African American Pastoral Counseling: The Dynamics on Self-worth, Personal Efficacy, Motivation, and Responsible Discipleship

A Thesis Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
Charles T. Walker

Lynchburg, Virginia
November 2020
THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT
Charles T. Walker
Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, November 11, 2020
Mentor: Dr. David C. Dixon

Abstract

This qualitative study evaluated the counseling practices of African American pastors in the Southeastern region of the United States. The study examined their perceptions and relevant themes when counseling their parishioners on self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. Relevant themes were: Cultural Context counseling; impaired self-worth and self-love in rural young females; and whether the rural male is dominated by loss of hope. The exploratory study collected data from 19 digital surveys, 10 selected pastoral counselors’ semi-structured interviews, and 10 collected member focus interview questionnaires. The findings from the data collected show that members felt comfortable receiving counseling from their pastor who: 1) identified culturally; 2) had a long-established relationship of trust; 3) was highly educated rural bi-vocational pastors who influenced self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation; and 4) recognized that solution-focused and Integrated Counseling techniques are ideal therapies. Many African American pastors can draw from the study insights that will help them implement a successful counseling program ministry in their Church.

Keywords: pastors, counselors, self-worth, Motivation, cultural, efficacy, discipleship
Dedication

First, I dedicate this project to the only true God and His Son, Jesus Christ because through the Holy Spirit I was endowed with wisdom, strength, guidance, and research competence. Second, I dedicate this enduring project to one of my daughter’s Angelia Walker who at 21 years of age has completed her Master’s in Anatomy, to my second daughter Shay who’s smile can brighten the darkest of days in anyone, and to my beloved son Michael, thank you for staying steady in life and for serving our country in the United States Navy. Much love and appreciation to my wife Syrenthia who helped me grow in faith, patience, in the ability to counsel, and brought alive my calling significance. Third, I dedicate this project completion to two recently deceased men in my life: my father Alfred L. Walker a Vietnam veteran who taught me courage amid adversities, and to my grandfather pastor, Rev. Raymond Moore who instructed and guided me as a young pastor in Christ’s ministry. Most of all, I thank my mother Juanita who had no worries about me as her eldest son.
Acknowledgements

I express great appreciation to my mentor Dr. David C. Dixon who is a LCMHCS and subject Matter Expert in counseling in the department of psychology of community care and counseling. Thank you for your coaching and mentorship that supported me throughout this Thesis project. To my second reader Dr. Margaret T. Gopaul, thank you for your invaluable feedback and expertise in research methodology. I will continue to offer my prayers of blessing on the School of Behavioral Sciences and especially the Department of Community Care and Counseling. Finally, Liberty University truly lives up to its motto in “Training Champions for Christ.” I immensely express great appreciation and thanks to the Dean of the John W. Rawlings Divinity School, Dr. P. Adam C. McClendon, the administrative staff, and their knowledgeable, professional professors who made the degree program a standard of through learning.

Final acknowledgement goes out to the United States Army Chaplain Corps for equipping and training me in the Art of providing spiritual, religious care support, and counseling to Soldiers and their Families.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**Ministry Context**

- African American Religious Values ............................................. 20
- Cultural Context Phenomenon .................................................. 21

**Problem Presented** ..................................................................... 22

**Purpose Statement** ...................................................................... 23

**Basic Assumptions** ..................................................................... 24

**Definitions** ................................................................................ 25

**Limitations** ................................................................................ 27

**Delimitations** ............................................................................. 28

**Thesis Statement** ......................................................................... 28

**Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework**

**Literature Review**

- Introduction .................................................................................. 29
- Self-Worth ..................................................................................... 29
- Factors of Self-esteem in Black Youths ........................................... 31
- Worship Builds Positive Identity .................................................. 33
- Self-Image: The Decision to Live or Die ........................................ 34
- Personal Efficacy ......................................................................... 35
- Counseling Self-Efficacy ............................................................. 37
Self-Efficacy and Depression................................................................. 39
Personal Efficacy in Marriage............................................................... 40
Motivation............................................................................................... 42
Motivation in Black Church Youth Groups............................................. 44
Counseling Intervention on Motivation..................................................... 45
Responsible Discipleship........................................................................ 46
A Culture that Prizes Communalism....................................................... 48
Conclusion............................................................................................... 48

Theological Foundations........................................................................ 50
Counseling Practiced in Specialized Fields............................................... 51
Licensed Counselor and Therapist........................................................... 51
Clinical Pastoral Care............................................................................... 52
Military Chaplain.................................................................................... 53
Mental Health Counselors....................................................................... 53
Substance Abuse Counselors................................................................. 54
Career Counselors................................................................................... 54
Types of Spiritual Counseling................................................................. 55
Biblical Pastoral Counselors................................................................. 55
Relevance of Bible to Counseling............................................................ 56
Integrated Pastoral Counseling.............................................................. 58
Bible and Theoretical Frameworks......................................................... 59
Counseling on Hard Subjects................................................................. 60
Pastoral Counseling Founded in Scripture ................................................ 61
Pastoral Counselors Counsel the Church .................................................. 62
Counseling Established Through Prayer ................................................. 63
Ethical Concerns for the Licensed Counselor ....................................... 63
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 64

Theoretical Foundations ........................................................................ 65
Storytelling versus Narrative Therapy ................................................. 66
Story in Ancient Tradition .................................................................... 67
Positive Psychological Theory ............................................................. 68
Cultural Context Counseling Method .................................................. 72
Cultural Theory .................................................................................. 74
Scriptural Analysis Method ................................................................. 78
Commitment to Scripture .................................................................... 79
Conclusion ......................................................................................... 79

Chapter 3: Methodology ...................................................................... 81
Intervention Design ............................................................................. 81
Introduction ....................................................................................... 81
The Research Question ........................................................................ 81
Qualitative Research ......................................................................... 83
Researcher’s Background .................................................................... 86
Researcher’s Beliefs and Biases .......................................................... 87
Participants’ Beliefs and Biases ............................................................ 88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of the Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 5: Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Proposal</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implemented Research Project</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complications to the Research Design</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Black Church Counseling Programs</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended Future Counseling Research</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A Recruitment Pastor Email Letter</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B Recruitment Follow-Up Pastor Email Letter</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C Pastoral Counselor Survey</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D Pastor Counselor Consent Form</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E Structured Interview Questions: Pastoral Counselor</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F Member Focused Questionnaire</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G IRB Approval</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tables

1.1......Biblical Counseling vs Outside Counseling…………………………… 104
1.2......Member Referral to Mental Health Counseling.............................. 105
1.3......Pastor Demographic Trends.......................................................... 115
1.4.....Influence of Higher Education on Counseling and Referral........... 116
1.5.....Member Satisfaction Category......................................................... 136
Illustrations

Figures
1. ......Charles T. Walker, “Preferred Counseling Model,” RapidTables.com......... 105
2. .......Charles T. Walker, “Church’s State,” RapidTables.com......................... 107
6. ........Charles T. Walker, “Member Questionnaire Age,” RapidTables.com........ 112
8. ........Charles T. Walker, “Influence of Counseling Degree,” RapidTables.com... 114
13. ......Charles T. Walker, “Counseling Trend (Female) Rural,” RapidTables.com... 119
16. ......Charles T. Walker, “Counseling Trend (Female) Urban,” RapidTables.com.. 121
Abbreviations

AA      African American
AACC    American Association of Certified Counselors
AAPC    American Association of Pastoral Counselors
CPE     Clinical Pastoral Education
DMIN    Doctor of Ministry
Ed. D.  Doctor of Education
LCMHCS  Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor
LUSOD   Liberty University School of Divinity
MDIV    Master of Divinity
PC      Pastoral Counselor
Ph.D.   Doctor of Philosophy
Chapter 1

Introduction

The African American Church is a thriving spiritual institution that operates as an epicenter of community life. Not only does the Black Church conduct worship, preaching, and spiritual formation groups, it also provides a platform for social programs and political activities. For example, social programs implement faith-based programs that help mentor delinquent and troubled youth, provide space for state social workers to recruit foster and adoptive families, and operate a food program for struggling families. Pattillo-Mccoy affirms that “Many public and secular institutions in [the Black Church] are unproblematically infused with religious themes.”

In the early 1960s, Black Churches hosted political meetings that disseminated information about planned social actions. As a product of the Black Church's cultural heritage and rituals, its central spiritual hub includes counseling parishioners who feel rejected, inadequate, and with a sense of low self-worth impacted by social inequalities. Social injustices impact self-worth, personal efficacy, and full participation in the wider community. Does the Black Church’s counseling program adequately improve parishioners’ level of personal efficacy in the face of many social inequalities? Is the Black Church’s pastoral counseling program sufficient to effect improvements in self-esteem, productivity, and motivation? Does the Black

---


2 Ibid., 767.

3 Ibid., 771.

Church’s counseling program integrate professional counseling services in the community? Other research questions to be addressed are: (1) How often pastoral counselors counsel parishioners in areas of rejection, motivation, personal self-efficacy, and self-worth in the Black Church? (2) Is cultural context counseling preferable over outside therapists? (3) Is narrative therapy a preferable counseling method for African American pastoral counselors? (4) Why do Black Churchgoers seek pastoral counseling as an alternative to mental health counseling services? Cultural context counseling is associated with social justice counseling⁵; however, though, it changes the approach by applying biblical principles and spiritual themes that practices the kingdom of God, thereby making it a liberation theology application counseling session.

Is the Black Church’s counseling program competent to effect positive changes in self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others? Spirituality is deeply-rooted in African American culture.⁶ Recent research indicate that 80% of Blacks find religious values to be very important, while 43% seek comfort through their spirituality and religion.⁷ The research further suggested that African Americans “rely on their religion as a source of strength, hope, liberation, and emotional support.”⁸ African American pastoral counselors use theological themes on deliverance and freedom.⁹ As black parishioners

---


⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁸ Ibid., 159.

gain confidence in rising above low self-worth, they become motivated to participate in exemplifying the love ethic in their disciplinary actions into the broader society.

**Ministry Context**

Some professional counselors have misperceptions about pastoral counseling. A great deal of the ministry of Jesus other than miracles and healings involved one-on-one counseling. Counseling Christians is the authority of the church! Other than miracles and healings Christians are mandated to carry (listening to one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2 ESV). Pastoral counseling is important to parishioners within the Christian Church because of its use of integrated counseling techniques while maintaining a high level of ethical and confidential practices.

This section will provide a brief overview of ministry, in which African American pastoral counselors ethically support and address issues of their parishioners. The researcher will analyze African American pastoral counseling intervention practices within the Black Church, specifically in the Southeastern region of the United States. Churches investigated will be urban, rural, and upper middle class who practice a traditional and contemporary style of worship. Within this ministry context, the researcher will explore the effects of their counseling on self-worth, motivation, personal efficacy, and responsible discipleship to the broader community.\(^\text{10}\) Successful therapy resulting from pastoral counseling enables members to view themselves as a part of a larger society of God’s creation and to practice the principles of love and good citizenship. Also, this investigation will describe, interpret, and evaluate the use of narrative and positive psychological interventions. In this regard, those who wish to counsel across cultures, according to Toldson, et al.:

Counselors can enhance the quality and integrity of their services by developing a better understanding of (1) specific cultural norms and folkways, (2) how sociocultural power

differentials manifest within a therapeutic context, and (3) how Black/African psychology tenets can shape clinical practice.\textsuperscript{11}

Thus, the researcher assumes that certain relatable counseling models (narrative and cultural context counseling) are essential to African Americans. One reason for these specific counseling models is that African American worldviews are shaped by their environment. The Black Christian’s worldview of self-worth and personal efficacy is uplifted by their religious notion of freedom and deliverance, "signifying both spiritual deliverance into God's kingdom and worldly deliverance from the social realities of oppression."\textsuperscript{12} Barnes states [that cultural context counseling within] the Black Churches is vital because it symbolizes [liberation themes] that shapes[ their ]worldview and is supported by particular biblical texts.\textsuperscript{13} However, Rachael Smith, in her dissertation, deems that Black parishioners can benefit from collaboration with other worldview counseling approaches.\textsuperscript{14} C. Fred Smith illustrates a “humanity worldview” that is often overlooked when caring for the cultural needs of others.\textsuperscript{15} Smith states, "The Samaritan [in the biblical parable] is commended for seeing himself as part of a common humanity."\textsuperscript{16} A humanity worldview should be significant when doing pastoral counseling. Therapy becomes

\begin{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{12} Mary Pattillo-McCoy, “Church Culture as A Strategy of Action in the Black Community,” 770.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 106.
\end{flushleft}
more effective when the counselor is influenced by models of counseling techniques, and perhaps identifies or is proficient in cross-cultural counseling and pastoral care. This ministry context study is a resource for professional therapists and pastoral counselors to become familiar in understanding the worldview, themes, and counseling needs of African Americans.

**African American Religious Values**

Black Christians pride themselves on the sense of connection with family and Church activities. Like other Christian Churches, African Americans consider their Church members as family; for example, they refer to each other as brother and sister.\(^{17}\) Connectedness within families renders a sense of strength, purpose, and empowerment. Therefore, congregants will derive particular needs inside the group most familiar to them. The Black Church maintains such a strong empowerment among themselves that any outside partnerships that overlook their way of life, practice, interpretations, and traditions can become an insult to their brother and sisterhood. An effective counseling program that is established in Black churches will support and care for the many psychological and crisis needs of individuals and families. Is the African American Church counseling program effective enough alone to satisfy self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation in the multiple needs of parishioners? Does the African American Church need to partner with other community counseling services to help improve psychological health? This research will explore and present these findings. However, according to Moore-Thomas et al., they suggest maybe Black Churches will be opened to community counseling partnership if they consider foremost the culture, religious beliefs, and the structure of their religious institution.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Cheryl Moore-Thomas et al., “Culturally Competent Counseling for Religious, 161.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 162.
The significance of this study is to explore Black Church counseling demands, practices, its effects on self-worth and personal efficacy. In addition, the types of counseling models used in their therapy sessions will be examined.

Cultural Context Phenomenon

Historically, the Black Church prides itself on its longstanding participation in political activism, which during the civil rights years became a central feature engaged by its parishioners. As a result of their activism, it encouraged motivation and increased positive images of self-worth. Cultural context counseling aims to improve self-worth, motivation, and personal efficacy. Cultural context counseling uses therapy models of narrative, positive psychology, and Scripture analysis. During turbulent times adjusting to colonialism, many parishioners sought counseling from their pastor, who culturally identified with their anxieties. Black Church parishioners drew upon a set of counseling practices and beliefs to help them navigate negativity and feelings of low self-worth brought on by those times.19 Pastoral counselors during colonialism helped its members work through negative social experiences by leading them to focus on therapeutic Bible stories that enabled them to responsibly live out their calling in humanity.20

A pertinent body of literature suggests that aspects of motivation is to engage in public speaking, politically participate, and to self-educate as a part of personal self-efficacy.21 Present-day African American churches exhibit preaching on themes of overcoming, living confident,

---


functional coping strategies and being an example of the practices of the Scriptural love ethic to thy neighbor.

Nevertheless, the ministry context problem for the researcher is to explore how often African American pastoral counselors address the multi-needs of parishioners, and what are the intervention modes used in their sessions to effect self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. Cultural context counseling or same identity counselors have influenced responsible discipleship within parishioners who later become models of advocacy and change in their spiritual growth.²²

Problem Presented

The problem that will be addressed in this research is the dynamic aspects of African American pastoral counselors’ counseling on issues that relate to low self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation among their members. To understand the issues they address and the effectiveness of their work, this analysis will explore these localities: urban, rural, and suburban Black Churches. Most of the previous work on counseling African Americans focused on attitudes and perceptions toward professional mental health counseling. The gap in the research failed to look at the competency level and effects of pastoral counseling practices Black Church pastors conduct among their parishioners.

The research questions helped to address and explore the presented problem in the Black church. For instance, Does the Black Church’s counseling program adequately improve parishioners’ level of personal efficacy in the face of many social challenges? Is the Black Church’s pastoral counseling program sufficient, in itself, to effect improvements in self-esteem, productivity, and motivation? Does the Black Church counseling program integrate professional counseling services in the community? Other research questions to be addressed are: (1) How

²²Rachael D. Smith. "Counseling Religious African Americans, 3."
often pastoral counselors counsel parishioners? (2) Is cultural context counseling preferable to other counseling methods? (3) Is narrative therapy a strictly African American counseling method? (4) Why do churchgoers seek pastoral counseling as an alternative to mental health counseling services?

The available literature on these topics reveals lack of licensed black professional mental health counselors, and the non-use of mental health counseling services among the black church community. African Americans bear negative perceptions of cross-cultural counseling therapy performed by another therapist.

To measure the effects of counseling intervention of African American pastoral counselors, data collection will include sending out 500 random pastoral counselors digital surveys, select 10 pastors from the returned digital surveys and conduct semi-structured interviews, and the selected pastors’ will select 10 members who voluntary consent to participate in a group focused questionnaire. The researcher will also analyze the relationships between urban, rural, and suburban counseling impacts on self-worth and self-efficacy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research study is to explore the various counseling techniques used in one-on-one sessions and the prevalent issues affecting parishioners in many African American


ministries. The researcher will analyze for relevant themes and compare each vicinity (rural, urban, and suburban) of Black Churches effects on their members who receive counseling on various issues. Alcohol and drug dependency are by-products of low self-worth and decreased personal efficacy. These negative coping habits can also affect commitment to steady labor, prolong family dysfunction, and be a potential to engage in criminal activity. Another benefit of this study is to educate and give understanding to other therapists who would like to do cross-training in a black parish setting. Cross cultural counseling involves the understanding of others cultural traditions, histories, religious beliefs, and the structures of their religious institution.26

To establish the groundwork of this research, first, it is helpful to grasp an understanding of conceptual definitions used. Second, it is significant to describe the theoretical and theological framework that gives birth to the significance of the study.

Basic Assumptions

The underlying assumption of this exploratory study is that self-worth can be greatly built upon by identity relation of the counselor which gives comfort to the session in cultural context counseling. The researcher assumes that there are differences in counseling practices between urban, rural, and suburban Black Churches. It is also the researcher’s assumption that more highly educated pastors are prone to further assist parishioners by suggesting referrals to professional counseling. The last assumption the researcher claim is that pastoral counseling is trustworthy, friendly, and holds an active caring interest and long-term commitment over time to the member.

---

Definitions

The following are definitions that relate to this qualitative study. The definitions that are presented are based upon scholarly literature, but are explicitly framed for the variables and population that this study proposes to assess:

**African American/Black.** Ethnic people of color and their descendants who were colonialized and had since been living in North America.

**African.** Ethnic people of color who are natives of the continent of Africa.

**Black Church.** Religious institution comprised predominantly of Black Americans.

**Christian Counseling.** Counseling helps Christians to view the experiences and problems in their lives as a part of God's plan and derive strength form His pardon, power, and purpose to address them. 27

**Counseling African American Families.** Context and intervention therapy methods that are culturally appropriate for Black families that have been impacted by social forces. 28

**Counseling.** A general term referring to counseling that may or may not be Christian in nature, but offers therapeutic interventions that help individuals, and couples address their problems.

**Critical Race Theory.** This critical research focuses on the person rather than the context. It helps individuals to not accept the status quo but become change agents. 29

---


Cultural Context Counseling. Counseling that is performed by a pastoral counselor or licensed counselor of the same ethnic identity and holds similar cultural traditions.30

Cultural Theory. The theoretical model of an ethnic group belief, practices, and stories of their traditions31

Motivation. Motivation within the sphere of counseling is considered the desire for an individual to change their patterns, behaviors, and actions.32

Pastoral Counselor. An ordained member of the clergy who has an advanced degree in counseling (but may not be a licensed professional counselor) that integrates psychological information into his/her ministry.33 It also refers to a pastor who provides general counseling sessions to parishioners.

Parishioner Outcomes. The experiences that a member expresses after receiving counseling sessions. The outcome may be expressed in terms of positive, negative, or a work-in-progress.34

Responsible Discipleship. This concept denotes a sociological and spiritual perspective that serves God, the self, the laws of the land, and respect and help to others.

Self-Efficacy. Character trait conveying “personal, social, and political empowerment and transformation.”35


31 Barnes, “Black Church Culture and Community Action,” 967.


35 Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care, and Counseling*, 11.
**Self-Worth.** Self-worth can be defined as a reflection of how an individual perceives or contributes personally. This perception can be used upon their values, beliefs, characteristics, and attributes.\(^{36}\)

**Limitations**

This study has several noted limitations. One is that the study on pastoral counseling is only studied among Black African American Churches in the Southeastern region of the United States. Second, the study is limited to the fundamental traditional use of Scripture. Thus, Churches that counsel same sex couples are not included in this research. The third limitation is placed on the time frame the researcher allowed for returned digital survey responses. If more time was given to the waiting process, the study might have yielded more participants. Fourth, the researcher did not use a more advance research analysis software and advises that Google Docs should not be used in dissertation Ph.D. candidates. The Fifth limitation is the researcher did not ask in the survey for pastoral counselors years of counseling education, nor asked if any were certified in counseling.

**Delimitations**

The delimitation of this research study is influenced by the theoretical framework of Cultural Context Counseling when analyzing for self-worth and personal efficacy as it can be affected by social discriminations.

---

Thesis Statement

African American pastoral counselors are competent, educated, and use effective techniques that are supported by the group’s cultural theories to counsel Church members on issues of self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation.
Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents the literature relevant to the purpose of this study, which is to examine African American pastoral counseling practices in their cultural context and how they build self-worth that leads to personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship in the world. This section also initiates the literature review with a presentation of these variables as they relate to counseling on them. Subsequent sections will present several theories relevant to counseling African Americans. Throughout this study, each of the four variables will be explored as they relate to practices of pastoral counseling in the Black church. Additionally, any gaps in the literature review will be emphasized. First, self-worth is discussed in the next section.

The first section variable to examine and how it is defined in contemporary literature. Throughout this literature review, broad definitions are first presented and then research that is related to pastoral counseling (if available). If the research literature lacks information, this gap will be emphasized.

Literature Review

Self-Worth

Generally, self-image shines through being linked to one’s status, talents and possesses that distinguishes him from another. Theoreticians describes that positive and negative occurrence can bear on one’s self-worth, for example, the success in reaching one goal and the

---

consistent failure to reach any other goal.\textsuperscript{38} The author also notes the work of Erikson and Marcia, who deemed that self-image could transition during different stages in life circumstances. They stated, "[persons] conclude their journey when they achieve the coherent feeling of their meanings, both for themselves and others in the social context."\textsuperscript{39} On the other hand, research on the concept of women’s self-image is linked to the importance of physical appearance rather than accomplishing a set of goals or possessing a skill.\textsuperscript{40} Webster et al. posit, "Self-concept theories propose that dissatisfaction in a particular domain will have an impact on self-esteem to the extent that the domain is essential in the person's self-definition."\textsuperscript{41}

In the reviewed literature on self-image, it is apparent that this variable affects one's thinking, feeling, and motivation. However, it is also noted that the counselor can be a significant asset to restore the satisfaction in a person’s wounded self-image. Leibert references Michael Lambert, who similarly, studied common therapeutic factors that worked for adult mental health outcomes.\textsuperscript{42} The author presupposes three therapeutic approaches that are common among counselors that effect positive counseling on self-image: empathy, the counselor-client relationship, and support.\textsuperscript{43} Nevertheless, scholarly literature on self-image exposes a gap

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 338.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 338.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 128.
because it lacks research specific to counseling Black American church members with ideal intervention models to help recreate positive self-images in them.

Nevertheless, research also suggests that among African American women, their relationship to religion helps them deal with physical, mental, and emotional stress experienced in earning a living, which can highly bear upon their self-image.44 A similar study by Kim, Chen, and Brachfeld found that positive image readjustment a readjustment is linked to having a close relationship with the Divine. The authors state, “a relationship between spirituality and positive psychological functioning, such as having a higher purpose in life and greater life satisfaction and well-being, all of which promote positive health.”45 Reading on much research that talked about a counselor using an integrated therapy approach to recreate a positive self-image in clients; however, a gap exists on a specific therapeutic model a counselor can use that relates and effects positive outcomes on self-image in African Americans faced with many social discriminations.

**Factors on Self-Esteem in Black Youth.** Past research has listed factors that elevate self-esteem in Back youth which are “positive racial identity, [educational] success, and positive emotional functioning.”46 Pastoral counselors and other licensed counselors who counsel Black youth must have a thorough understanding of the factors that affect functioning self-esteem and replace it


with positives in their life experiences. It is noted that cultural context counseling is also a significant protection measure that “buffer[s] the negative impact of discrimination experiences and bolster self-esteem because the technique is linked with a counselor of the same identity.”

The results and conclusion section of this research paper will analyze for current effectiveness of cultural counseling performed by African American pastoral counselors.

While Black pastoral counselors’ counseling sessions are one protective measure to maintain positive self-esteem in Black youth, a more important piece of groundwork comes through their socialization process that is instilled by members from their immediate family. Close ties within a Black youth’s family may practice giving praise and encouragement for his or her creative abilities. What praise and encouragement does is prepare the youth to cherish cultural pride, pride in himself, guard him against critical devaluation, and build positive views toward himself. To add, empirical studies acknowledge that all children regardless of racial identity are taught these important values that builds self-esteem at early ages. Furthermore, statistics report high achievements in education, job performance, and promotions among Black youth when their self-esteem is elevated.

The association between self-esteem and motivation will be explored more in chapter four which highlights its effects within the sphere of the African American worship experience and counseling experience.

---

47 Ibid., 357.

48 Ibid., 358.

Worship Builds Positive Identity. There is a correlation between positive racial identity and self-esteem in that the health of both promotes psychological well-being. The collective gathering of worship in the African American community or church which is the primary epicenters of socialization that supports racial identity and self-image. Even within their worship atmosphere the crescendos of melodic praise and rhythmic preaching alleviates stress that is caused by many social factors give them a sense of belonging.

Psychology uses a proposed method called the Social Identity Theory to control for psychological well-being of one’s identity within a group setting. The definition of Social Identity Theory is “a person’s awareness of belonging to a social group, together with the value and emotional significance of belonging.” Sometimes it is evident that certain practices of discrimination causes a sense of a devalued image. However, this research will show how pastoral counseling and the African American Church empowers its parishioners by including them in tasks and projects of that ministry. Social identity theorists label project work that interconnect people’s lives--affective commitment.

Religious Fellowship that builds on Social Identity is a major support to shared values and spiritual uplifting. This multivariate atmosphere affects all ages in their challenge to maintain a healthy self-image. The plethora of literature generally agrees upon the centrality of formal religious experiences to managing self-esteem. According to Greenfield and Marks, “religious participation is associated with having a more positive self-concept, both in terms of

---


51 Ibid., 27.

52 Ibid., 27.
self-esteem and self-efficacy.”53 In all, social identity is a mediating factor to prompting higher levels of self-esteem in groups of persons especially of the same culture.

In contrast, lower levels of self-perception produce a risk factor to psychological well-being and can lead to harmful behavior by self-inflicted injuries. The next section will investigate research on self-image during teen pregnancy and establish relevancy between loveless affection and the struggles it produces toward healthy mental health.

**Self-Worth the Decision to Live or Die.** Recent research on counseling pregnant women state that the many mothers who abort their babies is linked between the low view of herself.54 For mental health measures, it is important for pregnant teens to receive counseling because their “emotional climate during pregnancy establishes the prime view of herself.”55 The African American church in poor urban communities will have a great impact on pregnant teens self-esteem with a good established counseling program.

In contrast, other literature purpose that poor urban teens purposely get pregnant because of their low self-esteem.56 One reason for this is the link between loveless affection by a parent that may result in a teen wanting to get pregnant in order to love her child. The struggle with

---


55 Ibid., 9.

self-esteem from loveless parents results in a teen wanting to display that love to their own child.57

Other relevant research recognizes the importance of self-esteem on a person’s will to live. It is reported that when a person has low self-worth and is sustain due to negativity in the family or other factors it can lead to suicide.58 Research indicates there is a strong link between feelings of low-worth and suicidal ideation. Low self-worth that affects African Americans is displayed in their lack of personal efficacy. High levels of discrimination can affect personal efficacy. Crosby and Molock reported that the problem of suicide has mainly affected European Americans, the affluent, and Native Americans.59 Their statistics reveal that between the period of 1990-2003, there were 28,177 suicides recorded of them.60

Recent research conclude that these following factors contribute to suicide: drug use, weapon in the home, murder-suicide, and severe poverty, and low self-worth.61 Chapters four and five of this research will explore more on the effects of African American pastoral counseling relevance to self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation in parishioners.

The researcher assumes that cultural context counseling performed by Black pastoral counselor will build and promote healthy self-esteem in parishioners.

57 Ibid., 84.
60 Ibid., 1.
Personal Efficacy

Broad literature reviewed on self-efficacy notes that Social Cognitive Theory was created by psychologist Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy is defined as a combination of a person’s positive thought and confidence is needed for motivation to complete a task. Similarly, Gecas emphasizes, “an efficacious expectation is the belief that one can successfully perform a particular action. This theory relates to the Christian doctrine on faith, which states, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). However, Whyte, Saks, and Hook correlate that motivation and self-efficacy elevates when one is on a losing course.

Likewise, Black pastors counseling a member through the reality of oppression and racial tension will influence her self-efficacy to a steady commitment to excel and rise above the circumstances. This is where cultural context counseling becomes effective.

The following presents a sub-section that is devoted to counseling efficacy reviewed in the literature.

---


63 Ibid., 126.


66 Ibid., 416.
Counseling Self-Efficacy. Previous research in the literature focused on the counselor's performance and intervention skills used to improve self-efficacy.\textsuperscript{67} It was noted that past scholarly literature revealed that an integrated model technique was used in thirty-two studies on counseling self-efficacy from 1983 to 1998.\textsuperscript{68} Current research (2013) focused on training and supervising on counseling self-efficacy among mental health school professionals.\textsuperscript{69} From these study samples, counseling self-efficacy was performed by undergrad recreation students, trainees in counseling, counselors who were obtaining their Master's degrees, psychologists, and clergy.\textsuperscript{70} The author’s findings from this study evidence that counseling clients on personal self-efficacy is an effective treatment\textsuperscript{71} because it directly treats a client's anxiety, performance, and their negative thoughts that either aid or hinders their capability.\textsuperscript{72}

Similarly, Jackson also researched Psychology students to show that there is a relationship between enhancing self-efficacy and communication.\textsuperscript{73} The research study involved students who sent an email to the teacher requesting further instructions on how to improve their grade received bonus points. Of the students that responded, half got a reply message telling

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item Ibid., 180.
  \item Ibid., 180.
  \item Ibid., 180.
  \item Ibid., 180.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
them ways to perform higher (enhancing efficacy beliefs), while the other half that did not reply for assistance only received a general note without instructions on improving from the teacher. During the next exam portion, the students who received the instructions their performance were significantly higher because of the email that communicated efficacy techniques.74

On the other hand, low self-efficacy affects the ability to perform with high standards, especially when consistent patterns of oppressive systems challenge one’s capability. For example, perhaps African Americans pastoral counselors who counseled using the cultural context model will notice that minority status clients see that there are many challenges for them to obtain equal advantage and fair share in political and economic opportunities. Lawrence Mishel et al. noted that income class barriers violate "a core American principle of equal opportunity for all.75 The authors correctly observed that “Racial and ethnic disparities in wealth are profound. The median net worth of black households was $4,900 in 2010, compared to $1,300 for Hispanic households, and $97,000 for white households.”76 Income level disadvantage can be a possible cause of low self-worth in African Americans.

With this issue in the past of colonialization, the African American pastoral counselor helped to repair self-efficacy in their church members by using what is called narrative therapy technique. Storytelling is a talk session method of intervention that share stories of experiences to the counselee in a trusted and safe environment. The counselor’s cultural identity of course is the same and significantly became a great supporting factor to help relate to the member’s

74 Ibid., 243.


76 Ibid., 376.
experiences. However, Narrative therapy according to Ali Mohammadi et al., they recognized
the importance of it, “Narrative therapy takes the focus of the [client] from the problem and puts
emphasis on the [clients] strengths and abilities to deal with the problem.77 The literature on
narrative therapy has become a general model used by many therapists to effectively treat
significant offensive events in the lives of clients. The research shows a gap in the application
and the effectiveness of narrative therapy practices in the lives of Black Americans and the
importance of its use by pastoral counselors with Black Church parishioners.

**Self-Efficacy and Depression.** Self-efficacy is a construct founded in Social Cognitive Theory.
Self-efficacy beliefs are determined by how persons feel, think, motivate themselves and
behave.78 When a person’s aspirations are weak, psychologist tend to think the person will
become a victim to stress and depression.79 However, the relationship between self-efficacy and
depression is significant in adolescents, especially during age transitions. Research suggested
that stress in early adolescents develops into “psychopathologies of depression and social anxiety
when adulthood is reached.”80 In contrast, performance self-efficacy is severely affected when
there is high levels of depression, alcohol use, thus resulting in suicide among adolescents
worldwide.81 Poorer urban Black Church ministries experience an influx of people in their

---

77 Ali Zadeh Mohammadi et al., “Group Narrative Therapy Effect on Self-esteem and Self-efficacy of Male

78 Karineh Tahmassian, et al., “Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Symptoms of Anxiety, Depression,
Worry and Social Avoidance in a Normal Sample of Students,” *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral

79 Ibid., 91.

80 Ibid., 92.

81 Ibid., 92.
community who have long term battles with depression, alcohol abuse, and suicidal behaviors. Hence, there is a link between low self-efficacy and depression. Urban Black pastoral counselors perhaps are overwhelmed with the numbers of counselees seeking psychological and spiritual help with these struggles.

**Personal Efficacy in Marriage.** One primary ministry work that Pastoral counselors highly engage in is marriage counseling. Couples who have been together over ten years or more can get caught in the pit of apathy in which the couple’s stress level, love language, and personal efficacy fight for the marriage diminishes. Current research has drawn parallels between stress and marital satisfaction in Black marriages. Studies among both partners who work out of the home reveal that marital satisfaction is highest when both dual-earner’s stress levels are low.  

Marriage satisfaction is decreased when both partners experience high levels of stress on the job and come home to complain. In contrast, the husbands’ work performance is negatively affected when marital life becomes extremely challenging. Sun and McHale et al. call this the “work-to-home conflict” in which work demands interfere with the quality of a loving relationship in the home.

It is generally common knowledge that all marriages even across cultures experience these same challenges mentioned above. On the other hand, what is unique about African American marriages? This research will highlight the African American pastoral counselor’s counseling interventions and its effects on self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation within

---


83 Ibid., 1029.

84 Ibid., 1029.
the Black Church culture. This specific study investigates the types of counseling issues, techniques used, and the overall satisfaction of members.

Secondly, according to Sun et al., reports that there is a significant difference in marriage satisfaction between Black Americans compared to Euro-Americans. They reveal that marital satisfaction was lower in Black marriages compared to White marriages because of income differences. Yet, it remains an understudied trend in factors that make Black couples marriages thriving and satisfying. The Literature also reported that Black marriages have a higher divorce rate than Mexican Americans. Black pastoral counselors who are credentialed will have an enriched counseling program to provide for Black marriages.

In as much as economic pressure and stress forms a link between marital satisfaction and personal efficacy the counselor should refocus the couple on rooted values that enrich marital happiness. In this research, personal efficacy is measured and defined as the ability to still perform or accomplish goals even when motivation to is affected by circumstances, relationship issues, and psychological hindrance that is caused by anxiety, grief, and severe stress. Empirical research confirms the notion that long-term health related issues can at times affect the other spouse’s personal efficacy to stay and thrive within the marriage. Two main issues that affect personal efficacy in Black marriages are the management of diabetes and erectile dysfunction. Both health issues contribute significantly to satisfying sex.

Why is this important and what is its significant bearing on Black marriages? First, the struggle for the Black pastoral counselors to help reconcile the hard cases in marriage sexual issues are a challenge especially when confronted with severe behavioral relationship issues of adultery and other forms of marital infidelity. Second, according to Dr. Gail Wyatt, sex therapist,

\[85\] Ibid., 1029.
clinical psychologist, and professor, “African American men are more likely than men of other races to experience erectile dysfunction.” However, current research in counseling these issues have focused on couples working together to help solve long-term health related issues in marriage. On the other hand, according to Wooldridge and Ranby, “Couples who view chronic illness as a shared responsibility generally have improved health outcomes compared to couples who view illness as an individual responsibility.”

Black pastoral counselors will find much success in their counseling interventions when they use techniques that address and refocus the personal values of the caretaker that on health-related issues affecting personal efficacy. Marriage satisfaction can be felt if the healthy partner provide social support and health control measures to the other spouse's then personal efficacy for the marriage can thrive in the worst of times.

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of research on how to effect motivation back into the economically challenged Black couples. What follows next is a literature review on motivation. How Black pastoral counselors can best use their ministry to bring back motivation in their parishioners.

**Motivation**

Motivation can be defined as the desire to attain a specific goal. A widely accepted hypothesis is that one’s motives are main reasons for pursuing something. Some examples of

---


motives that prompts one to action are gaining basic needs, elevate social status, lose weight, and obtain a higher salary. However, newer studies on motivation reveal that it is not permanent and can increase or decrease over time. Toure-Tillery et al. proved that increases in motivation is maintain at a high level resulting from the result of a reaching a goal. They also found that a decline in motivation is significant when resources are not available to attain a goal. However, African Americans who struggle with the disparity gaps in income, residential, and mortgage discrimination over time will display depleted motivation even with much counseling because the system must change to match the counseling of “stick to it” motivation. As a result of the system not changing even with high motivation, pastoral counselors may see displays of counterproductive attitudes toward patriotism, solid work ethics, and good citizenship civility.

Consequently, African American pastoral counselors should recognize the need to use the framework of Cultural Theory in cultural context counseling to enhance motivation. The cultural theory, according to Barnes, is a social group’s (Black Church) beliefs, ritual practices, stories, and symbols that gives meaning to status and motivation. Cultural context counseling perhaps can reference famous African Americans like (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Sojourner Truth, Dr. Cornell West, Dr. Michael E. Dyson, and Oprah Winfrey) to inspire and increase motivation. The counseling relationship that pastors possess between members and Church culture has many dynamic empowerment effects. The literature on


91 Sandra Barnes, “Black Church Culture and Community Action,” 967.
motivation efforts lacks a dynamic exploration of conversation that influential Black leaders have had on changes in motivation. Church leaders can motivate personal change in parishioners that stem from their many successful accomplishments to enhance Black youth.

**Motivation in Black Church Youth Groups.** Influencing the youth ministry in the Black Church is one way of sustaining motivation in its youths. Numerous research has examined the role of Youth pastors in youth ministry. Chang-Ho et al. conducted a qualitative study on the youth pastor's relationship of leadership care that shapes youth attitudes.92 The results of their study evidenced that youth stay motivated outside of church when they participate in leading roles in Church programs.93 It is not enough to counsel one-on-one with youth, but it is equally important to model what is being counseled into leadership care and program activities.

Model leadership attempts to establish a connection between youth participants and sustained motivation that influences self-image, personal efficacy, and responsible discipleship. Conversely, spirituality, and religion, according to Barnes, are a unique inspiration on the human condition.94

Admittedly, the counseling program for Black youth in low-income urban Churches suffers. Several researchers have claimed that professional mental health counseling is significant to developing healthy youths. Lower-income urban churches differ in resources from suburban churches in that suburban churches can support more youth in professional services.

---


93 Ibid., 318.

However, lower socioeconomic Churches can create a mentorship partnering program with outside community services that will also influence behavior, develop academic success, and motivation.95

**Counseling Interventions on Motivation.** Current research literature on motivation has investigated the behavioral disorders displayed in troubled Black youths. Not much research is shown on how counseling programs motivate Black Church parishioners. Black pastoral counselors who pioneer and implement an impacting program is this gap area will have the potential for success. The researcher deems that counseling motivation should include these talk-therapy phases: discovery, awareness, resources, and execution follow-up. While the researcher does not believe these terms are exclusive of culture, he does note that they are steps toward successful motivational intervention. The researcher suggests these following phases should be completed within four weeks of counseling.

1. **Phase 1:** the pastoral counselor builds a relationship that sketches a complete view of the counselee’s resources or lack thereof and the internal and external influences of his or her whole world. This is a good first step especially with youths who live in impoverished conditions.

2. **Phase 2:** an in-depth talk between counselor and parishioner that allows the facilitator to see patterns that impact positive and negative imageries that impacts culture and social identity. As impacts are discussed, the pastoral counselor moves the conversation into the strengths & natural talents phase so the parishioner can see his treasured skills that can be used to spark motivation. This phase uses also narrative and positive psychological therapy.

---

Phase 3: This phase becomes the main enhancer to motivation. It causes for action on the part of the counselor to link the counselee with the community’s available resources and within social networks of his age in his group’s identity. The community network may include already established faith-based and volunteer programs. The outcome in phase three is to enhance upon self-worth, social connection, emotional stability, and confidence.

Phase 4: This phase checks on performance, self-management, competence, and emotional development. This follow-up phase should begin after four months of ending motivational intervention therapy.

Black pastoral counselors using the researcher’s motivational talk-therapy model as a means of intervention should note the prime purpose of its method and use it as a tool to steps to help build, establish a relationship, and create awareness through education and enlightenment that builds on confidence.

The following will discuss how Biblical principles are applied in the broader communities of African Americans as a measure to exhibit responsible discipleship. Responsible discipleship exhibits personal efficacy and motivation.

**Responsible Discipleship**

Responsible discipleship embraces a broad spectrum. Its concept from the researcher’s worldview combines a sociological and spiritual perspective. An African American is to be true to the self, the laws of the land, respectful to others, and exhibit the “love ethic” even in the challenges of unfairness. Jesus consistently preached regardless of any situation treat others fairly. This concept links the law of the land and the “love ethic.” For example, regardless how people may unfairly actualize things, the responsible disciple will employ actions that are accountable to God, the self, and to others in hopes to bring about a heart change. To bring light
to this concept consider the Sabbath law (no work was to be done) but a citizen’s sheep fell into a well. What does the responsible disciple do? The Sabbath law says to completely rest. An animal is just as much alive as a human being, so the responsible disciple justly saves the neighbor’s woolly. The point is a responsible disciple will act in a way that brings thought, peace, and a shared understanding to all parties directly and indirectly involved in the situation.

In older research literature, Schoelles argued that discipleship should not be limited to a purely ecclesiological image but should include all aspects of life within one’s community.96 The early disciples indeed concentrated on disciplining the communities around them. Hence, "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "…Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel’” (Matthew 10:6 NIV). The pre-resurrection community’s responsible discipleship was to be presence and practice in the community with greatest need of the love ethic.

In an extension world discipleship is a follow on from that of the post-resurrection community. Henderson’s explanation of the Longer Ending (LE) of the Markan gospel expands the new responsibility of discipleship after Jesus’ resurrection. He shifted the concept of needed community’s presence and practice to participate in the world at large as God’s new age of reign.97

Nevertheless, disciples understand the Church is the hub of strength, solace, direction, identity, and community action. For this reason, cultural context counseling’s advantage is linked between the relationship of identifying with the suffering, wronged, hurting, and will may way to


support them through the circumstance. Therefore, the spiritual counselor enables parishioners he counsels to activate borderless discipleship by being a presence of grace and forgiveness embodied in their actions to the world.

**A Culture that Prizes Communalism and Community.** Cultural theory bolsters the importance of communalism in the lives of Black Americans. African Americans feel a sense of pride in groups and gatherings. The researcher argues that communalism is a type of pastoral counseling motivational therapy technique. In the history of West African people they shared their problems in a group setting called the palaver.98 Hence, cultural context counseling helps individuals and families to “revive a culture of healthy relationships and restoring an ethic of commitment in [the] village.”99 Thus, the Black pastoral counselor bridges this ideal through his shared identity and his cultural context model.

**Conclusion**

This section presented an exploratory background literature study that undergirds the foundation practices of African American pastoral counselors. The researcher’s goal is to exam African American pastor’s techniques in counseling as they use them on issues their parishioners bring to sessions. The literature review explored a working definition of each variable and will later in this research consider how they are affected by key theme findings. The researcher will explore these counseling models of storytelling and cultural context counseling for counseling satisfaction.

---


99 Wimberly, *African American Pastoral Care, and Counseling*, 72.
The literature study opens with identifying conceptual definitions and then assumed that storytelling and cultural context counseling models is preferred to any other counseling intervention model. The researcher also assumed that African Americans' low self-worth will elevate because the counselor is of the same cultural identity. It is further noted that this study has limited generalizability due to the small sample of participants and the limited time frame the researcher allowed for return responses. The gap to be explored in this research study is exam these pastors’ techniques as it applies to these variables: low self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship.

Self-worth is described as reaching a goal; however, when self-worth is tested over time, it either increases or decreased when it is challenged by long standing obstacles. Two studies on self-image show the different effects as it is applied to each gender. The literature explains that females display self-worth through feelings and presentation of physical beauty and males showed confidence in competitive abilities as it relates to high self-worth. Counselors can help treat and build upon self-worth through the client-counselor relationship. Nevertheless, the quest is to discover the specific intervention model African American pastoral counselors use to measure for positive effects on counseling low self-worth.

Personal efficacy in psychology is rooted in the work of Albert Bandura (Social Cognitive Theory). The self-efficacy concept is the result of a person reaching a high goal. However, self-efficacy can be affected by relentless efforts that are not achieved because of an impossible to move embedded obstacle. Therefore, counseling that helps restore personal efficacy and motivation affected by failure is an effective therapy. The goal of this qualitative study will note how African American pastoral counseling techniques measure member satisfaction through their applications in counseling.
Motivation in psychology research literature is defined as a basic pursuit needed to obtain a goal. The background study of literature also noted that the use of rewards is prominent to sustain motivation. Scientific experiments have also proved that when a goal is reached or nearing its end motivation increases. Exploration on motivation regarding African Americans, being greatly inspired comes directly from alluding to their histories of famous leaders. As noted, Black youth achieved high levels of motivation by their participation in programs in their Church. Responsible discipleship is to no longer display the presence and practice grace and forgiveness among each other, but to embody it in their daily encounters of evil, inequality, and other social challenges in the world at large.

In sum, analyzing specific counseling models’ African American pastoral counselors conduct with parishioners is a definite research gap to explore. Specifically, counseling intervention models like narrative and cultural context.

The following section will discuss the theoretical and theological frameworks as it relates to and support the foundation work of pastoral counselors.

**Theological Foundations**

This section will establish a grounded understanding of specialized counseling careers and the theology that undergirds pastoral counseling. A sound theological foundation is pertinent to doing pastoral counseling. Theological soundness keeps psychological understanding in perspective, and therefore, guides counseling hermeneutic. The second reason these two specialties must be balanced is that the human is composed of three dimensions: mind, body, and spirit. The following establishes pastoral counseling as a specialization practiced in special careers and founded in Scripture.
Counseling Practiced in Specialized Fields

The researcher deems pastoral counseling to be a specialized helping ministry for individuals and families. It is founded on biblical principles, pastoral psychology, and counseling interventions. It entails four elements: guidance, reconciliation, discipleship, and a therapeutic relationship. Pastoral counseling is distinct from pastoral care because it involves different skill sets. For example, pastoral counseling involves levels of educational training and licensure, whereas pastoral care is congregational care based on natural empathy. Stansbury et al. likened the two different fields of ministry to a medical model: pastoral care would be a medical assistant, and pastoral counseling is a specialized doctor. In other words, pastoral care is about doing, and pastoral counseling is allowing the counselee(s) to control their options to problems.

Licensed Counselor and Therapist. Secular counseling therapies worldview is driven by the belief that client’s problems are “something outside of us, and the rescue [a person] needs is something that comes from within.” In addition to counseling work, authors Skovholt and Ronnestad state that a therapist’s job requires “accessing, integrating, and synthesizing” a client’s experience into a theoretical framework, which can be exhausting. However, these two

---


101 Ibid., 962.


terms are used interchangeably in the field causes ambiguity of practice. Although, counseling is what therapists do, it also describes a hierarchy of theoretical implementations and tasks.\textsuperscript{104}

Nevertheless, both terms imply an interest in helping others through the complexity of life’s problems. The qualification to help others as a counselor/therapist involves achieving intellectual understanding of theories and obtaining intervention skill sets. Obtaining a massive content of classes in Clinical Psychology does not translate into a stress less practice. On the other hand, the pastoral counselor helps his/her parishioners through personal and spiritual issues based on a combination of preparation. The pastoral counselor combines lived experiences, theological understanding, and a degree or certification in counseling. The following section will describe the different specialized counseling fields.

**Clinical Pastoral Care.** This specialized counseling ministry is known as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Within this ministry, there is a mixture of spiritual counseling, pastoral care, and crisis intervention for those who are medically, mentally, and physically ill. The founder of CPE is Anton Boisen, who lived battling schizophrenia.\textsuperscript{105} He influenced pastors who worked in state hospitals and psychiatric facilities to develop “practical competence in understanding the complicated interaction of spiritual health, heredity, biochemistry, and environmental factors in creating psychological disorder.”\textsuperscript{106} However, as most CPE counselors work in hospitals, they spend eighty percent of their work counseling (the sick and families) in a less formal way.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 46.


\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 2.
**Military Chaplains.** These ordained spiritual leaders perform most of their counseling with soldiers who may be experiencing adjustment problems, workload issues, career choices, relationship issues, grief, PTSD, stress of deployments, and life challenges. Chaplains across all military branches spend 75% to 80% of their time counseling soldiers and their families.\(^\text{107}\) However, one unique duty among chaplains, as opposed to other licensed counselors, is their guarantee of total confidentiality. Chaplain counselors are not mandated to report regardless of the nature of the counseling session. The reason chaplains do not report is that federal law supersedes any state laws.\(^\text{108}\) According to the Military Rule of Evidence, Chaplains are not to talk about communications without the (written) consent of the soldier or family member who benefits from the privileged communication.\(^\text{109}\) Nevertheless, Chaplain counselors are not restricted to counsel in an office; therefore, they are scene counseling in training environments, battlefields, and on ships.

**Mental Health Counselors.** Mental health counselors are specialized counselors who treat persons with psychological illnesses or behavioral conditions. According to Johnson and Johnson, psychological counseling is more of “talk therapy” that explores thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to help a person achieve behavioral change.\(^\text{110}\) Another type of mental health counseling is known as psychotherapy. Psychotherapists “focus on serious personality or psychiatric disorders that are a greater impairment to life functioning.”\(^\text{111}\) Within their practice, psychotherapists use


\(^{108}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 10.


\(^{111}\) Ibid., 8.
various interventions that are theory- and research-based to treat clients’ maladaptive behaviors and emotions. In contrast, a pastoral counselor who counsels in the general area of relationships and other issues will not counsel people with serious psychological issues, but will refer him/her to a mental health or psychotherapist. However, there are many Christian psychotherapists to whom the pastoral counselor can refer parishioners.

**Substance Abuse Counselor.** Most of the literature agrees that drug abuse counseling assists people to recover from destructive addictive habits. Treatment counseling for individuals with substance abuse problems can occur in group therapy, inpatient, and residential treatment programs. In addition, drug abuse therapies also combine CBT therapy and pharmacological treatment of clients. The treatment approaches these therapy counselors use are contingency management (client receive rewards for meeting goals), skills training through BCT strategies to cope, and motivational psychology (to enhance change). Much of BCT and CBT counseling interventions utilize manual-guided treatment approaches. With respect to ethical mandates (APA ethics) in counseling, pastoral counselors can partner with licensed therapists. In other words, the parishioner can see both the pastor and the professional mental health counselor for treatment.

**Career Counselors.** Reviewing the literature on pastoral counselors’ specific capabilities, they do not specialize in counseling parishioners in their career advancement. However, pastoral counselors in general apply positive psychological intervention to enhance a member’s motivation

---

112 Ibid., 8.

113 Ibid., 44.


115 Ibid., 3-5.
to succeed in their field of study. In similar fashion, a Cognitive career counselor (CCC) utilizes a methodology to help modify a client’s irrational belief while pursuing their vocation. According to Sheward and Branch, “Career counseling theories have developed over the last century.” They similarly place an emphasis on positive psychology (opportunity-development sessions) that helps clients improve the way they think, act, and feel within challenging situations.

Types of Spiritual Counseling

Spiritual counseling is performed by clergy who focus on counseling people who believe in God. Parishioners trust his sovereignty to assist with personal problems and guidance with difficult life’s decisions. Mostly, people who utilize spiritual counseling are on a spiritual path to improve their relationship with God.

Moreover, spiritual counselors are laypersons and ordained clergy who are lead pastors or associate ministers. Some clergy specialize in counseling through obtaining a Master’s or Doctoral degree from an accredited seminary. These counselors are working from various denominational organizations. The following section will identify specific types of spiritual counseling.

Biblical Pastoral Counselors. According to Hawkins and Clinton, Christian counseling is more than quoting verses from the Bible. They agree that “Christian counseling is a form of discipleship designed to help free people to experience God’s pardon, purpose, and power so

---


118 Ibid., 4.
they become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁹ Church members experience Holy Spirit counseling that directly impacts the heart and soul of a person. Biblical counselors deem that, if the heart and spirit of a person is transformed, it has impactful ramifications to change human behavior. Pastoral counselors who are strict Biblical counselors utilize bible stories and scriptural analysis because these allow God’s grace to restore, improve, change, and be intimately involved in every facet of a person’s life. Biblical counseling is “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph. 4:12 NIV). Kellemen and Carson state, “Churches that are biblical counseling centers are constantly looking for ways to comfort those who are suffering and to comfort and correct those who are sinning.”¹²⁰ Most importantly, counseling is an essential part of ministry; therefore, biblical counselors link the relationship between theology and counseling as the primary therapeutic model.¹²¹

**Relevance of the Bible to Counseling.** Pastoral counselors look at the Scriptures and see the same types of problems in their societies as today, such as relationship difficulties, dishonesty, wars, and political fighting. Clinebell defines relevance as “presence to where persons hurt and hope, curse and pray, hunger for meaning, and thirst for significant relationships. It also means helping to heal the wounds of injustice in society….“¹²² However, the spiritual side of Bible counseling shows God being in sovereign control among human affairs and that he is personable. According

---


to Kellemen and Forrey, since the fall of humankind the world has been broken, but “the Bible is addressed to the living about living [under God’s rule].”\textsuperscript{123} Therefore, counseling is a by-discipline of living in a broken world filled with many problems. In addition, the relevance of Bible counseling also helps the counselee to become aware of his behavior; thus, it is like CBT. Psalm 119: 71-72 states “It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold” (NIV). Hardships that encounter a person’s life are a lesson to recognize God’s trustworthiness or bring one back to obedience.

To the pastoral counselor, counseling becomes God talk therapy through relational conversations with the counselee. He or she uses Scriptural analysis and its contents of past relevant examples and situations to trust God today and be guided by the eternal truths therein. Kellemen and Forrey state, “The Bible is [relevant] because it provides us with our purpose in life: to glorify God through imitating Jesus.”\textsuperscript{124} In contrast, a licensed Christian therapist must be sensitive to the religious beliefs of a client to make counseling relevant to him. Thus, during the intake interview the therapist will discover any spiritual inclinations of the client. If the client is not spiritual, then the client must give his or her informed consent for the Christian therapist to use Scripture and prayer. According to Entwistle, “A significant key for ethical practice of any sort is provide a clear disclosure about the nature of the therapy to be used and then obtain an informed consent.”\textsuperscript{125} The next section will discuss integrated counseling in more detail that comprise a balance of human psychology and spiritual application.


\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 468.

\textsuperscript{125} David N. Entwistle. \textit{Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Eugene, OR: CASCADE Books, 2015), 297.
**Integrated Pastoral Counseling.** Integrated pastoral counseling differs from Biblical counseling in its application and philosophy. Twentieth-century pastoral counseling integrates psychological understanding into their ministry.\(^{126}\) David Entwistle reports a link between psychology and Christianity just as medicinal practices are “a means to minister God’s grace.”\(^{127}\) He also posits that the light of reason is a healing art to the mind because it helps one to understand how nature works.\(^{128}\) Therefore, the integrated model of counseling rejects the notion of psychology and Christianity being enemies.

Moreover, the starting point to counsel using the integrated model is to ask a set of basic questions that frames both disciplines. Christianity and Psychology ask, “Where am I? Where am I trying to go? How can I get there?”\(^{129}\) These basic questions provide a starting point based on one’s worldview and method. In other respects, the integrated model reasons the sovereignty of God to restore a counselee who face problems to the beauty of life and his grace upon the soul.

Nonetheless, traditional pastoral counseling focuses on helping to meet human need when pitted in various situations. Many parables helped neighboring persons to see themselves as it related to being a resource to the needs of others.\(^{130}\) Contrastingly, pastoral counseling in the late nineteen-century focused their techniques on helping with spiritual growth of an individual by dealing with self-control, piety, obedience, and personal awareness. Thus, to obtain an internal balance of the self.\(^{131}\) Pastoral counselors who adopt the integrated model of counseling


\(^{127}\) David N. Entwistle. *Integrative Approaches to Psychology*, 247.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 247.

\(^{129}\) Ibid., 249.

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{131}\) Loren Townsend. *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*, 11.
are usually licensed Christian psychotherapists. The researcher’s assumption is that suburban and megachurch pastoral counselors are more likely to follow this model. Given these facts, Entwistle hypothesized “theological reflection typically focuses on God’s workings in the world; psychological reflection typically focuses on the workings of God’s world.”

**Bible and Theoretical Frameworks.** Christian psychotherapists and pastoral counselors who integrate both disciplines must maintain ethical standards and theological integrity. In other words, according to Entwistle, Christian counselors must be devoted to Scripture without “conducting research on God.” Consequently, any scientific discovery that explains specifics in the creation phenomenon is a confirmation of God’s existence—General Revelation. Likewise, McCarron agrees and states “there is no reason why [one] should add unnecessary things to Scripture when counseling...[though] Psychology is the study of man how he thinks and behaves, it can be a helpful tool to aid in [counseling if] it does not stray from Biblical principles”

Contrarily, integration of biblical truths is not all that easy when tested in secular theories, because theories are trying to prove themselves. However, the key to handling assumptions of underlying theories is to discard any concept that does not hold to Scriptural integrity. The authors are not integrationist by far but are nouthetic counselors like Jay Adams.

---

132 David N. Entwistle. *Integrative Approaches to Psychology*, 250.
133 Ibid., 268.
Sometimes theories support Scripture and sometimes they are in error; for example, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) treats social anxiety disorder (SAD) by trying to change the way the person thinks to effect changed behavior. For the Biblical counselor this is partially true because the Scripture states “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2 NIV). This exhortation refers to the psychological realm of humankind to control the way he thinks. Contrastingly, it is error unless the heart condition of his soul is regenerated by Christ’s salvation. For this reason, if the heart is not made new by God, then the mind will suffer on condition of the heart; for example, Genesis 6:5 says, “every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (NIV). Given these points, Carl Rogers’ self-actualization theory of fulfillment brings out the evil internal drives of humans to match the external demands and values of an evil society.

Counseling on Hard Subjects. Competent pastoral counselors usually encounter some hard cases in counseling others to spiritual freedom or resolving their issue. For example, in the case of counseling a parishioner who thinks that is boultr with moderate depression maybe because of some sin he had done. Most pastoral counselors acknowledge that sin on the whole of creation is the cause for many of the health problems humans’ face.

In any case, counseling hard cases with parishioners’ sometimes results in a tense presence and a delicate conversation. Paterson, Grenny, et al. identified three aspects of a tense conversation, but the researcher will discuss only two: “stakes are high,” and “emotions are strong.”136 When stakes are high in a tensely important counseling session, it means the pastoral counselor may have to tell the counselee that God may heal your depressive condition or God

---

will sustain you through this disorder that may not change. The second factor of a serious
counseling session is that the counselee’s emotions will run high, for example, a young teenager
telling her mother she is pregnant. These situations and others have major impact; thus, causing
frustration, anger, and an awareness to a life changing reality. \(^{137}\) Whether it be counseling with a
parishioner on discrimination issues, sitting in the court room to support someone emotionally,
or minister to a counselee who is struggling with his sexuality, the pastor counselor must stand
on the resources of truth, as much as, communicating it respectfully.

Biblical counselors rely on the sufficiency of Scripture. While counseling others on hard
subjects are not always easy, nevertheless, one sure aid pastoral counselors can trust is the
presence of the Holy Spirit who imparts wisdom.

**Pastoral Counseling Founded in Scripture**

First, the necessity of Scripture\(^ {138}\) guides the Christian life. Scripture is the authoritative
standard that governs over creation. Even though, humanity is fallen pastoral counseling applies
a Godward, discernment of righteous wisdom to solve human problems. Second, counseling in
Scripture has always been instituted by Godly experienced people who are full of wisdom. For
example, Ahithophel Senior to King David was a great counselor (Psalm 55: 14); “Now in those
days, the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both
David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel's advice” (2 Samuel 16:23 NIV). Third, pastoral
counselors are led by the guidance of God. “You will be to Me, a nation of religious leaders, a
holy nation. ‘These are the words you will speak to the people of Israel.’ So Moses came and
called the leaders of the people. He told them all these words which the Lord had told him”

\(^{137}\) Ibid., location 333.

\(^{138}\) Heath Lambert. *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 36.
(Exodus 19:6-7 NLV). Fourth, pastoral counselors are called to a specialized task that involves a more difficult time with persons to mediate differences between them.

In those days the group of followers was getting larger. Greek-speaking Jews in the group complained against the Jews living in the country around Jerusalem. The Greek-speaking Jews said that their women whose husbands had died were not taken care of when the food was given out each day. 2 So the twelve missionaries called a meeting of the many followers and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to hand out food. 3 Brothers, choose from among you seven men who are respected and who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will have them take care of this work. 4 Then we will use all of our time to pray and to teach the Word of God. (Acts 6:1-4 NLV).

**Pastoral Counselors Counsel the Church.** The ministry work of counseling administered by pastoral counselors is mainly to Christians and is an outreach to non-Christians. Counseling in ministry context is theologically based. Even if the pastoral counselor uses an integration model of therapy, the hope will be theologically guided. To be theologically guided does not mean to use terms in theology, but the outcome of the session(s) the individual will make is hoped to be guided by the umbrella of God’s righteousness.

Christian counseling is not a limited aspect of theology constructed in the past. 139 In fact, good Christian counseling remains relevant and confronts all the secular actions and supposed theories the world believes to be true. For instance, a 11th grader comes to his pastor confused about his teacher’s teaching on Darwin’s theory that humankind evolved from apes. The grade schooler is confused as he relates it to man’s treatment of monkeys in experiments, and the killing and eating of them in Africa. The confused grade schooler exclaims in counseling, “Pastor they are our ancestors!” With theologically sound counseling with the grade schooler, he was able to alleviate his confusion. Sometimes education is not liberating. Finally, theology extends itself through counseling the Church on any given contemporary theory. 140

139 Ibid., 12.
140 Ibid., 13.
Theology influences counseling work and thereby clears the worldview of the Christian. Theology is important in counseling because through it pastoral counselors transforms the spirit of the person to be attuned to the things of God.

**Counseling Established Through Prayer.** Regardless of the many books and counseling resources pastoral counselors have on their shelves, it is prayer to God that instructs him or her with words of wisdom, direction, and revelation. One great example of God providing the ability to counsel his people through various issues is seem in King Solomon’s asking prayer (I kings 8:31-32 NIV).

31 “When anyone wrongs their neighbor and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, 32 then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence.

As can be seen in the verses above, prayer endows the pastoral counselor with the ability to guide parishioners through relationship troubles, spiritual apathy, feelings of guilt, hard time to forgive, and daily living. In Christian counseling, the worldview of the Christian counselee is brought into alignment with the righteous worldview of God in handling and solving his problems. God’s worldview is the rule of God’s holiness.

**Ethical Concerns for the Licensed Counselor.** The question is whether it is ethical for a Christian therapist to pray as a means of intervention with clients. The authors Weld and Eriksen researched other literature on the subject and they listed several concerns in that practice. They stated that “spiritual interventions might run counter to client welfare [such as] possible violations of ethical standards and policy. He added, that using Scripture by therapists who do
not nurture their own spiritual lives…as well as dangers can exist with clients who receive Scriptural teachings and practice them in harmful ways.141

Alternatively, now Christian therapists can pray and use Scripture in counseling if it does not conflict with state laws, client welfare, and client values. Weld and Eriksen also stated that “clients can be prayed for without the therapist being in client’s presence, or at the [client’s] own instigation and Scripture can be given by the counselor as a part of the client’s homework.”142

The authors raise valid discussions on the use of spiritual practices with clients whose mental health is challenged because the client may replace spiritual interventions to an alternative to take their medication. Today, therapists are to incorporate spirituality into therapy when the client gives them informed consent and the intervention is appropriate. The ACA Code of Ethics “requires counselors to promote the welfare of clients” (section A.1.a.) and avoid harming their clients (section A.4.a.).”143 On the other hand, Biblical counselors will make a referral to the parishioner to see mental health services when helping him goes beyond his scope of practice. However, pastoral counselors have no limits to using spiritual counsel.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, the purpose of this section was to establish a theological foundation for pastoral counseling that is grounded in Scripture. Pastoral counselors are to hold the authority of Scripture supreme to all other disciplines. Regardless of all wisdom and institutional knowledge, pastoral counselors are to rely on the Holy Spirit when mediating between individuals,


142 Ibid., 126.

143 Ibid., 127.
marriages, and families. Lastly, pastoral counseling are to display these core practical competencies as a part of his profession: good listening skills, empathy, initiate prayer, guide, and offer hope.

On the other hand, there is a distinction between pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Pastoral care is a broad term that expresses care and concern to parishioners like mitigating their needs with community resources, hospital visits, and family home visits that may occur in his daily ministry activities. This type of care does not require an ordained minister; it expresses itself in Christian as a whole responding to the needs of others in the congregation. One example of pastoral care is going to deliver a care package to a fellow member’s house. Another example is giving a member a ride to Church because their auto is in the repair shop.

However, pastoral counseling is a specialized ministry that requires training and certification. Pastoral counseling specifically focuses on helping a member through grief or providing biblical guidance to mitigate a need maybe in a counselee’s marriage. Pastoral counseling is private, confidential, and upholds ethical standards in a professional manner.

Theoretical Foundations

This section will provide an understanding of several theoretical concepts that are supportive of the research problem that examines African American pastoral counseling techniques when performed in parishioner counseling. “Cultural context counseling” in the Black Church promotes self-worth, confidence, personal efficacy, healing, and motivation to


145 Ibid., 20.

146 Ibid., 21.
engage in responsible discipleship in society. The following are theoretical concepts that undergird Black pastor counselor’s ideology when counseling parishioners. All theoretical frameworks are enhanced by a biblical worldview.

**Storytelling versus Narrative Therapy**

Storytelling is more of a practice than a theory.\(^{147}\) This practice enhances a significant message that bring an awareness to the counselee.\(^{148}\) However, according to Coyle, stories and its genre can be applied to the counseling session of pastoral ministry. The storytelling approach "connects life stories of faith and culture with the sacred story of God.\(^{149}\)

In contrast, to storytelling author and psychotherapists Michael White and David Epston founded a practice called narrative therapy.\(^{150}\) For them narrative therapy goes beyond mere storytelling. Clarke also agrees that people are the experts of their own lives and their stories give meaning to new discoveries learned from their lived experiences.\(^{151}\)

In addition, narrative therapy used in psychotherapy points to the client for being the expert of his own discovery, healing, new awareness, and an approach to the opportunity to solve his problems. According to Poon, he commented that in narrative therapy “The counselor

---


\(^{148}\) Ibid.,


attempts to understand the problems the client faces from the client’s perspective.” 152 Narrative therapy is much like the Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) developed by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg.153 The common features about both of these therapies, for example, is that SFT allows the client to discover solutions to the problem by steer talking him to discover past situations in which he mitigated and it proved to be successful in handling a problem. Narrative therapy allows the client to talk and the therapist will discourage negative focused talk about the problem.154 In essence, these theories are primarily a goal-setting language that focuses on victory and new resolutions.

**Story in Ancient Tradition.** Black pastoral counselors employ storytelling methods that are vital to counseling their members. Telling one's story was the primary form of counseling intervention used by pastors during the colonialization period. Perhaps illiteracy during colonialization was a contributing factor to storytelling as a means of counseling. Kudakwashe captures this thought of how African storytelling was effective. He states,

> In many parts of Africa, after dinner, upon the sound of a tantalizing drum, villagers would congregate around a central fire and settle down to hear and listen to stories. The storytellers told many interesting and captivating stories. Storytelling has been a ritual for the people of Africa in the evening after a hard day’s work.155

---


154 Ibid., 76.

This approach of telling narratives is akin to the way Jesus used parables to help the poor and marginalized of society to arrive at solutions, sense their value, and inform misdirection by its powerful guiding message. Stories proved to empower and enlighten people to action.

Storytelling used in the Black pastoral counselors’ counseling session provides empowerment through imagery and language that opens opportunity to solutions, action, and healing. Furthermore, the pastor’s autobiographic story can also provide support and facilitate solutions and healing. According to Mitchell, storytelling therapy is not a mere conversational alliance, but it is used as a tool to generate meaning and new possibilities of hope and meaningfulness. Therefore, storytelling to youth and teens is an effective intervention that helps build upon self-worth and personal efficacy.

The subsequent section describes a theory that undergird Black pastoral counselors use of storytelling to enhance even more clear thinking that will impact personal efficacy and motivation.

**Positive Psychological Theory**

Contemporary Positive Psychological Theory was founded by then-president of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman, in 1998. However, past researchers

---


like William James,\textsuperscript{159} Abraham Maslow,\textsuperscript{160} Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi,\textsuperscript{161} and Christopher Peterson have influenced the modern era of psychological practice.\textsuperscript{162}

The practice of using positive psychological theory in counseling involves focusing more attention on a client’s strengths and assets than merely the problem. According to Peterson, positive psychology is defined as a scientific study to find out what is right in a person’s life by paying attention to their strengths.\textsuperscript{163} It is evident in the news media that the focus is mainly on pointing fingers at who caused the problem. Rather than criticizing and blaming, positive psychology looks for ideas, commitments, healthy discoveries, well-being, and happiness.

Unfortunate past events are not considered to predict the future. Positive Psychology aims to reorient client’s happiness using three variables: pleasure, engagement, and meaning.\textsuperscript{164} Professor Martin Seligman is noted as the father of Contemporary Positive Psychology.\textsuperscript{165} New recommended suggestion for research is explore how Positive Psychology theory in counseling practices with African Americans affect self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. Positive

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{162} Martin E.P. Seligman. “Positive Psychology: A Personal History, 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 2
\end{itemize}
Psychology explores happiness and fulfillment, not in just personal character, but in something embedded in culture, histories, and the sociopolitical arena.\textsuperscript{166} This theory practice becomes an important counseling intervention because it utilizes two concepts, called mattering and love. Mattering means to be noticed by teachers, supervisors, or peers, and love means being more than a positive thought of subjectivism. Love and mattering are measured in an environment of providing continuous positive social interactions. In turn one will witness the improvements in healthy human relationships.\textsuperscript{167} If mattering and love is applied in the social realm of the Black community from all American citizens, then race relations will improve. However, though, regardless of status, values, and regional backgrounds, Black Americans are grouped into one category, thus bearing negative social constructs in a systematic whole.\textsuperscript{168}

In conjunction with positive psychology theory, Black pastoral counselors will affect high levels of self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship in parishioners who battle rejection and struggle with bouts of social anxiety. These unhealthy psychological functional fears can be intervened by the cultural context method of counseling. Cultural context counseling is social justice counseling that counsels on fears of rejection and discriminations. The Scriptures give encouragement and positive resilience for Christians. Below are some Scriptures.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philip 4: 8 ESV).


\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 85.
Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2 ESV).

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, (II Cor. 10:5).

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11 ESV).

These positive Scriptures attend to the counselee in mattering and love that enhances gratitude, big dreams, means-making, a positive outlook, overlook the negative, and offer psychological resiliency. Pastoral counselors understand the opposition and unfair practices of injustice, promotion selecting, and gainful employment satisfaction.

Many pastors may not be licensed or certified pastoral counselors, but in many of their sessions with parishioners, they practice the theory of positive psychology on a basic level. The Scriptures can be used as a form of positive psychology that counsels on low self-worth to confidence. Finally, pastoral counseling seeks to heal and restore the spirit, human emotions, and feelings through scriptural application. Whereas also human positive psychology aims to restore happiness amid anxiety, negative thinking patterns, and depression.  

The following theoretical framework called Cultural Context Counseling is also another undergirding theory used in the practice of counseling effectively on self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship.

---

Cultural Context Counseling Method

Cultural context counseling is conceptualized in this research study as a method of specific counseling that belongs solely to the practices of Black pastoral counselors who counsel parishioners on different forms of discriminations and parenting styles that is specific to African Americans families. Cultural context counseling can be interchanged with intercultural or multicultural counseling. However, it differs slightly in that of the person who performs the counseling. In this research it is Black pastoral counselors who share same identity and traditions rather than a counselor of another ethnicity who basically does cross cultural counseling. This form of counsel meets the individual’s identity, and for that matter, it links a connection of trust and shared understanding beyond the therapy itself. The term context counseling can also refer to same gender, social class, and other subcultures in American society.

Many past research studies have tried to apply a universal model of technique to understand cross-cultural counseling, but it only remained at a descriptive approach.\textsuperscript{170} Therefore, it did not influence or measure therapy outcome in counseling across cultures in terms of adequacy, sufficiency, and relevance.\textsuperscript{171} From Black pastoral counselors’ points of view, a Western-based therapeutic approach does not work for the most part on African Americans during counseling. The use of another culture’s assessments on Blacks motivation and personal efficacy has been misunderstood for decades. To echo these pastoral counselors voice, Chang declared, “Culture defines what constitutes problems and explains the nature and cause of these problems.”\textsuperscript{172} More broadly, Black Americans seek their pastoral counselors because their


\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 123.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 124.
shared culture prescribes solutions and interventions to their problems. It is not a matter of race tensions it is more the comforts of a shared identity.

Nevertheless, the current literature on multicultural counseling suggests that it be the cornerstone of the education of every counselor who will implement diversity training. More of these trained licensed professionals are practicing and implementing counseling models and techniques that are contextual for diverse ethnicities within the United States. Consequently, education is being provided to mental health counselors on knowledge of social justice theories and constructs that will make an impact on their counseling competency. The current trend of training consists of balancing respectful individual counseling with social justice advocacy in marginalized populations. How this works is that the counselor will decipher through the problem the client present and decide whether additional community advocacy is needed along with therapy when counseling across cultures.

While there is broad agreement that professional counselors should implement an understanding of multiculturalism and employ competencies in their therapy treatment session, relevant literature do not report much on the statistics of African American professional counselors in the field. However, the executive director of the National Association of Black Counselors (NABC), Tamara Ferebee stated, “Black counselors make up only 10% to 15% of professional counselors.” While gains are made to diversify a mode of respect and


174 Ibid., 38.

175 Ibid., 34.

understanding to counsel marginalized persons, the lack of qualified Black professional counselors can generate subliminal skepticism to accept services. The question remains: why is the field of psychology not attracting enough Black Americans to study and become a licensed professional?

The relationship between counselor and culture identity influences greatly the therapeutic outcome. African Americans who seek pastoral counselors as an alternative to professional mental health do so for stigma protection. According to Norma L. Day-Vines et al., "Culture is often viewed as incompatible from one cultural context to the next. That is, patterns of thought, behavior, and functioning may be deemed normative and acceptable in one cultural milieu yet construed as deficient or deviant in another cultural milieu."177

Black Americans, who feel a sense of comfort, trust, and relatability will seek out a pastoral counselor as an alternative to a community mental health professionals that does not have a long-term relationship of trust. With that said, the next section will follow upon the cultural theory that bridges a link between group identity and culture within the African American Church.

Cultural Theory

Several studies have explored the meaning of cultural studies and its relationship to cultural theory. Smith’s discussion of the meaning of culture openly acknowledges that it developed over time. He maintains it first was used in agriculture and religious worship.178


Furthermore, in the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, “the term began to refer to the improvement of society as a whole with culture being a value-laden synonym for civilization.”¹⁷⁹

The author states its final use designated spiritual, institutional, material, and infrastructural developments.¹⁸⁰ More importantly, the definition of culture is framed within the later often synthesizing itself with cultural theory. Cultural theory attempts to explain the autonomous nature of culture abstractly and systematically in a segment of society.¹⁸¹ However Sandra L. Barnes argues that culture is a “symbolic vehicle of meaning, beliefs, ritual practices, art forms and ceremonies [and even] language, and stories of daily life.”¹⁸² This definition supports an idealistic understanding of the traditions, beliefs, and communal worship life within the Black Church. The Black Church’s framed activities and community action helps to elevate self-worth, encourage personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship.

Cultural theory offers a systematic explanation of the practices of Church life and links it to the context of pastoral counseling in three ways: spiritual, social, and political. The focus of worship achieves spiritual awareness that the worshiper is made in God’s image. For the worshipper to be constantly affirmed that bearing the image of God in himself, does two things: transforms negative images of himself as non-worthy to an awareness of being worthy and righteous. To know and feel transformed increases feelings of self-worth and it will further motivate him to action in his community. Central to the concept of building self-worth is the dialectic preaching that characterizes the Black Church. Barnes argues that the Black Church is

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., location 333.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., location 333.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., location 390.

“an agent of change.” Part of low self-worth that many in the Black community face is due to being stereotyped and declassed, which results in consistent discrimination practices. Therefore, worship and pastoral counseling in the Black Church becomes a necessary means of psychological survival that liberates negative and oppressed thinking. Barnes supports the notion that the Black Church and its counseling aspects “correlate between spiritual and secular issues that inspire [parishioners] toward social engagement.”

The Black Church’s fight on issues of social justice becomes a means to be a prophetic voice to parishioners to engage in being responsible disciples within the community. Thus, the Black Church’s program and its specific context counseling becomes the hub for theology, logistics, and social empowerment. McKinney’s findings suggest that the Black Church’s worship and counseling context shifted from purely spiritual emphases to a social gospel presentation that addressed daily issues. The research study carried out by Pattillo-McCoy revealed that the counseling context of Black Church culture not only “addresses the how’s” and the psychological language, but becomes a structure for social action intervention. The Black social environment of the Church and pastoral counseling is are significant to inspire toward personal efficacy.


184 Ibid., 330.


The culture of the Black Church is a place of empowerment and sets the stage for Christianized political activities. All the activities, meetings, and spiritual messages are in themselves a source of counsel and guidance for parishioners. Thus, with this multifaceted structure, the culture and counsel from the Church also creates a positive image of themselves in the public arena. Drawing on the work of Djupe and Gilbert, they highlight that counseling from the Black Church’s leader on self-worth and motivation “provides opportunities to build civic skills.” Moreover, the authors claim these political activities develop “organizational skills, public speaking, letter writing, and petitioning authorities.”

Contrastingly, Driskell et al. says, “there is relatively little literature on the influence of other religious beliefs on political participation.” Their argument is that other religions have a different effect on the political process than mere Christianity. They also stated, “Some macro religious beliefs significantly increase macro political behavior, believers in an involved God are less likely to participate politically.” On the whole, as far as Driskell is concerned self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation coming from the political activities of the Black Church are perhaps minimally addressed. Whereas religions that take on a broader perspective of secular life has more influence of getting the attention of major political bodies to support the concerns of individuals and groups in their societies.

---


188 Ibid., 179.


190 Ibid., 294.
Cultural theory is also embedded into organizations, businesses, countries, and worship practices. Each entity's values, rules, and customary practices influence employees or participants' self-worth, development, and increased levels of motivation. In conjunction with cultural theory, embedded in counseling African Americans, Scripture analysis may interpret a liberation view, and cultural context counseling may use more of a narrative model than a set of empirical tests to treat problems.

The final theoretical framework, presented in the next section, will address the use of scriptural analysis in counseling parishioners on self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. Black pastoral counselors' use of Scripture is an important theological framework in counseling, regardless of any other used theory.

**Scriptural Analysis Method**

Scriptural analysis is the method of integrating Scripture to the notion of understanding human behavior and thinking. It involves a relationship with Biblical history, tradition, and theology. Biblical counselors highlight the importance of counseling through the Scriptures. However, it is important to take a spiritual assessment of who is receiving counsel and what method the pastoral counselor should use in the session. Two reasons an assessment is valuable are first that not every counselee who comes to counseling is a believer, and second, that members of one’s church are not all on the same spiritual level. Mark McMinn points out that “if we build our counseling models prematurely, they will [confuse a counselee] and render non-effective.”[^191] According to Johnson, he argued that “the revelation of Jesus Christ offers a distinctive interpretation in that his way to present his presence restructured thoughts and altered

fixed intentions in the heart.” For example, consider the encounter Nicodemus had with Christ. His presence and the way he meet needs, counseled, and healed restructured Nicodemus’ fixed thoughts and altered his intention about how to get right with God. Likewise a pastoral counselor helps transform a counselee quest for spiritual growth.

Commitment to Scripture. This method of Scripture analysis presupposes “no diluting of Scriptural truth.” The revelation in the Bible becomes supreme to all professional disciplines. Moreover, the Scriptures have long established counseling methodologies and techniques of what Bible counselors are now using. An example, of a method that pastoral counselors use of a created 5-step spiritual liberation model technique based on the scriptures assist in the area of forgiving oneself and to extend it to others. McMinn cited Eric Johnson in his work that the Bible provides us with a case study about others experiences and how it today provides us a “rich resource to obtain wisdom and personally maturity.” In all, the main source in the Bible that pastoral counselors rely on is the prescription on a commitment to righteous living and the pursuit to resolving issues through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, African American pastoral counselors who counsel parishioners on self-worth will have an advantage in enhancing their self-esteem using a Christ-centric therapy.

Conclusion

In sum, this section explained four theoretical models that underpin the theological and theoretical goals of what African American pastoral counselors try to achieve in their counseling sessions. These various frameworks will also assist and measure effectiveness on enhancing self-

---


194 Ibid., 111.
worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and in the world. The customary practices and worship life in the Black church is what makes cultural context counseling perhaps a significant model to engage with among members. Culture is what necessitate what is right for a group and what is not. Together with spiritual implications and social action parishioners gain a sense of pride and motivation.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct qualitative research that explores the influences of African American pastoral counseling. The data collected examined the various counseling topics and counseling methods conducted by participant pastoral counselors. The observer looked for thematic and relevant relationships in their talk therapy that supported self-worth, personal drive, and motivation.

Intervention Design

The Research Questions

The importance of this section places a high emphasis on designing a method to answer the research questions. The information that was collected were the results of conducting ten semi-structured interviews with pastors, analysis of findings from the nineteen digital surveys that uncovered relevant issues that affects self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. In addition, insight gathered from the member-focused interview questionnaire (who received counseling from their pastor) further showed the effectiveness of their sessions.

Making a list of research questions helped to address and explore which research design to use that will gain in-depth understanding in the study.195 The research questions this study examined were: Does the Black Church’s counseling program, in itself, adequately improve parishioners’ level of personal efficacy in the face of many social challenges? Is the Black Church’s pastoral counseling program sufficient to effect improvements in self-esteem, personal drive, and motivation?

---

productivity, and motivation? Does the Black Church counseling program integrate professional counseling services in the community? Other research questions to be addressed are: (1) How often pastoral counselors counsel parishioners? (2) Is cultural context counseling preferable to other counseling methods? (3) Is narrative therapy a strictly African American counseling method? (4) Why do churchgoers seek pastoral counseling as an alternative to mental health counseling services?

One concern in the African American community is that professional counseling lacks identification with their culture, history, and is non-effective to address their current challenges. So often the concern for Black Americans going outside their group for counseling is that therapist tends to normalize their experiences.\textsuperscript{196} The second concern for African Americans seeking pastoral counseling is the concern of being affordable. Most members go to their pastor for counseling because it is convenient, efficient, and there is no payment. The qualitative approach to this study precisely describes counseling from the pastoral counselor’s perspective.

However, the theoretical framework of cultural context counseling influenced the relevance of this study. More African American Church members are more inclined and comfortable to link with the same identity culture during their troubles and pain. Boyd-Franklin believes that the counseling community providers should implement a strength-based approach to counseling for this group.\textsuperscript{197} From the data collected, the relationship of self-worth is closely connected to job satisfaction. The study yielded data that 17.6\% of pastors spent time in their sessions encouraging members “out of a fixed mindset” who worked in factories in the rural


\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 18.
south.\textsuperscript{198} On the other hand, this research showed a strong relationship of emphases on spiritual growth as an avenue to being responsible disciples of Christ in every area of their lives. The statistical data collected revealed that 52.9\% of Black pastoral counselors helped parishioners more so to deal with the troubles and pain in their lives by counseling spiritual growth that can be a strength gained through lessons in adversities.\textsuperscript{199} In other literature, the theoretical framework is termed Critical Race Theory. This theory is mainly concerned about empowering human beings to take personal efficacy and positivity to transcend roadblocks created by race, class, and gender.\textsuperscript{200} Therefore, in pastoral counseling of African Americans, one can assume why the emphasis is placed on spiritual growth in adversities and think of creative ways to advance to combat low self-worth. The researcher examined the cultural context counseling and gained a good understanding of what Black Pastor counselors have achieved in their counseling sessions with their Church members.

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is said to be the best design for DMIN projects because it explores and addresses problems in specific contexts.\textsuperscript{201} Qualitative research is also an empirical field study to the problem presented. This type of research design highlights a hermeneutic process that allows the stakeholders to interpret, define their world, and engage in a mutual process.\textsuperscript{202} The participants and the researcher working together yielded comfort in the building process of

\textsuperscript{198} See figure 1.1.
\textsuperscript{199} See figure 1.2.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 1773.
the relationship. However, Merriam et al., used another term, called applied research. Applied research enhances understanding and teaches the observer what he does not know while participating in the field.203

However, there are many categories of qualitative research to consider. R. Tesch has organized twenty-eight design approaches in doing qualitative research.204 On the other hand, J. W. Creswell explains five basic approaches to conducting qualitative research.205 The investigator used a phenomenological approach to qualitative research to gain further insight into pastoral counselors’ practices. A phenomenological methodology studies the meanings and experiences from the pastoral participants’ perspective in the way they do counseling—not from a licensed professional counselor’s method of counsel.206

Furthermore, through analysis of the data collected from the member-focused interview questionnaires the researcher sought to explore parishioners’ attitudes, perceptions, and satisfaction of their counseling experience. The researcher’s prime investigation involved conversations with pastors to get a feel of the type of counseling model technique they used most in dealing with many of their counselee issues during typical therapy sessions.

Other studies in the literature have researched perceptions of Blacks who used pastoral care for life issues.207 The literature also explored the insights into pastoral care satisfaction from


205 Ibid., 10.

206 Ibid., 58.

the pastor participant's experiences. Another researcher used the phenomenological theory to explore insights and perceptions held by licensed professional counselors.

This study analyzed the counseling methods conducted by Black pastors in the Southeastern region of the United States. Strong emphasis of investigation was placed on the process, the number of hours dedicated to counseling matters of self-worth, personal drive, and motivation. A third study revealed insights on understanding the theological orientations to counsel African Americans. Avent et al., concluded that counselors not immersed in Black Church culture will not influence parishioners to seek professional counseling outside of their Church.

A fourth study, steered by Williamson, investigated the findings on the reluctance of African Americans to utilize professional counseling services. Racial tensions and negative stereotypes have created a stigma for Blacks to take advantage of professional counseling services; therefore, they are more comfortable with the same identity.

208 Ibid., ii.


211 Ibid., 86.


213 Ibid., 6.
Lastly, qualitative research overall managed past studies by the quality of skillsets displayed by pastoral counselors compared to licensed professional’s systematic therapies. Their findings concluded that the urban Black pastoral counselor’s functioning role is a base partnership to professional counseling referrals and a model to understand sensitive ethnic and cultural issues when rendering cross cultural services. Nevertheless, the philosophical paradigm that will undergird the relevance of this study is elaborated in the next section that transitions into the researcher’s background, beliefs, and biases.

Researcher’s Background. In developing this research study, the researcher has two main theoretical orientations. First, the investigator is an African American ordained minister; therefore, he brings to the study identification with Black Culture, traditions, and their personal histories that prompt such a needed piercing into the world of Black pastors who counsel. The observer is also a DMin candidate, specializing in the pastoral counseling program at Liberty University, John W. Rawlings Divinity School.

The researcher’s worldview is influenced by two theoretical frameworks: Black Cultural Theory and Critical Race Theory. Black Cultural Theory relates to same identity expressions and activities in the church, political processes, and the community in promoting healthy self-worth and personal drive. Critical Race Theory is the philosophical assumption that self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation are influenced by power relationships based on race, gender, and class within American society. These two lenses are the interpretive frameworks of

---


215 Ibid., 688.

216 Ibid., 1408.

subjective epistemology that gives meaning and understanding into the form of counseling practiced by Black pastors. Personal epistemology refers to understanding what is present through reflection upon values, language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. In other words, an expressed attitude is an adopted set of knowledge based upon the reflections of an individual’s experience.

**Researcher’s Beliefs and Biases.** Admittedly, not many Black pastors are certified pastoral counselors; for this reason, the researcher established the fact that pastoral counseling is another form of professional counseling. This rarity is also seen among licensed counselors. For example, in 2015, only 4% of licensed psychologists in the United States are Black Americans, while 68% are European-Americans.

The researcher believes in the trichotomy of the human soul: mind (psychological), body (physical), and soul (spirit). Therefore, counseling should be an integrated therapy—Christopsych. The researcher inferred this term from the conversation the prestigious Jewish Sanhedrin member, Nicodemus had with Jesus of Nazareth. "How can someone be born when they are old?" (John 3:4, NIV). Jesus replied, "I have spoken to you of earthly things, and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" (John 3:12, NIV). In this passage, an integrated model for counseling is clearly stated, although strict biblical counselors might object to this notion. According to Crabb et al., they believe that psychological insight is

---


not enough to restore a promising life; although it allows for critical thinking, it should not serve as the Christian's final authority.220

Dayringer explained integrated counseling during any session is to utilize the best treatment among the various therapies.221 In addition, he compared counseling to the nurturing importance of a relationship.222 Furthermore, William Earl Crane, a Presbyterian minister, became frustrated with doing just "personal evangelism" in his pastoral counseling practice. He felt it alone did not meet congregants' needs as more in-depth crisis developed with modernization. Therefore, he opened himself up to the integrated fields of psychology and religion.223 As such, in the above passage, Jesus and Nicodemus developed a God-seeking and therapeutic relationship. Jesus appealed to him in Spiritual truth and on a psychological (earthly) level.

Participants’ Beliefs and Biases. The researcher’s goal was to explore the Black Churches’ counseling practices in the Southeastern region of the United States. One of the research questions is: Does their counseling intervention produce improvements in self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others? The researcher assumed that most southern Black Churches are more politically active toward social reform, and therefore, their counseling program is centered in cultural nurturance that denies any form of rejection and devaluation of total participation in society. Are the Black pastoral counselors

---


222 Ibid., 14.

concerned for adequately modernizing their counseling programs through faith-based grants to meet the ever-changing issues and needs for individuals and families?

The researcher also assumed that the Black suburban churches have integrated their counseling programs through referral and community mental health partnerships. It is the goal of the researcher to also explore Black pastoral participants counseling methods and the organized programs centered on building members’ life skills in the megachurches of the Southeastern region of the United States. It is assumed that their congregational income can staff skilled pastoral counselors and licensed professional counselors. Some Caucasian churches have integrated counseling services. For example, South Point Church, a megachurch in Maryland staff licensed psychotherapists in their counseling center.

This notwithstanding, the researcher will liaison with pastor participants through surveys, interviews, and focused group activities and correspondence. In the following section, the participants’ realities, expressions, attitudes, and experiences will be captured through implementation of the population study, select participants, and sampling techniques.

**Implementation of the Intervention Design**

Overview of Research Methods

In this section, methods of how to collect data will be discussed. The main research question is: How does the Black Church pastor contribute to healthy self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others? The research philosophy is influenced by two essential theories, Critical Race Theory and Cultural Theory, because they are relevant to the study. Furthermore, another research question is: What counseling models are used to counsel parishioners? According to Merriam et al., they define intervention design as "Data [is] nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the
Therefore, the data collected are based on the interpretations and experiences from the digital pastoral counseling survey, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a purposeful sampling of a member-focused group questionnaire. In qualitative research, interview data collection is "a process in which the researcher and participant(s) engage in a conversation that focuses on questions related to the study at hand."

**Population.** The population studied is collected by a random sampling digital survey on Black Churches in the Southeastern region of the United States. The Southeastern region of the United States includes the states of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Florida. According to Gallup’s U.S. Daily survey, the Southeast region is 43% very religious, based on data analyzed from more than 6,000 interviews. Mississippi sample size of 1,187, ranked number one of very religious of the states in the Southeast.

The select audience is African American pastoral counselors of the traditional Christian faith who have pastored for seven or more years. Most Black Churches are known for their advocacy toward civil rights; therefore, the researcher assumes pastoral participants are seriously engaged in counseling that promotes healthy self-worth in their members. To add, Black Churches in the Southeastern region are only a segment of the larger population of African American Churches.

---


225 Ibid., 107.


227 Ibid., Gallup Analytics.
**Participants.** The subjects in this study are nineteen senior pastors of Black Churches in the Southeastern region of the United States who can offer their experiences and perspectives in understanding their professional counseling ministry. Through analysis of the completed digital surveys, the researcher documented and synthesized statistical data relationships. Once initial contact was made, the researcher sent out 500 digital survey links to Black Senior pastors via email and text message. Since the pandemic, most pastors were not successfully reached, nor on their Facebook page being that offices were mainly closed. The nineteen completed digital surveys came from pastor referrals due to complications to get good samples. The original random sample turned into snowball sampling. Senior pastors referred the researcher of other willing pastor participants they knew in the States under research study. The study among Black pastoral counselors was not gendered specific.

Second, the investigator also conducted ten personal semi-interviews with a pastoral counselor. The ten one-on-one semi-structured interviews were scheduled and organized over Zoom. The researcher selected ten pastor participants from the nineteen collected digital interviews. The researcher called them to ask them to participate further by way of an interview. The participant pastors agreed and gave the researcher a good date and time to meet over zoom. The researcher sent out to all participants a reminder through Zoom. The pastor would then accept the invitation. During the recorded interview, the researcher would lead with questions to engage the conversation. For example, the researcher asked, “What relation and importance does a counseling ministry has in your church? Is there a difference between counseling and the preached Word?” In the total sample pastoral participators came from six states: Alabama, Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The interviewees had educational levels of PhD., Ed.D, DMin, Bachelor’s, and Associate degrees.
The third part of the research study included member-focused participants in different parishes that received counseling from their pastor. The researcher requested the interviewed pastor to select one member in their congregation to volunteer to complete a member-focused group questionnaire about their level of satisfaction with his counseling effectiveness. The member questionnaire part of the research only required ten selected church members by the pastor to complete the survey and email it back. The key to successful qualitative research is to hear from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher.228

**Inform Participants of Project.** The investigator located Black Churches using church website directories and Google searches. Initial contact was made through a telephone call to the Church’s main number, emailed pastor recruitment letters (for a sample see appendix A), and messages explaining the research project were left on Church Facebook websites. Follow up phone calls, emails, and messages were consistent. The most successful method of contact was pastor to pastor referrals since the original random sample plan failed.

On the other hand, challenges occurred because the investigator did not have a history of a working relationship with potential participants. As a result, the potential participants ignored or refused the study. The effective strategy was to engage pastors to connect with other pastors who would be more likely to participate in the study.

**Sampling Technique.** Qualitative research requires the researcher to analyze, synthesize information, and create relevant relationships in the study.229 The researcher made some adjustments on several questions asked in the digital survey. In addition, the investigator discovered that word of mouth (snowball sampling) was much more effective than mailing out

---

228 Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 16.
229 Ibid., 101.
survey invitations to pastors who did not feel comfortable with the investigator. Therefore, the investigator used the relationships pastors had with one another.

**Semi-Structured Interview.** The semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually. The highly structured interview questions assume each pastor counselor share the same ideas and vocabulary. For example, a semi-structured interview uses a mixture of structured and less-structured questions. A highly standardized interview does not allow natural flexibility and flow of the investigator-participant relationship. The investigator asked relevant questions pertaining to pastoral counselors’ practices that affected self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others.

**Research Credibility.** The current research was formulated by asking specific research questions regarding the levels of competence of Black pastor counselors to do quality and effective self-worth building during counseling sessions on their members. These questions lead to two theoretical frameworks (Cultural Context Counseling and Critical Race Theory) that became the underpinning of such a study. Thus, the credibility of this research does not solely rely on the roots and culture identification of the investigator, but in the grounded trustworthiness that can emerge from a particular paradigm(s). This study is not drafted out of the researcher’s own biases but the researcher affirms the use of four “tradition scientific research criteria” (internal validity, transferability, reliability, and objectivity) that offers credibility and trustworthiness to this qualitative research study. In addition, Morrow suggest that

---

230 Ibid., 109.


232 Ibid., 252.
“qualitative research is *idiographic* and *emic* (focusing on one or a very few individuals, finding categories of meaning from the individuals studied) rather than gaining knowledge from larger samples using only existing theories applied by the investigator.\(^{233}\)

**Internal Validity.** Credibility is associated with the question of remaining consistent during the process of any research. Morrow recommends that achieving consistent credibility of the outcome of one’s research requires steady engagement with participants and repeated examination in the field.\(^{234}\) The investigator continually made sure he did not push for his own assumptions to the research questions; thus, he reflected on the research relationship by asking participant pastors’ their meanings, context, and experiences in detail during the one-on-one interview process.

**Transferability.** Can the results from this study represent all African American pastors who feel the same as this small sample of nineteen respondents from six different states in the Southeast region of the United States? Given the fact that Black culture is underrepresented extremely in the rural areas of the study, it has generalizability in most of rural America where Black Americans live who battle self-worth issues to wider and advanced communities. However, when it came to addressing preferences to refer members to professional counseling, a high percentage of the Baptist Churches regardless of vicinity supported the idea because of educational influences. Generalizability was also affected because there was more Baptist participation in the study than the Pentecostal group. Pentecostal Churches operate in “deliverance ministry.” They rather pray for a counselee that is experiences issues with low self-worth, lack in personal drive, and even sometimes mental illness cases to cast out the spirit of

\(^{233}\) Ibid., 252.

\(^{234}\) Ibid., 252.
rejection that causes low self-worth, withdrawal, complacency, suicidal tendencies, and emotional disorders that is displayed in behaviors. Two pastors who knew the researcher in this study asserted that mental health issues are spiritual attacks in nature and therefore, placed it as 2 on the Lickert scale of 5.235

**Reliability.** The research findings were conducted through statistical computation of the digital survey data, repeated questions asked across the board on the semi-structured interview, and the member focused questionnaire study. Morrow stated that reliability is derived from repeatable analysis techniques.236 As a data collector in this study among 90 percent of pastor participants the researcher did not know, fairness has been shown through an even investigation of data collected from rural, urban, and suburban localities of Black pastoral respondents. Different constructions like the closed ended survey, open-ended interview, and the evaluations of pastors counseling by counselees are reliable research activities and processes.

**Objectivity.** Morrow’s article proposes that for research to be objective rather than subjective, it should solely derive from the data collected that is analyzed and synthesized by the researcher.237 Furthermore, she acknowledges “participant checking [is a form of verification of confirmability] but] should be another elaboration on the emerging findings and treated as additional data.” Thus, the researcher should never be the subject of data collection.

**Triangulation.** This method is used to validate the credibility and validity of the research findings of this study.238 The investigator in this study combined the digital surveys, conducted a

235 See figure 1.3.

236 Susan L. Morrow. “Quality and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research in Counseling Psychology, 252.

237 Ibid., 252.

semi-structured interviews (pastor counselor explained from their perspective), and conducted a member’s focused questionnaire, in which members talked about their satisfaction level of their pastor’s counseling. These tri-fold methods of influences enriched the interpretations of the study, as well as, offered trichotomous findings that brings credibility and validity to answering the research questions. The following section shows the implementation of varying in-depth and unbiased methodological triangulation data collection techniques.

**Relationship to Participants.** According to Walsh, when any research is conducted a professional relationship is established between the two parties who share a role to the study. With this understanding, the researcher played a role, and the participant pastors played a significant role in providing the data the researcher collected. Varying roles limit distortion of credibility and validity to one person in the study. The researcher only knew two pastor respondents of this study. When there were only two responses from the 500 emailed digital interviews to church pastor’s email addresses, the researcher utilized the snowball sampling. From those two respondents, a total of 19 surveys was collected because of the snowball sampling of pastors. Pastor’s knew pastors in the sampling states the researcher was studying. The participants vicinity and culture were considered important to data collected. Of special note, no data collection began until the researcher’s IRB was approved (see Appendix G).

On the other hand, the research remained objective to the collected data presented by the pastoral counselors. The docs.google/forms.com was the basic software that analyzed the data input and created statistical pie and bar charts for the researcher. Two main assumptions of the researcher are that most Black pastoral counselors use narrative and cultural context counseling

---

models as their main source of counseling intervention. However, the data proved otherwise that Solution-Focused and Integrated techniques were significant in their talk therapy sessions with members.

**Digital Survey Analysis.** Data collection consisted of 19 snowball sampling digital surveys when only two responded to the 500 emailed surveys, 10 semi-structured interviews, and 10-member focus survey questionnaires. Once data had been collected the researcher began reading all feedback. Second, the researcher analyzed and compared pastor counselors’ thoughts with other pastoral counselors’ thoughts. Third, the investigator categorized themes that were relevant to self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others. The digital survey offered multiple choice and open-ended questions to offset researcher biases.

**Recording of Semi-Structured Interview.** During the semi-structured interview question sessions, data was collected by recording and note taking. The researcher scheduled all 10 selected pastor counselors by phone calls to them. All the pastors consented on the digital survey, if they were chosen to be interviewed, they agree to be recorded. Once the pastor counselor agreed to be interviewed, he was asked again if he change his consent to be recorded? All selected pastor counselors were then sent a Zoom invite as a reminder of the scheduled interview. At the start of each interview, pastors were reminded that they are being recorded. The researcher ensured that his note taking was not of his own subjectivity by rereading the response of the interviewee line-by-line. In addition, the investigator asked follow-up responses that each pastor counselor made on the digital survey. The one-on-one interview allowed the participants to accurately reflect and explain their reasoning and ideas in reference to the study.
Below are the times and dates of each pastor counselor interviewed. Each interview is listed in order of schedule. Most of the interviews lasted 45 minutes or more.

Pastor 1: August 31, 2020 5:57pm
Pastor 10: August 31, 2020 7:33pm
Pastor 18: September 2, 2020 5:19pm
Pastor 5: September 3, 2020 9:53am
Pastor 7: September 4, 2020 1:43pm
Pastor 9: September 5, 2020 1:09pm
Pastor 3: September 5, 2020 3:35pm
Pastor 14: September 6, 2020 12:39pm
Pastor 15: September 6, 2020 1:20pm
Pastor 8: September 7, 2020 12:32pm

The only time recordings were replayed was during the researcher’s analysis of theme findings that affected self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship to the self and others. To add, the interviewing pastor’s identity was decoded by using number pseudonyms (as listed above). Further, protection of identity to participants the researcher did not included the interviewing pastoral counselor’s church’s name, nor city. All data recordings were kept in the researcher’s home office (without a label) locked away in a cabinet. In addition, the researcher’s main office door is always kept locked and he has the only key to enter.

**Member Focused Questionnaire.** The focus of this research part is to investigate one of the research questions regarding Black pastoral counselors’ effectiveness in counseling self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation of member issues. To explore the findings on this, the interviewed pastor counselors were asked by the researcher to select a volunteer member who
received counseling within a year’s time. The investigator provided the pastors a link for the consenting parishioner to take the volunteer member-focused questionnaire. The members names and contact information were not known because once the link was submitted it went straight to the investigator’s data collection email. These findings measured the counselor’s effectiveness, techniques, member satisfaction, and areas of needed improvement. One of the limitations and concerns of this technique of the study is that the pastoral counselor recruited the member to partake in the questionnaire the link and perhaps this method could offset trustworthiness of a fair evaluation.

Conclusion

In short, this chapter described qualitative research as action research and implemented a trifold research design: digital survey, semi-structured interviews, and member focus questionnaire surveys. The action researcher goes out into the field to observe and partner with participants to understand the “why is” and “how it is” of a population or subgroup. The researcher made no judgments on the way pastors interpret and practice their counseling ministry. There are several ways to collect data. One common way is to interview participants. The interview is more than yes and no answers; it involves open-ended questions that allow the participant to explain in depth. The second way is to create a questionnaire survey. The survey is for a large sample in the population sample that elaborate on their perceptions regarding the research study problem. Typically, questionnaires are worded questions that seek for feedback that enlighten and reveal experiences that helps answer the research problem.241

240 Ibid., 18.

241 Ibid., 109.
The sequel to data collection, more importantly, is the target population that the researcher gains his knowledge. The target population may come from a variety of sources like single mothers, Southeastern States of the United States, Black pastors’ only, non-gender specific, rural, and urban areas, and many more. This specific target group of the population area being studied is known as the subgroup. Subgroup trends are representative of the larger population in the research. Thus, once the research design is well thought out, the investigator moves into practical action—the field stage.²⁴²

Nevertheless, this specific research included a systematic process of administering and collecting data that ultimately yielded more about pastoral counseling practices.²⁴³ The researcher also engaged in the field of study to learn and answer specific research questions about member satisfaction of experiencing their pastor’s counseling ministry. The trifold data that were collected was then analyzed for results and findings.

However, to prevent challenges to confidentiality in this research, the investigator decoded the pastor’s identity by ascribing the pastor a number (i.e. pastor 1, pastor 14). Furthermore, the researcher did not link a state with the identified pastor number. The second challenge to this qualitative research study was to prevent discrepancies in what was answered on the digital survey. Therefore, several questions on the digital survey were worded differently to ensure reliability in data collection. For example, what level of education did you complete? In what specialization was your degree? What type of degree did you receive? The investigator ensured that the research design matched the research question. The data collection is


²⁴³ Ibid., 4.
undergirded as the research design which is a logical plan undergirded by a theoretical framework.\textsuperscript{244}

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 73.
Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This section will present the researcher’s collected data and findings. This chapter will view common approaches to counseling used among Black pastoral counselors. This chapter will analyze the relevance of counseling issues to self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation. In addition, this section will also address the research questions and provide an analysis of thematic findings. Based on experience and the number of hours, pastors’ techniques can be examined for strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, pastoral counselors with degrees and those without will be compared for quality of satisfaction to counsel on self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship.

Problem Presented

The problem that will be addressed and explored in this chapter is the comfort level of parishioner’s preference for a pastoral counselor instead of a licensed counselor. Most of the research literature regarding Black Americans who decline to seek professional counseling is argued that their attitudes and perceptions against it are due to mistrust from the past scientific and medical histories and the idea of being labeled from peers for seeking outside help.245 Interestingly, to date, scant attention has been paid to research involving the structure and strengths of African American pastoral counselors’ competency level of practice in their cultural sphere. What they do in their cultural practice should be seen as effective to handle life’s living issues that can affect self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation among their parishioners.

Other studies examined the perceptions of licensed professional counselors toward the work of pastoral counselors. While some view the work of pastoral counseling as paraprofessional to licensed counseling, it is no less of counseling itself that seeks to mitigate person’s issues. Jackson in his research reported that there can be somewhat of a “conflict in combining religion and counseling.” He explained that some in the community of professional counselors derided the over-spiritualizing, whereas pastoral counselors reject the over emphases on the scientific and psychodynamic approaches. These two different theoretical beliefs will remain an ongoing debate in three ways: 1) whether religion and spirituality should be a separate component when treating clients, 2) How to balance counseling one’s emotions and rational thought and spiritual growth, and 3) the actual defined differences of what pastoral counselors versus the professional counseling community.

Despite this long-standing conflict, many educated contemporary pastoral counselors make use of the integrative counseling model in their sessions with members. The researcher collected data from the digital survey of 19 participants that reported (36.8% of African American pastors) use the integrative model (Bible and psychology) for counseling. Furthermore, 84.2% of pastoral participants rated a 5 on the Likert scale in support of using the Bible to counsel members. Others stood firm at 15.8% rating of <5 that the Bible is not a requirement to counsel parishioners.

---


247 Ibid., 85.

248 See table 1.

249 See table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>Pastor Respondent</th>
<th>Bible Counseling Scale from 1-5</th>
<th>Referral to Outside Counseling Scale from 1-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor D</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Pastor F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor E</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>Pastor F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>Pastor B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>Pastor C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>Pastor B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Pastor A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.** This chart shows by state pastoral respondents who view the significance of Bible in counseling parishioners and their views toward outside counseling referral. Only 15.8% of pastoral participants view professional counseling as a conflict of interest.
However, based on pastor participants submissions of the digital survey the researcher created using the free basic Google Docs software (the software computed) pastoral respondents, showed a slight increase of 42.1% in preference for the Solution-Focused model. This increase by one is significant because it reveals Black pastors’ competence, trust, and comfort to diversify techniques rather than use a purely Scriptural lecture.

Although many pastors take serious the public proclamation of God’s Word, however, public teaching on the Word of God is different from sitting down with a congregant in a one-on-one counseling session. In addition, private counseling involves an interchange of ideas, problem solving options, and establishes long-term relationships. Jim Newheiser, director of the Christian Counseling program at the

Table 2. Deliverance Prayer Ministry seeks casting out spirits of anxiety, and mental and emotional disorders to that of referral. 10.5% of pastor respondents rated referral <3.
Reformed Theological Seminary argues that preaching from the pulpit can eliminate a need for one-on-one counseling. The explains the preached Word addresses some of the issues being faced today by parishioners as did the characters in Bible stories. In addition, Newheiser also clarified that good preaching can also alert a congregant to the need for counseling.

Relatively little has been written on about the perspectives to counseling and techniques used by Black pastor counselors with members of their own culture in their parishes and communities. The outstanding things that are heard about what Black pastoral counselors do is make large and consistent contributions to support other agencies that advocate for the healthy self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation of Black Americans in the community. The researcher collected data from pastors in six of the Southeastern states of the United States. Throughout this chapter the data collected from these states will measure the pastor’s ability to effectively counsel the issues he addresses with parishioners

**Research Questions.** The research questions that make this study significant and gave headway to the research problem are: Does the Black Church’s counseling program, in itself, adequately improve parishioners’ level of personal efficacy in the face of many social challenges? Is the Black Church’s pastoral counseling program sufficient to effect improvements in self-esteem, productivity, and motivation? Does the Black Church counseling program integrate professional counseling services in the community? Other research questions to be addressed are: (1) How often pastoral counselors counsel parishioners? (2) Is cultural context counseling preferable to other counseling methods? (3) Is narrative therapy a strictly African American counseling

---


251 Ibid., 4.
method? (4) Why do churchgoers seek pastoral counseling as an alternative to mental health counseling services?

**Demographic Summary**

The study received digital surveys from nineteen Black pastor participants from six of the Southeastern states of the United States: eighteen males and one female. Only one pastor participant had a biracial identity. The largest group of respondents came from the states of Virginia 36.8%, Georgia 26.3%, and third was Kentucky with a 15.8%.

The highest denominational participation came from Baptist denominations at 73.7%, non-denominational 15.8%, and the Pentecostal groups at 10.5%. **Table 3** shows all the pastors demographics.

This information is important for two reasons: 1) it tracks relevant counseling themes based on their education level and the vicinity of their church. 2) The chart will show a number (pseudonym) that references findings of what counseling technique work and do not work with pastoral counselors in his given state.

**Age Group.** Does age make a difference in what type of counseling technique is used? Further in the chapter it will show one pastor’s use of the narrative model, not because of his age, but his
Figure 1.3. Statistical trends show the median age of pastors were 46-65 years of age. It reveals an impact on counseling because of life experiences. However, there was a difference in the number of hours they counseled their members.

congregation is mostly youth and teens. Moreover, the research also revealed that 10.5 percent of pastors were in the age range of 66-75, 15.8 percent between 36-45, and 73.7 percent between 46-65. What is interesting about these statistics is that the age range of 46-65 are the generation of Black pastors that are diverse with their counseling techniques. Whereas the pastors in the age range of 66-75, favor the storytelling method to counseling. The older generation of pastoral counselors favor cultural context counseling because it involves storytelling. The storytelling creates powerful thought from the message it tries to convey and especially narratives of favorite Bible characters that were in various life situations. Those participants between ages 66-75 Churches were in rural settings and their counseling method emphasized more on spiritual growth. Aside from the counseling method, the number of hours placed into counseling parishioners can give a picture of the care and quality being put into each session. Nevertheless, Pastor 1 mainly counseled elderly adults <20 hours per week, while pastor 14 counseled young adults and couples >20 hours per week. Does the amount of hours counseling prove quality and effectiveness?

The number of hours given to counseling was based on the size of the congregation and the issue at hand. For example, family issues can last over several sessions while encouragement was minimal. On the other hand, pastors of the age 46-65
counseling model depended on the age and experience of the counselee. Youth and teens received more of storytelling therapy while young adults to older adults benefited from the solution-focused techniques to counseling. For example, Pastor 1’s church service was more traditional than Pastor 14 who mainly held a contemporary service. In a contemporary service, many youths and teens are participants in the program activities. Instruments that are played in contemporary Church services are: the keyboard instead of an organ, electric guitar, drums, and lightings are affixed to arose Holy excitement in the atmosphere. This type of atmosphere encourages healthy feelings of high self-worth and motivation.

The style of worship in a church is determined by the congregational demographics. For example, a traditional service will attract more middle aged and senior adults. Traditional Church services conduct worship in the manner of sing hymns. Older adults benefit in this type of service because the slow singing of hymns in a reverent manner uplifts their motivation to continue being responsible disciples to the younger Christians and world.

In analyzing the hours dedicated to counseling the elderly and younger adults, data revealed that pastor 14’s counseling session emphasized spiritual development because it becomes the strong foundation to carry members through the roughest of times which is the key means to maintain healthy self-worth, personal drive, and motivation, especially the rural younger members. The survey findings confirmed that the primary counseling topic in sessions is spiritual growth with a computed rate of 52.9 percent, while 17.6 percent of counseling addressed self-esteem and self-love. A person’s self-image (self-worth) of themselves is a


253 See figure 1.5.
strong indicator of not being firmly convinced of their position in Christ and to a degree affect their Christian walk. Emphasis is highly placed on self-image for an African American is a big deal because of the challenges of inequality, social status, and negative stereotypes in contrast to the privileges of being Euro-American.

Figure 1.5. Over half 52.9% of pastor respondents counseling emphases is on spiritual growth through trials, struggles, and hardships

Of paramount significance is the use of the trinitarian model to teach the image of God the Creator who image all humans reflect. Pastor 14 has used this diagram of the reflect of God to counsel on issues with discrimination, building self-worth, and recreating a positive image of the self.

Pastoral Experience. Critical to the pastoral counselor’s position is his experience. The pastor must be a person who can apply wisdom to art of counseling people through various life stages. 1 Timothy 3:6 says, “A Church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall” (NLT). To make the experience of the pastor pertinent consider LaMothe’s fable. LaMothe tells a story about a wise Rabbinic sage who helped a young prince reinforce his personal efficacy and motivation to continue with his
princely duties while respecting his conviction that he is a rooster.\textsuperscript{254} The Rabbinic sage had experience in dealing with other’s perceptions and yet allowed the subject to decide his outcome.

One’s utilization of pastoral counseling wisdom with experience does not come solely from a private lecture. It is not a conversation on cross referencing of many Scriptures to try and put a quick fix on the counselee’s issue. It not merely a personal narrative of the counselor’s lived experiences in hopes that it addresses the counselee’s problem. LaMothe further pointed out that “the absence of [wisdom and experience of the pastoral counselor] impoverishes the congregation, because [members] are deprived of [the know-how, the right and left limits] that can alert them to make an informed and constructive [decision to change].”\textsuperscript{255} The experienced pastor counselor promotes and nurtures a counselee’s ability to enhance his efficacy and confidence to resolve matters with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This research study revealed that 42.1% of pastors preferred the Solution-Focused Model for counseling parishioners, while 36.8% preferred the Integration Model. The solution-focused model supports the ability of the counselee to make sound and constructive decision for his situation. There was an even preference in all locales (rural, urban, and suburban) that favored solution-focus because of its person-based problem-solving approach. However, the study found only one pastor, pastor 14 who took a narrative approach to counseling his parishioners because they were youths and teens.


\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 512.
Further analysis revealed that the ten Member-focused participants who had taken the open-ended questionnaire indicated that parishioners received significant counseling for marriage issues. The study showed 38.5% of females went to marriage counseling who were of ages of 46-55, whereas 23.1% of males of ages 26-55 went to marriage counseling, and 38.5% between the ages of 26-55 received counseling on other issues.

Struggles with low self-worth and personal efficacy issues revealed that a solution-focused and integration approach to counseling would be more advantageous because it created an exchange of dialogue. When a counselee expresses themselves aloud, it reveals to them their uniqueness that in turn can reveal passions, strengths, and lead to several ways to problem solve on their issues. Putting one’s feelings into words releases confidence, destroys phobias that may not exist, and open dialogue to challenge misconceptions.

**Educational Background.** The study showed that most of the Black pastors were highly educated, however, with only three pastors who had some college. The data indicated that three pastor participants had earned a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree, two earned a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), and one earned a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Biblical Counseling. In addition, five pastors earned Master’s degrees with various concentrations in Theology, Biblical, Education, and General Ministry, four earned bachelor’s degrees in Bible and General Ministry, and three had some college.\(^\text{256}\) The significance of an earned degree has to do with a certain level

---

\(^{256}\) See Table 3.
of competency to satisfactory counsel males who’s issues are hopelessness in working in rural fishery jobs. The educated Black pastoral counselor is an inspirational model to spark despondent males who work in the rural fishery plants to pursue an education and an advanced degree in hopes to transform their state of hopelessness that affects personal efficacy and motivation.

Reliability was established and brought out consistency in answers when questions were asked differently especially in the trifold data collection method. The investigator asked several different questions on the digital survey (education level, degree concentration, and awarded degree) and the same questions were also asked in-depth during the one-on-one interview. The researcher looked for validity by asking questions like, “What is your level of education? “What type (awarded) degree do you hold?” In doing so, the researcher discovered that one pastor’s educational level was mistakenly recorded. And sometimes in research, the participant may unintentionally misunderstand the question being asked.

Does a certain educational level indicate one’s success in counseling parishioners in the church? The researcher previously stated that experience for the pastor is more of a success than a earned degree. The exception is the pastor who is studies are concentrated in counseling and therefore is licensed. On the other hand, attitudes during the research process revealed that highly educated pastors were more likely to volunteer to participate in this research than pastors who had no advanced degrees. Odulana et al., in their research indicated that the educational achievement of a pastor influences parishioner’s attitudes to volunteer and supportive
Pastoral counselors had much influence in encouraging member-focused participants to participate in the (open-ended) questionnaire as a recipient of his counseling.

Moreover, the study also revealed the pastors’ educational influence helped the referral to professional counseling go smoothly. Pastors that were highly educated rated a five on the Likert scale that they are in favor to referring members to professional counseling. Out of the nineteen pastor respondents, 57.9% gave a five rating on the Likert scale to indicate that the influence of an education helped referring easy, 21.1% rated four, and 21.1% answered with a <3. Pastor counselors who were asked, if an earned counseling degree would make a difference in their counseling success? The findings showed 42.1% rated a five that it did, 31.6% rated four, and 26.3% answered <3 as it being an effective enhancement.258


258 See table 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastor</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Yrs. Pastor</th>
<th>Edu. level</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Church Location</th>
<th>Services Held</th>
<th>Denom</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>26&gt;</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Biblical</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Divinity</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Biblical</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Some Collg</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Contemp</td>
<td>Pentecost</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Biblical</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Liturgical</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>Some Collg</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Contemp</td>
<td>Non-denom</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>66-75</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Some Collg</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Contemp</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>Assoc</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>Non-denom</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>&lt;7</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Liturgical</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>&lt;7</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>Pentecost</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>46-65</td>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>Contemp</td>
<td>Non-denom</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. This chart shows other demographic trends important to counseling trends on member issues. This chart establishes validity and reliability by the researcher asking several different questions on the digital survey regarding education level, degree concentration, and degree awarded (type).
Pastor Education level Refer to Mental Health Influenced by Education Pastor Perception of a Counseling Degree
---
1 DMIN 4 5
2 DMIN 5 5
3 Master 5 3
4 Bachelor 5 5
5 Master 5 3
6 Master 5 4
7 Master 5 4
8 Some College 2 2
9 Bachelor 2 4
10 Ph.D. 5 4
11 Ed.D. 4 4
12 Some College 3 4
13 Bachelor 4 5
14 Some College 5 5
15 Bachelor 5 3
16 Associate 4 3
17 Master 5 5
18 Ed.D. 3 5
19 DMIN 5 5

Table 4. Shows the influence of education on attempts to refer and the pastor’s opinion on having a counseling degree.
However, when the researcher addressed pastoral counselors in the one-on-one interview, several pastors expressed that counseling parishioners should be a separate job that the pastor performs. A couple of them felt members should seek counseling from a licensed counselor. Other pastors felt that counseling members puts added stress on them because of the other demands of pastoral ministry. While the responses above are a surprise, it is was very impressive that most rural pastors in this study were bi-vocational with advance education. In addition, some pastor participants have relocated from urban to a rural setting after a lengthy secular career. Overall, the findings of pastor counselors experience and educational he brings to the ministry is a great influence to support healthy thinking and significant motivation.

**Church Locale and Congregation Demographics.** The nineteen pastoral participants during the interview told where their Churches were located, the congregational make up, and the type of worship service. There was an even representation of rural (42.1%), urban (42.1%), and 15.8 percent were suburban. The interviews with pastors in all locations revealed that counseling single males and females on issues of low self-worth is impacted largely from family dysfunctions and self-esteem issues.
However, the largest denomination of pastoral counselors belonged to Baptist. Statistics from the data collection showed 73.7% of the pastors interviewed were in some form of fundamental Baptist organization. Others (15.8%) were non-denominational, and the lowest denominational ministry participants were Pentecostals (charismatic) at 10.5 percent. This statistical breakdown is important because it reveals the dynamics of their counseling techniques and whether advance education in counseling influence successful turn outs. One pastor did not believe in sending members with psychological issues to mental health counseling but deemed in the powerful prayer of deliverance from an evil spirit that is causing the member’s doublemindedness.

It is worthy to note the different types of worship services these pastors held. More Baptist pastoral counselors were 52.6% traditional services, 21.1% held contemporary services, 15.8% gospel services, and 10.5% held liturgical services. Also of note is two liturgical services were pastored by Black pastors whose congregants were mostly white. Of all three suburban churches in the study the members were predominantly African American. Why does the culture of the congregation matter? Further in the chapter the cultural make up of the congregation will reveal the relevance of cultural context counseling that deals with racial discriminations. The congregations’ cultural diversity were as follows: 73.7% African American and 26.3% as a mixed worship group of White and Black parishioners. However, the main point of this section is that there were no significant differences in Black member issues among rural, urban, and
suburban churches even Black members in a predominantly White congregation had the same counseling issues.

**Figure 1.11.** Traditional worship services are significant among Baptists.

**Figure 1.12.** Cultural diversity is increasing in rural communities.

**Counseling Analysis Summary**

This portion of Chapter 4 discusses Black pastoral counselors counseling effects on self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation with parishioners. These counseling effects were combined from the digital survey, pastor interviews, and the satisfaction critiques from the member-focused interview questionnaires.

**Prayer: Central Element.** As mentioned previously in this study, pastoral counseling is another form of professional counseling in that it counsels in areas that affect various living situations like grief, divorce, family adjustments, whereas, a clinical psychologist treats the personality in counseling. The
The essential element that is applied by pastoral counselors in their counseling sessions is the belief in and practice of prayer. One interviewed pastor said, “Prayer is the most effective means to aid him during counseling.” This same pastor holds a M.Div., pastors a rural Church, and has referred several members to professional counseling because of mental health issues. The prayer element is more practiced by a Christian counselor than a secular counselor. Stansbury et al. stated, “[The] vantage point [of the profession of pastoral counselors] places the [church ministry] in an important position to act as gatekeepers to [parishioners’ souls] than the mental health system [to advocate spiritually].”

**Pastor Counseling Trends**

One research problem to explore was the question: What are the effects of pastoral counseling on self-worth, personal efficacy, and motivation? Using the semi-structured pastor interviews and the member-focused interview questionnaire, the researcher was able to see a broader picture of counseling performed in the Black Church. Parishioners in rural and urban churches faced the same unique challenges as persistent family dysfunction, limited education, and struggles in career advancement. Most humans face these general problems, however, it becomes unique to African Americans because of systemic social inequalities spawned on by lack of cultural understanding and practices that are seated in selfism. The reluctance to seek psychotherapy services for social anxiety among Black parishioners is because of being labeled as weak or crazy for getting outside help.

---

The compelling trends in this study showed single males who live in the rural account for 42.9% who seek counseling from a pastor on issues that deal with discrimination and persistent family dysfunctions. Education issues accounted for 28.6%. On the other hand, single females in the rural community sought counseling as follows: 70% on self-esteem issues, 20% dealt with husband or Baby Daddy conflict, and 10 percent for struggles in parenting. Contrastingly, urban pastors have counseled male parishioners at 75 percent on persistent family dysfunctions, and 25 percent on handling discriminations. Surprisingly, the study shows a reversal of trends with persistent family dysfunctions lower in Black rural communities than that of the urban setting. Also, trendy is discrimination counseling was lower in urban church communities than in rural church settings. Furthermore, single urban female parishioners have an alarming rate of being seen for self-esteem counseling.

Semi-Structured Interview Themes

During the interviews, several themes continued to surface. These themes were the firm belief in the counselor’s identity to be the same when counseling Black families; building self-worth in young adult females; restoring the loss of hope in males in rural communities; and boosting motivation in marriages to work at not breaking up because of challenges. The semi-structured interview revealed that the overall counseling aggregate of all pastor participants were
40 percent of congregants sought marriage help, 20 percent of all counseled the young adults, and 10 percent each spread evenly between the elderly, individuals, youth, and single families.

From the nineteen pastor participants, 89.5 percent said Yes they like to counsel, and 10.5 percent said No. These numbers are significant because it measures counseling effectiveness based on the attitude and motivation level brought to the counseling session by the pastor counselor. On the digital survey Likert scale with five being the highest, 79% rated <4 that counseling is significant in their ministry and 21.1 % rated counseling importance as >3.

Each interviewed pastor was asked their definition of counseling. They reported as follows:

**Pastor 1:** To provide a safe and secure environment where the person can openly express their feelings and situation(s) that precipitated the emotions.

**Pastor 3:** Counseling is providing a useful, objective 3rd party, perspective that is grounded in the wisdom of the Scriptures and the Love of Christ. However, given the sheer quantity of psychiatric and psychological diagnoses that are possible, only trained, certified, and licensed counselors should be engaged in this work - not untrained, unlicensed pastors.

**Pastor 5:** Looking at myself before looking at others.

**Pastor 7:** To guide someone to peace within their heart and greater understanding of their value and worth as a child of God.

**Pastor 8:** Helping someone deal with everyday life problems. Help them to grow on a spiritual journey within God's Word.

**Pastor 9:** Counseling means to encourage and impact the life of another person to help them be the best they can be.

**Pastor 10:** Identifying a problem / seek a solution that seeks wholeness as a goal.

**Pastor 14:** Counseling mean to help people with all kinds of issues that affect their spiritual and mental health.

**Pastor 15:** Happy individual cope and making others feel important. Help people reach their
goals whether it be emotional, mental, and spiritual.

**Pastor 18**: To provide one with the ability to look inward and outwardly in their current state in order to form an opinion on what direction he/she should move toward.

At least six of the ten interviewees conducted counseling using an integrated approach, while the other four counseled from a purely Christian-centered perspective. The relevance of the pastor giving their definition of counseling indicates which technique of counseling influences them the most--a Solution-Focused or an integrative approach. Perhaps these two ways to approach counseling will yield different outcomes to strengthen, build confidence to solve their own problems, and drive on personal efficacy to the situation. Taking an integrative approach in counseling others is sort of like developmental and spiritual growth counseling. Midgette argued that “…the [pastor] should assume a more positive function in helping [members] meet problems of daily living.”260 Similarly, McClure expressed, “Pastoral counseling is a more narrowly-defined relationship between a pastor and a person in need.” 261 Solution-Focused and integration approaches to counseling is a mid-level skill that is appropriate for ministry counselors and it do not infringe upon the skill level of a clinical counselor.

Another research question that is explored in this study is: Do storytelling remain a basic method when counseling African American? Storytelling has powerful message conveyed that may alert one’s consciousness to action. Storytelling has been used by Black Americans since the colonialization period. Therefore, Narrative has been a social legacy that shed light and bid hears to be move to action. Storytelling was used heavily by plantation preachers and

---


261 Barbara McClure, “Contemporary Pastoral Care and Counseling, 21.
resulted in sparks to righteous action. These narratives were rich in their cultural language and worldviews. Storytelling on the plantation was full of Black folklore and became their tradition in how they delivered sermons.\textsuperscript{262} The influx of higher education has influenced the Black preacher with other ways to approach counseling his members. During one interview, pastor 14 who is 75 years of age, leads a rural congregation, and has a contemporary service preaches and counsels mostly in narrative style because his congregation is attended by many youth and teens.

Pastor 14 knows his congregation best. Spiritual narratives that originated among plantation slave services became further developed in a counseling model in the 70s and 80s through the work of Michael White and David Epston.\textsuperscript{263} Today, a more systemic treatment is called narrative therapy. Narrative therapy is highly practiced by professional school counselors. The difference between storytelling and narrative therapy in counseling is narrative therapy is a systemic skill that listens to an individual and helps the individual to separate from the problem to better construct their situation.\textsuperscript{264} Storytelling inspires and teach without the hearer engaging into a dialogue with the storyteller.\textsuperscript{265} Like the gathering of Black slaves on the plantations, narrative alluded to a direct message—it had powerful meaning. However, according to Nafziger et al., they explain that narrative therapy in school counseling is “…a sensitive approach… [they] encourage [students to] use their own words to tell their own stories which carry their own meaning … narrative counseling is not about students simply telling their stories; instead, it is


\textsuperscript{264} American Psychological Association.

about reworking stories so that new realities can take shape.”

Similarly, Coyle defines it this way “Narrative provides…both common life and transcendent spiritual experiences [that] populate spiritual narratives in people’s lives.”

Nevertheless, in this study the researcher learned that rural, urban, and suburban pastor counselors have pushed past storytelling and opened their counseling ministry to Solution-Focus and Integration counseling models. In as much as, these two techniques are prominent in this study, there were four other dominant and recurrent themes that came out of the data collections that influenced a member’s low self-worth, declining personal efficacy, and motivation. These themes are expounded upon as follows:

**Theme 1: Cultural Context Counseling.** This is one of the research questions that sought exploration by the researcher and the findings were: Is cultural context counseling still a main model when counseling? Cultural context counseling is essentially being linked with a counselor who is of the same cultural identity and who have shared experiences of being discriminated against. The counselor may also be a person of color. However, many of the interviewed pastors specified that it is not so much of the ability and expertise of the counselor as it is relating through shared experiences. African American Church goers preferred a pastoral counselor for these two reasons: 1) because of an established long-term relationship and 2) Convenient--there is no cost for services.

**Identity Relationship Comfort.** Pastoral participants were asked their opinion on does it matter the cultural identity of the therapist? Most of them answered from a nonracial intent,

---


Yes. One respondent explained, “A Black person who is trying to navigate their way through corporate America is best to seek counseling from the same identity.” He added, for example, “In a session where a therapist is counseling cross the culture a Black family she may struggle not in her capability to counsel but experimentally. She may not have firsthand exposure to the mores, codes, and cultural repertoire that is idealistic of African American rearing of their children. What the researcher gained from this interview is that there is a bias for culture rather than the expertise of the licensed counselor. When it comes to anything other than culture and tradition, the licensed counselor’s abilities are phenomenal and satisfying.

However, in the digital survey cultural context counseling rated at 10.5% which is lower than Solution-Focus and Integration counseling techniques. This statistic was surprising because in the assumptions part of this research the researcher assumed that Cultural Context counseling will be the most used technique when pastors counseled their members. The digital survey also asked pastor respondents, how effective they thought cultural context counseling is in handling discrimination issues among their members? The results were 78.9% of the pastors rated a 4> on the Likert scale, whereas other pastors rated 21.1% <3 and below because they believed discrimination counseling alone is not effective to cause change in the social system itself. What it does do is treat the counselee’s self-worth and drive for excellence in the self.

**Counseling Multiracial Congregations.** This portion of the study revealed the reluctance from biracial pastoral counselors to use the cultural context counseling as an approach within a mixed congregation.

What is learned from this specific exploration is that cultural context counseling is specific to Black parenting and counseling of racial discriminations. Five pastors (26.3 percent) reported to have culturally mixed congregations-- three were in rural and the other two in an
urban setting. One pastor categorized himself as biracial. “To divide a congregation in categories of racial and ethnic labels is a catastrophic problem that should be avoided,” he voiced. He felt people should be looked at, first as human beings in the congregation, so to prevent sectarian developments.

In addition, the pastor counselor also has several mixed marriages within his church. He had counseled on issues with a couple who were struggling because of cultural misunderstanding. He goes on to explain that he preaches and counsels on the “love ethic” theme in hopes for congregants to embody the spirit of discipleship among each other and in turn display it to the world. Within mixed congregations, counseling techniques that are used by the pastor is the Solution-Focused model. However, cultural wars that arise from within interracial marriages he refers to professional counseling to avoid being accused of being biased. A pastor never wants to be pitted in a pick-and-choose situation.

For the most part, the researcher learned that multiracial congregations especially in the rural Church communities are thriving institutions of oneness. One reason for this, as Marti suggested that “religious racial integration in Protestant churches is the process by which members of ethnoracial groups subsume their contrasting ethnic identities to a shared religious identity.” Nonetheless, one important aspect to point out is responsible discipleship is defined in this study the commitment to God, the laws of country, and to fellow citizens. This term constitutes a sociological perspective to humanity and the self. This perspective means being true to the self in helping others, being true to the country, but also requesting the equality of those entities to be fair to them. From the spiritual perspective, responsible discipleship means to

---

actualize the “love-ethic” Christ taught his disciples of “going the extra mile,” “treat others as you would treat yourself,” and render aid to those who are not of your culture (the parable of the Good Samaritan). However, within multiracial churches “responsible discipleship” is conceptualized into a public proclamation from the Word of God. The Critical Race Theory concept undergirds Cultural Context counseling when dealing with discriminations that affect self-worth and efficacy. Perhaps this method of counseling was widely used in Black churches during the antebellum period. Therefore, the pastor of a multiracial congregation may very well create a counseling environment that cultivates cross-cultural teams of counselors to meet the needs of interracial marriages and individual needs. One pastor stated, “If the other race has encountered the Black culture by growing up in a diverse neighborhood, then they will be effective in counseling Blacks on self-worth and personal-efficacy.” In other words, cross culture counseling can be effective coming from a White counselors if they grew up within the Black culture.

Nevertheless, all pastors were asked, how could their overall counseling program improve? The data collected indicated 36.8% advocated for community partnership and faith-based grants and 26.3% preferred licensure or certification in counseling. It was agreed upon by most of the pastors the steps they need to implement is to establish a team of counselors (Life Coaches and certification training in basic counseling techniques). To do this, will alleviate some demands off the senior pastor.

**Theme 2: Self-Esteem Young Adult Females.** Data collections indicate that pastors in the urban and rural Churches had significant numbers of single females being counseled on self-esteem and self-worth issues (see figures 13 and 16 for statistical results). The pastor interviews also reported factors of absent fathers, income struggles, and conflict between a child’s father for
failed leadership contributed to struggles with low self-esteem. Pastor 5 indicated that the absence of male fatherly leadership to their children are impacted by long hard hours of work in the rural fishery factories. In addition, drugs are used to cope with the harsh realities of life and systemic inequalities. Do to not having enough income to needed resources, it results in spikes of Black males doing unlawful acts that cause for them to be incarcerated.

**Single Females.** In this part, the researcher will statistically compare how low self-worth affect self-esteem in females, accept persistent family dysfunction, and prolong depression. To combat self-esteem struggles in single mothers and to help provide some stress relief, one Church has established a single mother support group that does a lot of activities together. Pastor 5 believes encouragement and self-importance are to be built into social support networking. According to Mandara et al., they agree that working together produces a healthy feeling about oneself. They say, “[persons with social support] have fewer symptoms of psychological problems than unmarried adults.”269 The researchers also noted that a “sizable number of [single] mothers being unmarried at the time of the first childbirth was predictive of higher depression, regardless of age…”270

In fact, the investigator in this study noted that the data collection surveys reported that pastoral counselors conducted self-esteem counseling at 23.5% which is second to persistent family dysfunction recorded at 31.6%. Along with counseling self-worth and self-love, 26.3% of their counseling dealt with depression. However, the overall statistical Likert scale rated a five which is 52.6% of pastoral counselors who felt that counseling helps to elevate healthy feelings

---


270 Ibid., 1189.
of self-worth and self-image for single females who deal with “baby-daddy” family dysfunctions. The other pastor counselors rated a four that it somewhat helps, which is 42.1% total. Mandara et al., also mentioned that “[single] African American mothers with high self-esteem tend to cope with stressors better and have more optimistic perceptions of the future compared to low self-esteem mothers.”271 These results between pastor counselors show almost a split that counseling helps greatly and those who believe it is somewhat helpful.

In all, single females and single mothers felt important and protected in the Church’s support group. Self-esteem issues among single females and single mothers showed no difference, in that, there had been an absent father in their lives and has somehow carried on generationally through the absence of their children(s) father.

**Elderly Females.** The population of elderly women within any congregation face frustrations and develop some feelings of low self-worth. These feelings are the result of realizing they are in the later stages of life and their physical, psychological, and performance is declining and limited, according to Pastor 1. It was noted during pastor 1’s interview that he was the only pastor with a predominately elderly audience except for several middle age couples. His advice to supporting the psychological health of these elderly women is to encourage their commitment to church-related activities. Many of the women are auxiliary leaders and mentors to other younger adult women in the surrounding community—regardless of faith.

During the closing stages of elderly females’ lives, they are more participatory in religious organizations than any other social institutions.272 However, pastor 1 predicted that an

---

271 Ibid., 1191.

influx of younger adults into their Church would challenge the elderly women’s attitudes and probably lower their personal efficacy to the commitment of the organization’s mission. However, one research study attested the same point made by pastor 1. According to Moberg, he declared, elderly female participation may remain devout in spirit, beliefs, and ritual practices of prayer so long as the variety of participation does not directly interfere with physical capabilities.\textsuperscript{273}

On the other hand, pastor 1’s one-on-one counseling sessions with them has been helpful because he helps them to come to acceptance of their life’s stage. He adds, “acceptance is not a need to quit, as much as, it is a time to be innovative given one’s restrictions and capabilities.” That goes to say, to help sustain healthy self-esteem it is important to identify age-level capable activities like working as a telephone caller organizer. Another idea is become computer savvy for the church’s needs and remain connected to the Elderly Association Ministry Group. Earlier years do not have to be lost through aging deprivations, but one can be even more resilient with and adjusted positive attitude toward age decline by being innovative and committed to modified activities.

**Theme 3: Loss of Hope among Rural Males.** The researcher noted a dominant expressed theme among rural Black Church pastors that young male figures who are to be the future heads of their community are spiraling down through loss of hope. The qualitative data collected does not show depression and substance abuse as primary reasons to account for male loss of hope. The category of \textit{Other} reveals 36.8\% is from other factors. The other category factors can be limited physical abilities, long term divorce effects, and lack of academic success. The second highest factor that contributed to loss of hope was limited employment due to mental illness.

\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 48.
(21.1%). During the interview pastors indicated that *Other* were the affects of education, job advancement, financial struggles that limit resources, and parental relationship conflict.

**Lack of Job Advancement.** Pastor 5 indicated he had numerous counseling sessions and encouragement talks to males in his parish and community about what affects their lack of motivation. He explained that it is not merely the decline in job advancement, but the non-desire to continue to work in the rural area because of being unhappy with factor work. The long hours and repetitive physical movements in the “sweat shops” --fisheries and industrial factories—contribute to their depression. In addition, pastor 5 had not counseled on suicide ideation with any member of his church due to depression and feelings of hopelessness. Nonetheless, according to the survey report other pastors in the Black communities of rural and urbanity have counseled suicide. The data collected on counseling on suicide reported 63.2 percent said *Yes* they have counseled a parishioner on suicide ideation and 36.8 percent said *No* they have not. Severe depression and hopeless can lead to attempted suicide. Besides that, pastor 5 also commented that young adult males do not have enough education to be gainfully employed in higher paying jobs.

Pastoral counselors realize the need to keep and established partnership with community agencies to help provide skillsets and technical training to meet the competitive workforce outside the rural area. Bryant et al. wrote, “It is well documented that African American men experience high levels of psycho-social stressors [job advancement, poverty, income struggles, violence etc.] that may place them at greater risk for developing clinical levels of depressive symptoms.”\(^{274}\) It is evident from the interview encounter with these pastors that they are

implementing interventions (counsel-and-action) using spiritual, community, and culturally accepted measures to help African American males overcome hopelessness, depression, and lack of motivation.

Amid the negative sociodemographic issues challenging Black male figures, the Church and the social world have many exceptionally great role models and high achievers. Many Black intellectual high achievers have overcome various challenging obstacles, which as a result impact people of color. Much of their success is credited to Afrocentric programs and activities. According to one researcher, “Afrocentric training, education, and counseling groups have used African American values, rituals, cultural practices, and worldviews in order to help Black boys and Black men to learn new ways of perceiving the self.”275 Needless to say, a Church’s good counseling mentorship program will facilitate positive interactions, activities, learning, and trainings that elevates a thriving spirit.

**Parental Conflict.** Some pastor respondents have attributed the lack of motivation and personal efficacy of African American males affected by a home environment where their parents are constantly arguing and fighting in front of them. What these young males need is healthy role models and mentors in their lives, said pastor 8. Another pastor sees the decline in personal drive as due to absent father leadership. The constant looking at parental flaws, failures, and conflicts impact the African American male’s mindset. One such approach to consider with African American males who are impacted by parental conflicts within their homes is to concentrate on counseling strength-base of the parishioner and help him to see the strengths and

---

positives in his parents.\textsuperscript{276} With disappointments from society, discriminations, conflict in the home, competitive job markets, and struggles for basic resources creates potential to decline in personal drive. However, one challenge that adds to hopelessness from seeing conflict in the home is the fear of approaching his parents to encourage them to seek family counseling. Their fear to approach the matter becomes disheartening.

Nonetheless, while there are societal factors that contribute to the decline in young Black males’ personal efficacy to reach some life goal, positive relationships in the home environment will transition to healthy self-esteem, attitude, and motivation. Barrett suggested, “[family leadership] mentoring has the capacity of making a lasting impact on [Black males] who do not know their own worth.”\textsuperscript{277} These community pastor leaders are willing to work in partnership with families on behalf of reversing males being dominated by the sense of hopelessness.

In all, this research section has described how unhealthy home modeling can negatively impact rural Black males’ personal drive and motivation. Regarding the nuclear Black family, this research also examined the satisfaction derived from marital counseling. Members reported information show 52.6\% had issues with communication while the percentage of divorce and separation was far less. Analysis also showed that couples who were counseled with communication issues the marital satisfaction rate rose to 26.3\%. In counseling marriages (52.9\%) of the interviewed pastoral counselors placed therapeutic emphasis on the Word of God.


A Spiritual application is important for two reasons 1) It reveals where each partner’s accountability level is before God, and 2) Spiritual emphasis reels them back from living out a secular philosophy of a covenant marriage the divine expects.

**Theme 4: Marriage Counseling.** Data was collected from ten Member Focused interview Questionnaire participants and it revealed that 40% of them went to see their pastor for marriage counseling, and 20% of the young adults went for life coaching and spiritual issues. The remaining 40% was split evenly between counseling elderly, single families, individuals, and youth. In addition, the data indicated that the median age range 61.5% between ages of 46-55 were mostly females. Members also reported (76.9%) their sessions went beyond several meetings.

**Member Responses to Counseling Experience.** Voluntary member participants of the focused told of their reasons for seeking pastoral counseling. Their responses are as follows:

**Member 1:** I chose a pastoral counselor over a licensed one because of his biblical mindset. I have visited a licensed counselor and did not like the feedback received.

**Member 2:** We desired counseling grounded in biblical principles.

**Member 3:** A pastor has a biblical worldview that is applicable to the total Christian life.

**Member 4:** I have been to both and find value in each.

**Member 5:** I desire more of a spiritual session.

**Member 6:** The spiritual aspect relates more than purely a psychological behavioral treatment.

**Member 7:** I am a Christian and believe it was the best course of action.
Member 8: We did it for the discount on the marriage license.

Member 9: We wanted biblical truths about marriage as opposed to a secular worldview.

Member 10: Accessibility.

As a result of the member interview questionnaire responses, it is evident that 70% state biblical principles were the primary reason to request a pastoral counselor for marriage issues. The explanations by these members discloses one reason why professional counseling is not an alternative. Contrastingly, 78.9 % of the pastor participants counseled less than twenty hours per week. Is the number of hours they provide in counseling sufficient for member satisfaction? According to the member interview questionnaire, satisfaction was categorized and explained in the charted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>MEMBER SATISFACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Affair</td>
<td>Several weeks involved steps and activities to healing: Forgive, Remove, and Replace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Conflict</td>
<td>The sessions questionnaires touched on things we did not consider and brought out unknown feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage Standards</td>
<td>The sessions involved weekly precepts from God’s Word on day-to-day married living and the issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>We were able to release thoughts, feelings, and emotions to one another in the sessions without being Scripture bashed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Child</td>
<td>The sessions involved actions of healing to grief: writing a letter, creating picture memorabilia, releasing balloons at burial site etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Growth</td>
<td>The session offered a steady concentration on Scriptures in the area I struggled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflicts</td>
<td>The session offered weekly (2) case scenarios and we discussed our views in front of pastor as he guided with questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Shows the counseling session category and member satisfaction comments.
The member’s feedback on satisfaction with their counseling session was rated at a high level of satisfaction. Is the number of hours a counselor put into each session a determinant of satisfaction? According to previous data, the length of counseling sessions, nor hours is a strong indicator of effectiveness. Therefore, pastor participants that conducted less than twenty hours per week in counseling was determined by the size of their congregation and the type of counseling needed. As pastor 8 mentioned, encouragement is sometimes all that is needed rather than a lengthy meeting.

**Member’s Responses to Counseling Improvements.** Nonetheless, given the high satisfaction comments on pastoral counseling they did have improvement suggestions.

- Meet somewhere other than an office.
- Increase number of pre-marital sessions.
- More active listening
- Eliminate bias
- Follow-up

The members who were dissatisfied in their pastor’s counseling session perhaps can be a link to the 10.5% of pastors who reported they did not like to counsel. A second factor is that though highly educated some pastors lack sufficient training in counseling.

**Be as it may,** African American marriages are unique in their cultural structure and survival techniques. African Americans religious belief surrounding family and marital harmony is having a solid connection with the spirit.\(^{278}\) A native African traditional belief is the soul, body, and relationship harmony becomes balanced by the divine sustaining spirit. When the spirit that causes peaceful union is hampered by an intrusive force, then spiritual intervention is

sought out to restore the union of their souls. Furthermore, the bracing of their cultural ancestry and traditions undergird their survival to navigate through a trendy world. The comfort of counseling from someone of their cultural ancestry perhaps may prevent secular ideologies and intrusions of cultural shifts.

**Relevance of the Theological Framework**

This qualitative research in the work of pastoral counseling understood Christian theology as the main framework for ministry care of parishioners who needed one-on-one talk therapy. The essence of many of these pastors’ counseling is to provide or refer which is an ethical standard of the helping profession. Although, the profession of these pastor counselors implemented different theoretical counseling models, they nonetheless, remained spiritual and faith-based at heart.

In addition, the study indicated pastors used theoretical counseling models that were more favored toward the Solution-Focused, and Integration techniques. Regardless of the counseling model used, God and the work of the Holy Spirit were at the center of all intervention. The pastoral counselors were not clinicians and when counseling went beyond their skill level they referred the parishioner. Overall, amid counseling individuals or families facing unique challenges the pastoral counselor encouraged to remain God centered through the matter. This is the core of the pastoral counselor’s ministry work.

**Relevance of the Theoretical Framework**

Rethinking the way African Americans honor their community, traditions, and the significance of God in their communal spiritual experiences is what enlightens the concept of Black Cultural Theory. It is the significant participation of a cultural group to empower, educate, sustain, and promote personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship. The Black
congregations in this qualitative study have been a sample of the ritual practices, self-resourcing, and the many aspects that come with the work of the traditions in African American pastoral counseling. The examination of Cultural Context counseling has been the paradigm to counsel discriminations, Black families unique parenting styles, and the use of narrative influenced by the early slave tradition before it was expanded by Michael White. One important relevance of the Black Cultural Theory is the aspect of the link between cultural components who understand their behavioral patterns.279

Conclusion

This research focused on the significant work of the Black pastoral counselor and his or her influence on counseling self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship with parishioners. Responsible discipleship is defined in this study the commitment to God, the laws of country, and to fellow citizens. This term constitutes a sociological perspective to humanity and the self. This perspective means being true to the self in helping others, being true to the country, but also requesting the equality of those entities to be fair to them. From the spiritual perspective, responsible discipleship means to actualize the “love-ethic” Christ taught his disciples.

The findings in this study of recurrent themes and counseling effectiveness was based on a small sample of Black Church pastors. The limitation with this sample size is it does not speak on behalf of every Black Church denomination because of the interpreted differences in fundamental doctrines and structured church polity. However, the results of this study reveal the strengths and weaknesses of these Black Churches counseling program, further training, and

continued counseling education by partnering with the licensed professional community. The research shows that 77.8% of pastors in this study devoted less than twenty hours a week in counseling sessions with parishioners. In addition, the overall member satisfaction of effective change in their lives was 70%.

Quite surprisingly, there was not a significant difference in counseling themes between rural, urban, and suburban Churches. Most of the counseling themes dealt with self-worth, job advancement, family conflict, and marriage. Even so, many of the troubling issues that affected these parishioners are a result of challenges in the social structures. The specific message that is argued by members of the focused group study is that counseling is preferred by a counselor who identifies and share their culture, mores, and traditions.

However, findings from counseling multiracial congregations’ those pastors took a counseling approach that was strictly Solution-Focused. However, even if a licensed counselor has cross-cultural training, parishioners were more comfortable with a committed long-term relationship. This long-term relationship is one main reason Black parishioners prefer a pastoral counselor over a licensed counselor. Culturally shared traditions were the intent rather than the expertise of the counselor. Though, one salient weaknesses of the Black Church’s counseling program is the lack of a structured team that is trained in life coaching, basic counseling, and certified through the AACC.

Other findings in this study also revealed that Black pastoral counseling is transitioning from the typical storytelling to accepting other theoretical models like integration and Solution-Focused methods. The reasoning behind such a change is the influence of advanced education earned by these pastors. In as much as, obtaining professional degrees a large percentage of them are very supportive to refer to professional counseling. Pastoral counseling centers on counseling
parishioners through life’s changing and challenging circumstances while clinical counseling
treats the personality, emotions, and mental difficulties. It is found that perhaps Christians would
seek first counseling help through a pastoral counselor.

In all, pastor participants were found to bridge the gap between pastoral counseling and
professional counseling by seeing both as professions in the community to help people. One
major difference between these two professions is skill levels. Another difference is the method
and procedures of therapist interventions to counseling effective. Black pastoral counselors are
recognizable public influencers in the communities they serve. They are the foundational key to
referring and partnering with other licensed counseling professionals.
Chapter 5

Conclusion
  Introduction

In this final section, a discussion will entail the beginning of this research proposal and the results from the exploration of the research. The discussion will provide lessons learned and if any adjustments took place with the research design. In the final section of this chapter is a discussion about future recommendations for the success of Black Church Counseling Programs and suggestions on future recommended counseling research.

Beginning Proposal

The purpose of this qualitative study sought to explore the counseling practices among African American pastors in the Southeastern United States. Out of the ten states only six pastoral counselors from them participated. Regardless of these pastors’ denominations, inquiry examined how they perform counseling, prevalent issues counseled on, and the counseling models used. One finding is that most of their theoretical approaches differed from the researcher’s beginning assumptions. Findings in the member-focused interview questionnaire indicated a satisfaction with marital counseling conducted by their pastoral counselor. Of major importance is the pastoral counselor knowing when to refer marriages to a licensed counselor. Referring does not mean they were less capable but that they reached their skill level of competence. The licensed therapist can handle the many hard cases because of extensive training beyond the pastor. Pastors in this study referred individuals because of mental health issues and marriages when comprehensive treatment is needed, personality disorders, and rejection issues that interfere with the couple’s overall relationship. Findings by the researcher, opposite of his first assumption, discovered that narrative and cultural context models to counseling members in the Black church was not significant as the solution-focused model to handle most issues. The
researcher found out that cultural context counseling worked in counseling discriminations and family issues dealing with parenting. The transitions of these pastors to other models of counseling were influenced by education. The researcher implemented a mixed research design to explore the effectiveness of their counseling with members. These data collections included: digital surveys, selected pastors for the semi-structured interviews, and member focused questionnaire responses. Using these three methods ensured reliability and validity to the sample sized research conducted. Using a qualitative research approach to this study, yielded, at best, relevant contextual understanding of the pastor’s work and his perspective.

The gap quest in this research was to understand the actual practice and technique in their counseling plan with members. Does their competency level as a pastoral counselor maximize its art of practice to contribute to the overall satisfaction of the counselee? Other previous research viewed the opinions of the licensed counselor versus pastoral counseling. In addition, some research had been devoted to understanding why Black Americans decline to seek mental health counseling. However, this researcher’s goal was to go beyond theoretical opinions to discover the actual practice and dynamics of Black pastoral counselors’ effectiveness to satisfactorily counsel their parishioners. The overall results indicated that they are indeed a part of the professional counseling community, although, with counseling practices that are limited to their position. They are the key paraprofessionals that initiates and sustain a community partnership with licensed counselors.

**Implemented Research Project**

The research design in this study was qualitative and it used a phenomenological method of exploration to measure the effectiveness of Black pastoral counselors’ counseling techniques, looked at prevalent counseling issues of the parishioners that impacted low self-
worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship. The population of study for
the researcher was the states in the Southeastern region of the United States. The target
population was specific to Black pastoral counselors who were Senior pastors in Churches that
have over seven years of experience. Traditional denominations were significant to the
researcher as stated in the limitations section. However, only six states out of the ten
Southeastern states participated in the research study. There was no specific gender qualification
for this study. In fact, there was only one female participant that submitted the digital survey,
though, she was not a part of the semi-structured interview.

The tri-fold data collection consisted of 500 randomly emailed digital surveys,
conduction of 10 semi-structured interviews with selected pastors, and 10-member focused
interview questionnaires that evaluated their experience in counseling. As a result, only nineteen
of the pastor surveys were submitted from Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky,
and North Carolina. Selection of the ten pastors to be interviewed were based on availability,
educational background, church location, and congregational make-up. The interviewed pastor
selected and asked members if they wanted to volunteer to complete an evaluation of their
counseling experience. If the member volunteered, they were given a member questionnaire
open-ended survey link to complete and once submitted it populated in the researcher’s
collection. The requirement for members to participate in the volunteer study was an age
requirement of eighteen, of African American descent, and agree to the consent at the beginning
of the survey.

Review of the results proved that Black pastoral counselors were highly influenced by
educational achievements that impacted their practice to consider other counseling models and
influenced their decision to refer parishioners to a licensed professional counselor. It was noted
the work of several pastors who had partnerships with professional counseling services in the community. A significant highlight that was revealing is that many of them understood the competence level and different practices between pastoral care and counseling verses psychological therapy. Pastor 5 indicated during the semi-structured interview that some pastors cause more harm to individuals when they go beyond their ability to counsel. He clarified the position of the practices of pastoral care and counseling by alluding to his service as Christ mandated him to visit the sick, aid the hungry, and pray and evangelize the spiritually lost. Moreover, he mentioned that his work as a counselor was more of a listener, prayer mediator, and assist the counselee to find solutions that work even if it is referral to licensed counseling. Pastor 10 who also interviewed with the researcher has a Ph.D. in Biblical counseling and he specified that he is more systematic in making application the Word of God to a counselee’s issues. However, psychological counseling involves extensive treatment methods that is specified for the specific counseling issue. He adds, counselors in this discipline apply scientific theory treatment to disorders, anxiety, and help to restructure negative behaviors.

Nevertheless, the researcher noted that to bridge both professional disciples should only come from the expertise of a licensed Christian psychotherapist. To add, the pastor counselor that goes beyond his capability to counsel in mental health will result in grave consequences such as lawsuits and even potential death of a counselee. The premise for any pastoral counselor is to counsel parishioners on life adjustments and encourage them to remember past lessons and apply them in other living experiences.

Despite success in the numbers of parishioners coming for counseling, this study was limited by the sampling participation from states which affected generalizability. There was non-participation from five remaining Southeastern States (Mississippi, Florida, West Virginia, and
South Carolina). The second reason for limited generalizability is due to the small sampling size from submitted pastoral surveys. The researcher limited responses to one and a half months. The small samples of data collection insight that came from the pastors and members is good for making adjustments to their ministries. However, these small samples of voices, techniques, and themes is not a true representation for a larger population of study.280

The themes findings that affected the variables of low self-worth, personal efficacy, motivation, and responsible discipleship were challenges to cultural identity comfort, self-esteem struggles in young females, family conflict that affected male efficacy, and marriage issues. To add, cultural context counseling was only recommended to counsel various types of discriminations. One weakness of the member-focused interview questionnaire is that it lacked insight on other issues other than marriage. This may have been the result of a limited time frame to respond. The most popular counseling method used among educated Black pastoral counselors was the solution-focused and integration models to counsel.

Lastly, evaluations from the member-focused interview questionnaire showed that members were highly satisfied with the counseling effectiveness of their pastoral counselor that they sought not to seek licensed professional counselors. A second reason for the services of a pastoral counselor was it was convenient (no cost, accessible, prior relationship, and faith-based) to them. However, one disadvantage of the member-focused feedback is there was no evaluation made by the 70% of females who struggled with self-esteem issues who lived in a rural setting and the 75% of them who lived in an urban setting (see figure 1.13 and 1.16). Their feedback would evaluated the effectiveness of their pastoral counselor on dealing with low self-worth.

---

Complications to the Research Design

As the research began after the IRB approval, the researcher’s original design included mailing out randomly 500 digital surveys to Black pastors who headed churches. The disheartening discovery was no large responses except two. Due to the pandemic, many church offices were closed, and many answering machines were full. It had no other room to leave messages. With the two that replied, they knew pastors in different states, and they referred me to them. Thus, the original random sampling design turned into a snowball sampling. The responding pastors texted the digital survey to their pastor friends and they completed and submitted the digital survey. To that end, the research gained a total of 19 pastoral participants. The researcher learned that the key to getting a completed submitted survey is via relationships. If people do not know you, they will not trust you. The original research design lacked at least being acquainted. Therefore, potential pastor participants hesitated to participate in the study.

Recommendations for Black Church Counseling Programs

One main positive that came out of this research study is the enlightenment to pastors that there was a much need to implement an effective counseling program. The preached Word and the ministry of counseling are for the Church to grow and spiritual growth for the individual Christian. During the exploratory research it was found by the researcher that African American Churches lacked basic counseling training for lay leaders. To make this a reality and to operate an effective counseling program the senior pastor and staff must identify dedicated, Holy, gifted, and committed leaders that are willing to undergo training.

The team can be supported through training from the AAPC, CPE, and AACC to be credentialed as a Board-Certified Coach (BCC), Certified Life Coach (CLC) or Spiritual Coach Certification. In addition, a basic counseling certification can be earned through training from the
American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) that teaches basic counseling skills, analysis methods, and counseling ethics.\textsuperscript{281} The team also can be trained a certified in grief counseling and certified as a tragedy response counselor. The beneficial aspect of building a team of counselors in churches, is that it will free up some time for the senior pastor to devote more time to Word studies and to schedule pastoral care appointments. Several pastors during the semi-structured interview commented on the lack of time to fulfill counseling and pastoral care demands, and not to mention sermon preparation time. The senior pastor the researcher learned during the research that the pastor was a one-servant multi-tasker.

The second suggestion on how to establish a counseling program is to work through a faith-based community grant, which can incorporate a licensed professional counselor. With an establishment of a possible counseling center that has a head licensed counselor, Life Coaches, and basic certified counselors, it would be a great ministry to perform extended duties of pastoral care and counseling. It must be reiterated again that pastoral care and counseling is not the go ahead to counsel mental illness, personality disorders, nor childhood rejection and abandonment issues. Those descriptive competencies are for the specialized licensed counselor, such as, Christian psychologist, clinical psychologist, and mental health specialist. The church program center of counselors is mainly support teams to guide the counselee to professional counseling, if need be, and perhaps counsel them through living adjustment that causes them stress.

**Recommended Future Counseling Research**

Since there are many factors that contribute to the counseling needs among African Americans, they become comfortable with same identity counseling. A recommendation that grows out of this study is to include pastoral participants in the digital survey that are White but

\textsuperscript{281} See www.aacc.net
pastor a predominantly African American church and to add survey questions pertaining to their counseling experiences of their African American parishioners.

A second suggestion for future research is to explore other minorities counseling practices and issues in their churches. Those minority community Christians can be Islanders, Mexican American Churches, and Korean American Baptist Churches.

A third research suggestion to conduct future research among African Americans is to study and evaluate how they counsel on suicidal members or those in their communities that have come to the Church for help.

A fourth suggestion on a recommend future research is to study the practices of counseling within in a multiracial mega church settings. Do they have a counseling center and if so how do they operate in handling and rectifying issues among their members? Does the cultural diversity of membership complicate counseling effectiveness because of perhaps limited ethnic available counselors?

A fifth suggestion is to research counseling effectiveness and practice of multicultural congregations across various faith groups in America. A final study suggestion for further recommended research is to analyze the effectiveness and satisfaction of cross-cultural counseling done in a multiracial congregation.

A sixth suggestion is to research the dynamics of the grieving and grief counseling of African Americans.

**Conclusion**

This research study is qualitative and used a phenomenological method of analysis to measure the effectiveness on Black Church pastors’ abilities to counsel their members. This study also used the theoretical framework of the Black Cultural Theory to examine the dynamics
of cultural context counseling of pastors located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The Black Cultural Theory dominated the ideology and practice of relating to others with a shared identity and the traditions and mores of parenting that operates within Black families. This theory also influenced the ideal of Cultural Context Counseling when counseling on discriminations. In earlier African adjustments to the challenges faced in colonialization cultural context counseling was a means that identified with the sufferer, supported, and encouraged responsible discipleship to God and his creation of humanity.

Within this study, the Black Church is moved toward a more contemporary style of worship and of counseling techniques. This upgrade to counseling that moved from storytelling to using intricate counseling interventions are influenced by their advanced education. Because of pertinent mixed congregations, Black pastoral counselors are challenged to become more cross cultural in their counseling ministry practices. As the challenge for the licensed community to train in cross cultural education, so much more for the Black community of pastoral counselors need to train cross culturally in preparation for meeting the needs of diversity within their growing congregations.

More broadly, the Scriptures support the ideal of counseling and worship to and in a multiracial community. Revelation 7:9 affirms that cross cultural worship is achieved, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,” (ESV). To add, Jesus also counseled across cultures, for example, the woman near the well, received counseling on the troubles in her relationships. Jesus said, “for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your
husband. The woman replied, what you have said is true” (John 4:18 ESV). The researcher believes counseling anyone is based on truth rather than a shared ethnicity.

Due in part to the small sample size of pastoral participants this researcher study is limited in the use of a more sophisticated research analysis software. The statistical analysis computed in this research used a basic software in Google Docs. However, for those who are pursuing a Ph.D. level of education a more advanced software is advised to do qualitative research analysis.

All in all, this research measured the practices of Black pastoral counselors and the results of their effects on parishioner’s satisfaction are proven to be sufficient given their competency level of what pastoral counselors do. Their work is certainly not clinical in practice but assist and guide other in challenges to living adjustments. Pastoral counseling is another kind of professional counseling that supports faith in the Word, spiritual growth, and trust through challenges.
Bibliography


Seligman, Martin E.P. “Positive Psychology: A Personal History,” Annual Reviews of Clinical Psychology, (December 3, 2018)


Appendix A: Recruitment Pastor Email Letter

Dear Pastor Participant:

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Pastoral Counseling. The title of my research project is African American Pastoral Counseling: The Dynamics on Self-worth, Personal Efficacy, Motivation, and Responsible Discipleship and the purpose of my research is to study the therapeutic intervention of Cultural Context Counseling and its effects on the outcomes of parishioner self-worth and personal motivation that will affect their discipleship interactions in the broader community. I am writing to invite eligible pastors to join my study.

Pastor participants must be 18 years of age or older, ethnicity of African American, and actively pastoring for 7 years or more. Participants will be asked to complete an online survey. It should take a total of 20 minutes to complete the survey. Your name and/or other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain anonymous and coded.

To participate, please click here [https://forms.gle/pGCbjeu6JDPd7gQ26] to complete the online survey by [DATE].

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please electronically sign and date the consent form and then proceed to the survey.

Sincerely,

Charles T. Walker
Doctoral Candidate Liberty University
cwalker115@liberty.edu
Date

Dear Senior Pastor:

Our recent telephone conversation of your willingness to participate in my final steps of research as a Doctoral Candidate is a significant honor. With your many years of pastoral counseling and experience, I am certain your invaluable input will help to make pastoral counseling a primary ministry in the life of the Church.

The online survey link is https://forms.gle/v8W1keS4JZrdK651A. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Once finished please hit the submit button.

Thank you, so kindly for your time and invaluable input.

Sincerely,

Charles T. Walker
Doctoral Candidate Liberty University
cwalker115@liberty.edu
Appendix C: Pastoral Counselor Survey

1. The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in the interview portion of this study (if selected).
   1. Yes
   2. No

2. Please type your First Name MI and Last Name and Today's Date below.

3. The Pastor completing this survey please provide your contact information (phone number and email address).

4. How many years have you pastored?
   - Less than 7 years
   - 7-12 years
   - 13-25 years
   - 26 or more years

5. Do you identify as being African American?
   - Yes
   - No

6. What is your age?
   - 18-35
   - 36-45
   - 46-65
   - 66-75

7. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

8. What is your Church’s denomination?
   - Baptist (Missionary, Independent, Progressive, National, American, Southern, Primitive etc.)
   - Pentecostal
   - Non-denomination
   - Full Gospel
   - Other
9. What State is your Church located?
   - Georgia
   - Alabama
   - Florida
   - Kentucky
   - Mississippi
   - N. Carolina
   - S. Carolina
   - Tennessee
   - Maryland
   - West Virginia

10. What type of services do you hold?
   - Traditional
   - Contemporary
   - Liturgical
   - Gospel

11. What is your level of Education?
   - H.S.
   - Some college
   - B.A. or B. S.
   - Master’s
   - Doctoral
   - Licensed Psychologist, Counselor
   - Other

12. What was your degree concentration?
   - Biblical
   - Theology
   - Pastoral Theology
   - Religion
   - Counseling
   - Social work
   - Ministry
   - Other

13. What type of Degree?
   - Divinity
   - Ph.D.
   - Ed.D
   - Bachelor
   - Associates
   - Professional Counseling License
   - None
14. What is the total number of years in the Pastorate?
   - 7-10 years
   - 11-16 years
   - 17-20 years
   - 21-25 years
   - 26-30 years
   - 31 or more years

15. What is your congregation’s demographics?
   - African American
   - African descent
   - Islanders
   - Mostly mixed

16. What area is your Church’s location?
   - Urban
   - Rural
   - Suburban

17. What is your essential counseling ministry work?
   - 1. Counseling young adults
   - 2. Counseling couples
   - 3. Counseling teens
   - 4. Counseling middle aged
   - 5. Counseling elderly
   - 1 & 2
   - 1 & 3
   - Other

18. What has been your primary counseling topic?
   - 1. Divorce/separation
   - 2. Depression
   - 3. Career
   - 4. Self-love, image & self-esteem
   - 5. Emphasis on work ethics
   - 6. Emphasis on spiritual growth
   - 2 & 4
   - 3 & 5
   - Other

19. How many hours a week do you counsel?
   - 20> hours
   - 20<hours
20. How important is counseling in your ministry?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

21. How likely would you refer members to professional counseling?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

22. How important is Biblical counseling?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

23. Honestly, how do you rate your counseling abilities?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

24. Honestly, how do you rate one having a counseling degree?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

25. What impact does counseling have on a member’s self-worth?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

26. What impact does counseling have on a member’s motivation?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

27. What impact does counseling have on member discipleship?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

28. What impact does counseling have on handling discriminations?
   - 1  2  3  4  5

29. What improvements are needed in your counseling program?
   - Certification
   - Licensure
   - Faith based counseling grant
   - Community services partnership
   - Life Coach
   - Other

30. Have you counseled suicide ideation?
   - Yes
   - No

31. If you have counseled on suicide ideation, what factors lead to a member’s negative thinking?
   - 1. Mental illness
   - 2. Depression
   - 3. Self-esteem
   - 4. Health concerns
32. In your opinion, what contributes to counseling in depression?
   - 1. Dysfunctional family
   - 2. Substance abuse
   - 3. Societal oppression/racism
   - 4. Self-love or self-worth
   - 5. Lack of motivation
   - 1 & 4
   - 3 & 5
   - Other

33. In your experience, what type of counseling do you prefer?
   - Narrative (stories)
   - 1. Solution-focus (lead member to make their own decision)
   - 2. Cultural context (help member deal with forms of discrimination)
   - 3. Psychological (emotional & physical issues)
   - 4. Integrative (spiritual & psychological)
   - 2 & 3
   - 1 & 5

34. Do you like to counsel?
   - Yes
   - No

35. In your own words, what does counsel mean?

36. In your ministry what is the primary type of counseling you do that affects African American males?
   - 1. Societal discrimination
   - 2. Education
   - 3. Family dysfunctions
   - 4. Career happiness
   - 5. Loss of hope
   - 1 & 5
   - 2 & 4
   - 3 & 5
   - Other

37. What is the primary type of counseling you do that affects African American women?
   - 1. Self-esteem
   - 2. Parenting
38. What is the primary type of counseling you do that affects African American teens?
   o 1. Self-love
   o 2. Pregnancy
   o 3. Family issues
   o 4. Abuse
   o 1 & 4
   o 1 & 3
   o 2 & 3
   o Other

39. What is the primary type of counseling you do that affects marriages?
   o 1. Communication
   o 2. Separation/divorce
   o 3. Romance
   o 4. Feeling appreciated
   o 5. Infidelity
   o 1 & 4
   o 2 & 5
   o 3 & 4
   o Other
Appendix D: Consent Form
Consent General Form: Pastoral Counselors

Title of the Project: African American Pastoral Counseling: The Dynamics on Self-worth, Personal Efficacy, Motivation, and Responsible Discipleship

Principal Investigator: Charles T. Walker, Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity: Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be African American, a pastor, and have had 7 or more years of pastoral leadership experience. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
The purpose of the study is to study the therapeutic intervention of Cultural Context Counseling and analyze the benefited reports of members receiving pastoral counseling. The study will examine its program effects on members’ self-worth and personal motivation that will affect their discipleship interactions in the broader community.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an online survey. This will take about 20 minutes to complete.

2. Participate in an interview: 10 participants will be purposefully selected from the survey based on their counseling frequency and location to participate in an interview. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes and will consist of 15 open-ended questions. If selected for this procedure, it will take about 30 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include the understanding on how to lead an effective cultural context counseling program within the African American Church.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks involved in this study involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
• Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms and codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
• Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is study participation voluntary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher conducting this study is Charles T. Walker. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to email him at <a href="mailto:cwalker115@liberty.edu">cwalker115@liberty.edu</a>. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. David C. Dixon, at <a href="mailto:dcdixon@liberty.edu">dcdixon@liberty.edu</a>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at <a href="mailto:irb@liberty.edu">irb@liberty.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You may print a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in the interview portion of this study (if selected).

Printed Subject Name ___________________________ Signature & Date ___________________________

Version Date: 04/04/2020
Appendix E: Structured Interview Questions: Pastoral Counselors

1. Can you describe the primary focus of your ministry regarding families?

2. Can you describe your counseling practice in your congregation? The structure and process please explain.

3. What group is the main counseling focus in your ministry? What group (families, individuals, youth, married etc.) the main topic focused on?

4. Explain the main factor that affects morale when persons come to you for counseling?

5. What would you say are the factors affecting morale in families? Including youth.

6. Explain the prime issues in counseling single moms? black families?

7. Describe what counseling models you use (storytelling, integration model, cultural identification as a form of counseling, etc. Why?

8. Describe your primary counseling area strength. Why?

9. Describe what area in counseling you would like to improve. Why?

10. What is your counseling intervention helps, supports or process?

11. What does identity counseling mean to you? Describe an experience in counseling? Do you prefer counselees to receive same identity counseling? Why?

12. Counseling women, what is the primary factor affecting personal drive? teens? males?

13. Counseling the middle-aged, what is the primary factor that affects their self-worth?

14. Explain your reason to refer or not a member to professional counseling services.

15. Does your counseling program have a team of counselors? Why or why not?

16. Describe some ways to improve your Church's counseling program?

17. Describe a scenario of counseling on self-worth?
Appendix F: Member Focused Questionnaire

1. Please type your First MI, and Last Name. Please type today’s date.

2. Do you consent to be interviewed without coercion?

3. What is your age?
   - 18-25
   - 26-35
   - 36-45
   - 46-55
   - 56 and up

4. What is your gender?

5. Type of counseling received.

6. Length of counseling
   - 1 hour
   - 2 hours
   - Over several meetings

7. Describe the counseling plan presented. Did it relate to your issue?

8. What was beneficial about the counseling session?

9. What could have been better about your session?

10. Explain why you chose a pastoral counselor over a professional counselor?

11. When depressed, do you retreat from church attendance? Responsibilities? call-in to work? Do you start to quit things?

12. Describe your ideal counselor?

13. In your opinion what advice would you give to help improve the counseling program in this church?

14. What was the process to receive counseling?
   - Appointment
   - Immediate
   - Return phone call
Appendix G: IBR Approval

IRB #: IRB-FY19-20-279
Title: African American Pastoral Counseling: The Dynamics on Self-worth, Personal Efficacy, Motivation, and Responsible Discipleship
Creation Date: 4-4-2020
End Date: 
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Charles Walker
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor: 

Study History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submission Type</th>
<th>Review Type</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Expedited</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Study Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Dixon</td>
<td>Co-Principal Investigator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dcddixon@liberty.edu">dcddixon@liberty.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Walker</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cwalker115@liberty.edu">cwalker115@liberty.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Walker</td>
<td>Primary Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cwalker115@liberty.edu">cwalker115@liberty.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>