents and purposes in the lives of individuals, as it regards both the individual and the community writ-large.

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[311] Pastoral theologian John Patton speaks of this practice of 'hearing and remembering' as significant components of pastoral care, in that, pastoral caregivers are positioned to hear and respond to the very personal aspects of what individuals share with them about their lives. See John Patton, John. Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p.32.

[312] Patton, ibid, p.35.

For instance, in 1 Corinthians 12:12 through 13:13, the Apostle Paul calls attention to the fact that the Spirit of Christ and God the Father, is what binds us together as members of the same body. As members of one body, not only are we personally linked to each other; but, as members of the same body, we need each other in order that the purposes of the body (on the whole) are maintained. If one portion of the body is suffering, the entire body is at risk. In other words, because we have been fashioned as a portion of a whole by the power of God's love, our response to God ought to be forever concerned about one another. Hence, I am proposing that the essence of Christian morality is communal.

As I have noted previously in chapters two and four, African American pastors hold a unique position in their community, because the needs of the community are often great. Black pastors, in large measure, are viewed as being what Malony & Hunt describe as 'cultural heroes' – meaning, they often serve in multiple roles[313] in the black community:

> We suspect that engaging in dual-role relationships is what makes ministry so hazardous. Dual-role relationships are those in which people play several different roles with those they serve. While psychologists and physicians relate to those they help solely within the confines of their offices, clergy interact with parishioners in a variety of settings.[314]

Accordingly, since African American clergy spend an inordinate amount of time investing in the lives of their members, they require a reciprocal kind of care from within

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[313] The lack of positive male role models in the home, schools, communities, etc., postures the black preacher as a significant figure head – hence, the frequently overheard parental chide in African American households, "Don't make me call pastor …!"

[314] Malony and Hunt argue that it is difficult for pastors to attempt to manage the 'dual-role relationships' they are sure to encounter in ministry – to do so would be detrimental to clergy well-beings. See Malony, H. Newton and Richard A. Hunt, The Psychology of Clergy. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991), p.36.

the context of community, which makes them feel valued in the community as a whole. Not simply valued from the standpoint of performance, but, valued for their personhood as members of the Christian community.

Taking into account Malony and Hunt's concept of the pastor as 'cultural hero,' (within the programmatic nature of) pastoral theology in the black church, once the communal crisis has been averted, or once the pastoral hero has 'saved the day', the community returns to its' state of well-being, while the pastor is left depleted, alone and bereft of communal regard.

Of this, pastoral theologian Edward Wimberly writes:

> …many of the laity have expected the minister to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and to provide solutions to many earthly problems as well as to be a custodian of the values connecting them to God. Although no human could live up to these expectations, they have been operative among the laity, and the pastor has tried to live up to them as much as possible.[315]

This expectation of the proverbial 'cultural hero' appearing from out of nowhere to avert the crisis situation, prompts the emergence of (an oftentimes exaggerated) 'false self' in pastors who are depressed. The pastoral art of donning the mask to hide the pain becomes the customary default position, prompting what I refer to as 'pastoral masking'; and, further marginalizing emotionally depleted clergy leaders from within the confines of community.

Wimberly states that due to leadership expectations in the African American church, black pastors are challenged to avoid showing any signs of weakness. They are

[315] Wimberly, ibid, p.36.

expected to maintain a 'stiff upper lip', so to speak, at whatever the cost; because the image of the black pastor requires the constant portrayal of always being in control.[316]

However, the physical, emotional and spiritual cost of repressing one's 'true self', can take its toll over a period of time – some examples of which were presented earlier in chapter four, whereby, Bishop Georg Bloomer et al, report being prescribed Prozac and other prescription medications, as a means of regulating the psychological pain they are experiencing in their personal and/or professional lives.[317] How does one (whose life's calling surrounds the intentional 'crafting of community') reconcile finding him/herself being marginalized, disregarded and 'uncared for' by the community they serve?

I believe the answer can be found in the suggestion of what theologian John Patton describes as communal care as a type of "re-membering," – that is to say, listening, hearing and responding to individuals in a manner that affirms their personhood. He argues that 'care of self and care of others' goes hand-in-hand. But, far more often than not, after performing herculean feats in the context of congregational life, most pastors are left standing alienated, devalued and alone.

Patton's premise of 're-membering is what I consider to be the crux of what isolated and depressed clergy leaders require – to be afforded the opportunity to be listened to, heard and responded to in such a way that regards their personhood and overall well-being as valued members of the worshipping community.

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[316] This points back to the 'cool pose' stance and/or 'aloofness' prominent among black males in the broader society, of which I discussed in Chapter Four.

[317] In chapter four I made mention of several popular pastors in the African American community who have made public, their once private challenges that have caused their personal lives to spiral out of control.

The second part of the Genesis narrative involves *confession*. When God inquires of the whereabouts of Abel, "Where is your brother Abel?" God is essentially eliciting a confession from Cain – giving Cain an opportunity to own up to his sinful, murderous, and selfish act of dishonoring God's creation of community.

How does pastoral theology inform the ways that isolated, depleted clergy leaders can be reincorporated into community? Dr. Ed Wimberly speaks to this dilemma of alienation and reincorporation in his text, *Relational Refugees*. He writes:

> Relational refugees are persons not grounded in nurturing or liberating relationships. They are detached and without significant connections with others who promote self-development. They lack a warm relational environment in which to define and nurture their self-identity. As a consequence, they withdraw into destructive relationships that exacerbate rather than alleviate their predicament.[318]

Despite their leadership ability, oratorical prowess, and in-depth, or thorough knowledge of scripture, pastors require the same kind of care, acceptance, affirmation and responsiveness that congregants are afforded. In other words, what I am arguing is that pastors require nurturing relationships – i.e., fundamental human care.

Accordingly, drawing from the resource of Old Testament narratives, I propose the prophetess Huldah,[319] as being a constructive metaphor for engaging in therapeutic practice with African American clergy suffering with depression.

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[318] Wimberly, Edward P. Relation Refugees: Alienation and Reincorporation in African American Churches and Communities. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), p.20.

[319] MacDonald, William. Bible Believer's Commentary: Old Testament. (Nashville, TN: Thompson Nelson Publishers, 1992), p.464. I selected the Old Testament prophetess Huldah to use as a metaphor because she is one of four women with an authentic prophetic ministry of mention in the Old Testament (the others being Miriam, Deborah, and Isaiah's wife). See Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda, – Women of the Bible. (Grand Rapids, MI: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.248.

Huldah was uniquely positioned in the community because she was a "foreign, female prophetess…who sat on the Judean council of elders."[320] Huldah's narrative emerges in 2 Chronicles 34:19-28, when King Josiah of Judah sought to repair the temple by destroying everything associated with inappropriate and/or idol worship. In the tradition of his father David, Josiah was passionate about pleasing God; and, in the process of initiating reform, the Book of the Law was found in the temple and read aloud to him. After hearing its contents, King Josiah was grieved by the grave warnings contained therein; and, it prompted him to seek the counsel of the prophetess Huldah who was 'renowned' for matters pertaining to the Book of the Law.

> Comparing the contents with the prevailing practices in the state of Judah, Josiah feared God's wrath. He commissioned his 'top officers' to find out whether the book's content was an authentic expression of God's will. They went to see the prophetess Huldah to get her assessment.[321]

In the Judeo-Christian community, Huldah was regarded as a leader. She lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter (or Mishneh)[322] where the king, high priests and counselors petitioned her for the Word of God. The Second Quarter district of Jerusalem was "…associated with repetitive teaching. [Womanist biblical scholar Wil] Gafney notes that the Targums say Huldah lives 'in the House of Instruction'."[323] These men selected Huldah to intervene for them rather than her contemporary Jeremiah,[324]

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[320] The Huldah narrative is exceptional, in that, the roles of women in biblical history have typically been that of childbearer, obedient servant/wife, or as a commodity (or item for exchange in society). See Preston Kavanagh. Huldah: The Prophet Who Wrote Hebrew Scripture. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), p.233.

[321] Achtelstetter, Karin. "Huldah at the Table: Reflections on Leadership and the Leadership of Women." *Currents in Theology and Mission,* 2010; 37:3, p.181.

[322] Mishneh is otherwise known as 'the college'.

[323] In Kavanagh, ibid, p.32.

[324] Cheyne, Thomas Kelly. The Decline and Fall of the Kingdom of Judah. (London, England: A. and C. Black, 1908), p.17.

believing that because she was a woman, she would be far more compassionate and more readily inclined to petition God on their behalf.

Another aspect of Huldah's background worthy of mentioning here, centers around her contribution to the bible, in that, she was one of the principal authors of Hebrew Scriptures. Huldah was one of fourteen individuals who worked with King Josiah's secretary Shaphan, the scribe. "A majority of [the] Shapan Group members seem to have collaborated on composing much of the Psaltery, though psalm-by-psalm coding shows that Huldah frequently participated. Though biblical authors apparently worked in teams, we are still able to link Huldah herself to specific words, verses, passages, and often whole chapters of Scripture."

Kavanagh suggests that the authors of Scripture revealed themselves by utilizing two methodologies 'anagrams' and 'coded spellings'.

> To form anagrams, biblical writers used some or all the letters within a single text word to spell a hidden name. Coded spellings require one – and only one – letter from text words to spell a name…this greatly expanded the vocabulary available to biblical authors when they encoded spellings and anagrams.[325]

Essentially, what this implies is that Huldah was instrumental in shaping the Deuteronomistic history as it regards her scholarship.[326] However, the point that I would like to place particular emphasis on is Huldah's positioning within the community. As a spirit-filled religious leader, she was known to sit among kings, high priests and scribes. She was a respected prophet, known for being impartial to the patriarchal leaders of her day, as evidenced in her response to Hilkiah (et al) when he sought counsel from her on

[325] See Kavanagh, ibid, p.5.
[326] "She is the only one of Deuteronomy's leading authors to be significantly encoded in the initial verses of Dtr's opening chapters – 5, 6, 7, and 8." Kavanagh, ibid, p.109.

behalf of King Josiah. She states, "…tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the Lord…" Huldah's response to Hilkiah conveys three things about her – she possessed authority, respectability and communal influence.

What I am suggesting here, is that it would take someone with a degree of authority, respectability and prophetic influence to assume the task of engaging African American pastors in the kind of mutual exchange that elicits the openness and emotional vulnerability that the therapeutic moment necessitates. Her place in biblical scholarship also denotes that a core component of utilizing the Huldah metaphor as a model for therapeutic practice is that the model is biblically rooted.

I consider the Huldah metaphor a useful communal contextual model for therapeutic practice because: 1) Huldah was positioned as a vital member of the community and thereby, readily accessible to the leaders of the day; 2) Huldah was discreet in her practices with the male leaders; 3) Huldah was viewed as an impartial counselor, based upon her dealings with King Josiah and other leaders like him; and, 4) Huldah was proficient in matters pertaining to the Book of the Law (and conduct for living).

For these reasons, I propose utilizing Huldah as an appropriate (communal-contextual) pastoral theological model for engaging in therapeutic practice with African American clergy who suffer with depression. HULDAH dually informs black pastoral theology and Womanist theology by affording African American pastors a 'safe holding environment' whereby they can remove the pastoral masks of performance, and discover or accept who they really are (in order to begin considering the possibilities of developing into the person they aspire to be).

Fortifying the Pillars: 'Constructing Good Enough Holding Spaces' in Psychotherapy with African American Clergy

I coined the acronym HULDAH (Helping to Undergird Leaders through Direction, Accountability and Healing), as a means of providing a therapeutic space for the care and counsel of emotionally depleted African American clergy leaders. I envision that in this therapeutic 'holding space,' African American clergy would experience the kind of supportive care, counsel and guidance that fosters encouragement, renewal and hope.

The goal of the HULDAH model, at its most fundamental level, is to bring about the "healing of human brokenness in context." Consequently, the tenets of the HULDAH model represent a liberative form of pastoral care and counseling, utilizing four touchstones as a methodology for pastoral theological praxis:

1) Relationality – a mutual regard for the other
2) Reconciliation – a return to self and/or to God
3) Restoration – re-entry into communal life
4) Renewal – engaging in ritual practices of self-care

The first step in the HULDAH model requires the development (and subsequent strengthening) of the therapeutic alliance through *relationality*. Nancy Boyd-Franklin contends, "Joining must be accomplished before the therapeutic agenda is pursued."[327] This idea of 'joining' is of particular relevance in counseling with African American clergy due to the cultural stigmas associated with therapy being viewed as: 1) spiritually

[327] Boyd-Franklin, ibid, p.231.

taboo for pastors;[328] 2) the equivalent of potential (pastoral and/or) career suicide; and, 3) demonstrating a lack of faith, or a sign of weakness. This is where I believe establishing an 'authentic relationality' or 'mutual empathy' should be at the forefront of engaging with African American pastors in therapeutic practice.

In the text, *How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy*, Maureen Walker defines 'authentic relationality as, "an increasing capacity for representing oneself more fully in relationship. It signals respect for the complexity of each person, acknowledges the importance of embodied difference, and invites expression of that difference in relationship."[329]

The concept of relationality,[330] as the first component of the HULDAH model, suggests that the therapist utilizes the pastor's personal narrative[331] as a resource in establishing a connection with him/her, which allows room for clergy to grow comfortable with simply 'be-ing'. Winnicott contended that a possessing a sense of 'be-ing' was primary in healthy self-development, as opposed to 'doing' which is as an outgrowth of premature development. Amidst dual-role relationships, internal/external expectations, image promotion/projection, African American clergy have multifarious opportunities to 'do', but appear limited in their capacity to simply 'be'. I contend that

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[328] Here I am referring to the idea that clergy (as representatives of God) are not expected to experience feelings of, or entertain thoughts of hopelessness.

[329] Walker, Maureen. How Connections Heal: Stories from Relational-Cultural Therapy. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2004), p.11.

[330] Relationality or relationship authenticity is described as "the ongoing challenge to feel emotionally real, connected, and vital, clear and purposeful in a relationship. It describes the ongoing and mutual need in a relationship to be seen and recognized." See Judith Jordan. Women's Growth in Diversity: More Writings from the Stone Center. (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 1997, p.245.

[331] This speaks to Patton's argument for the primacy of experience as it regards the particularities embedded in contextual pastoral care. Patton, ibid, p.44.

the relationality component in the HULDAH model invites clergy into the therapeutic space of 'being'.

> Jordan compellingly argues that mutual empathy is key in moving a relationship toward a deeper and more resilient connection. That is, not only must the therapist have a capacity to be moved by the client, he or she must be willing to demonstrate that response in the actual relationship.[332]

The concept of authentic relationality or mutuality proves helpful when working with African American clergy specifically, in that, from a socio-cultural standpoint, the practice of image promotion/projection that black clergy ascribe to – does not allow much room for emotional vulnerability.

As was mentioned in chapter four, communally reinforced notions 'keeping at a distance' and/or to 'not becoming too familiar with congregants,' often derail opportunities for African American pastors to establish authentic relational presence in community. When aspiring pastors are told, "Don't get too comfortable around the people - remember you are the pastor!" the lines between the need for autonomy and the need for authentic community can become blurred.

Secondly, authentic relational presence serves as a constructive therapeutic resource in allowing for the 'unmasking' of the personae of the preacher, which has the capacity to give way for underlying emotional conflicts to emerge. Through empathic mutual exchange, clergy feel less pressured to 'keep up appearances' at the expense of their emotional selves.

Lastly, relationality allows pastors to experience the protection of the therapeutic space as a 'safe holding environment' where they can freely give voice to their True Self,

[332] Walker, ibid, p.10.

as it regards the traumatic experiences of their lives. The 'holding space' allows them to do this, in a way that aids in their process of uncovering, discovering or re-covering the fragmented aspects of their personhood – in a supportive environment, without shame.[333] The tenet of relationality will aid clergy in countering feelings of isolation by fostering communal relationship within the therapeutic encounter, encouraging authentic dialogue and re-establishing trust within community.

The second tenet of the HULDAH model is *reconciliation*. In its most basic form, reconciliation seeks to guide black clergy toward the process of ***reconciliation*** to self and to God. The therapist takes on the task of becoming the one who journeys alongside clergy in the process of revisiting their connection with self and with God. In this second tenet, the pastor formerly known as 'guide' now becomes the one who is guided by the therapist. Not as a 'representative of God', but, from the distinctly vulnerable stance of 'creature', in desperate need of the Creator God.

In his essay on the "Theology of Pastoral Care", Tillich writes, "All men are estranged from what they essentially are. It is their tragic predicament to be guilty for this estrangement, although it is universal and inescapable. Pastoral care must lead also in this point to acceptance. We must accept the fact that we are estranged, and that we are responsible for that which is at the same time unavoidable…we must accept the fact

[333] "The False Self has as its main concern a search for conditions which will make it possible for the True Self to come to its own. If conditions cannot be found then there must be reorganized a new defense against exploitation of the True Self." See Val Richards. The Person Who Is Me: Contemporary Perspectives on the True and False Self. (London, England, 1996), p.11.

that we will be guilty as long as we live, and that no one can overcome the bondage to estrangement in his own strength."[334]

Here Tillich reminds us that the nature of pastoral care leads individuals toward acceptance of who they are and then leads them progressively towards the "potentiality"[335] of who they can become in Christ. The act of reconciliation grants the ability to acknowledge that Christ came as a propitiation for our sins, and that as 'creatures', we might be reconciled with our Creator God. This revelation is a constant reminder to us of the limitations of human weakness. I contend that pastors need to be constantly reminded of the limitations of human weakness for their own self-development and self-emptying – a reminder that through Christ, God takes the sinfulness of man unto Himself and extinguishes it for all eternity.

From a pastoral theological perspective, the power of reconciliation for pastors is that it demonstrates the need for a continual process of self-emptying before God. This self-emptying is reflective of the nature of sin as being in direct opposition to God, thereby, separating humanity from God.

The value of reconciliation in the HULDAH model is that it reminds clergy of God's benevolent love towards them. Jesus' suffering on the cross is meant to convince humanity of God's forgiveness of sin. It exemplifies God's gracious will to be in relationship with something other than God's self; to the degree that God's love transcends human evil. This is what therapists can remind hurting clergy of – the presence and availability of a reconciling love and grace of God that is capable of

[334] Tillich, Paul. The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis and Religion. (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 1984), p.127.
[335] Tillich, ibid, p.126.

reaching both outward and upward. Reconciliation is God's means of convincing humanity that we might also reconcile ourselves with one another. The HULDAH model helps pastors to embrace this concept.

The third tenet of the HULDAH model aptly following reconciliation is *restoration*. In *Rest in the Storm*, Professor Kirk Byron Jones talks about pastors needing to develop a 'back of the boat' mentality. He writes, "The back of the boat is that place where we go to remember who and whose we are. It is the place where roles and responsibilities are no longer the matters at hand. What matters in the back of the boat is that we receive a refreshing of mind, body, and spirit…that we are at peace with ourselves and with our God, regardless of life's circumstances…that delight is found, not in what we produce, but in what we can, if only for a moment, open ourselves to receiving unconditionally."[336] Restoration in the HULDAH model presents the therapist as the person who guides clergy away from pathology that promotes depression and isolation, and draws them toward healthy spiritual disciplines around self-care and intimacy with God. Restoration requires that clergy make deliberate, cognitive lifestyle choices that require accountability to someone other than 'God'. In the HULDAH model, the therapist aids in this process by providing pastoral direction and encouragement in the quest towards personal introspection, so that wholeness might be obtained.

The fourth and final tenet of the HULDAH model is *renewal*. Although it is a given that the Huldah metaphor encompasses within it a return to those ritual practices of prayer, meditating upon the scriptures, studying the bible, etc., by virtue of the fact that

[336] Jones, Byron Kirk. Rest in the Storm: Self-care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2001), p.37.

Huldah was a scholar, I am proposing that the power of renewal in the HULDAH model lies in its capacity to afford clergy opportunities for personal and pastoral refreshment beyond the context religion. Winnicott asserts that "only in the act of playing, are people capable of being their true selves." He is suggesting a type of freedom from the 'doing' that pastors so easily find themselves encumbered by. Therapists can assist pastors in the process of becoming deft in the art of play, through utilizing the therapeutic encounter as an opportunity to engage pastors in play therapy, or other areas of interest pastors may enjoy like gardening, sculpting, music and the like. The art of play therapy allows pastors to more readily embrace, recover and/or discover the very human aspects of themselves beyond the context of religion.

The HULDAH model is designed to be a liberating process of intimacy with self and God, which allows pastors the opportunity to be listened to, heard and responded to in a communal setting where authenticity, vulnerability and safety go hand in hand.

Implications Moving Forward

As I indicated earlier, the role of prominence that the African American preacher once held in the life of the black community, in some respects, appears to be waning. The onslaught of clergy depression, church scandals, clergy divorces, and now an increase in African American clergy suicides, are indicative of the state of the broader culture.

The aim of this dissertation was to establish the existence of depression among African American clergy. At the outset, the growing problem of clergy depression was presented as a viable topic for exploration due to growing concerns around overall clergy mental health and wellness in the pastorate.

From a socio-historical perspective, I used Chapter Two to establish the existence of depression in (enslaved and freed) Africans, by exploring the impact that oppression had upon slavery, and its plausibility as an underlying cause of what I argue is the *trans-generational* transmission of depression from the American trans-Atlantic slave trade. My argument for slavery as an historical trauma, was supported by three research findings: 1) a letter written by Dr. Benjamin Rush, indicating his prognostication of depression among (enslaved and freed) Africans; 2) the repetitive insertion of the term 'indifferent' alongside the names of several African slaves, which was discovered in the Pedee Plantation's slave records dated, in 1782; and, 3) the fact that American slave traders found the Igbo slaves to be an 'undesirable' population for slave trading, due to their despondency and tendency towards committing suicide as a means of 'flying' back to Africa with the 'Water Spirit' to transcend the suffering and brutality of American slavery.

Chapter Three outlines the results of the survey I implemented using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-IITR) to determine the existence of depression among a group of African American (evangelical) pastors in Maryland and New Jersey. Of the thirty-one pastors surveyed, the results showed conclusively that the study participants scored at, near, or above fifty percent on some of the significant criterion for assessing depression: agitation (42%), loss of energy (77%), change in sleeping pattern (61%), change in appetite (55%), concentration difficulty (49%), tiredness or fatigue (58%) and loss of interest in sex (43%). Since at least three out of five symptomatic features need to be present before a diagnosis of depression is established, the study has concluded that

among the population surveyed, African American clergy are experiencing varying levels of depression.

In Chapter Four, I addressed the issue of 'cultural stigmatization' and how depression tends to be viewed as a sign of weakness in the African American community. I offered cultural clues as to how the black church has arrived at this dilemma of mental illness among her leaders, by identifying the unspoken cultural assumption of needing to 'uphold the image' of strength and resilience at the negation of one's emotional or psychological self. Utilizing Donald W. Winnicott's theory of the 'true' and the 'false' self, I identified how black pastors construct false images of self through image promotion/projection (of which, I argue is a form of pastoral masking), and how their internalization of the same may lead to depression. Further, I put forth the dangers associated with black female pastors' adherence to the 'strong black woman' (SBW) motif, as it regards the suppression of depression, amidst culturally-embedded expectations of performance (i.e., African American women taking on the responsibility of caring for everyone else but themselves).

The cultural hermeneutics of the black church are explored in Chapter Five, for the purpose of clarifying how certain ritual practices in the black church tend to contribute to the dilemma of depression among African American clergy leaders. Here, the notion of deification of the pastor (or pedestallization) is introduced as a means of explaining the enigmatic setup of what I argue is the 'cultural sacramentalization of the black preacher', based upon Paul Tillich's concept of the Spiritual Presence as embodiment, during the preaching moment.

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation by offering the Old Testament prophetess Huldah as a therapeutic pastoral theological response to clergy suffering with depression. HULDAH is a communal contextual model of care which incorporates four tenets of therapeutic intervention: relationality, reconciliation, restoration and renewal.

Admittedly, the role of (black) pastorate is not an easy one to undertake. Yet, if black pastors are to survive the crisis of depression, they must avail themselves of substantial self-awareness in the hopes of obtaining a healthy future for themselves in the pastorate.

St. John Chrysostom viewed the priestly office as a dangerous office for anyone to desire to undertake – so much so, that he earnestly conveyed to Basil his reasoning for fleeing the priesthood. He viewed the challenging responsibilities he was confronted with, as being more costly than he was willing to subject himself to. Chrysostom viewed the life of the priesthood as a life of devotion to the common good of the church, rather than the pursuit of personal ambitions of power or vain glory. While this view may appear to depict the priesthood as unattainable or overly glorified, I would argue that there is something to be said for taking responsibility for personal introspection and honest self-examination in regard to our own human frailty in the pastoral function

I would hope that this work adds to the field of (black) pastoral theology. It is intended to provide insight into how clergy depression may arise from ritual practices that are prominent in African American evangelical congregations. Despite the constant demands of pastoral ministry, it is the responsibility of the pastor to avail him or herself to regular practices of self-care; and, it is the responsibility of the worshipping community to ensure that *every* member of the community experiences the same.

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