

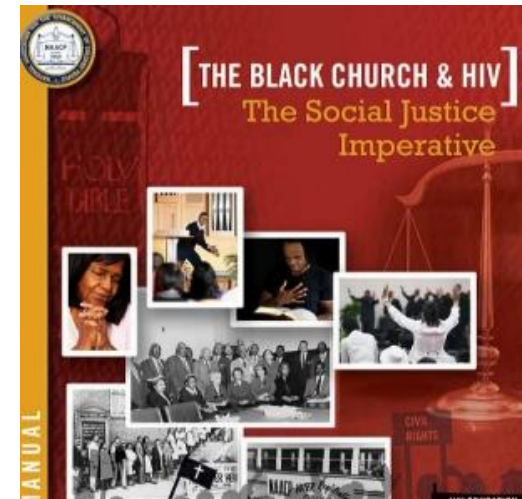
Formative research of faith-based approaches in HIV prevention in the Mid-South

Black Gay Research Group Summit
Atlanta, GA
January 14, 2015



HIV Prevention in Black Churches

- Hosting annual HIV testing days
- Building capacity to deliver HIV services
- Observance of World AIDS Day
- Implementing interventions
 - HIV education
 - Stigma reduction
 - Sexual decision-making



Agate, Cato, Watson Mullins et al., 2005; Berkley-Patton, Bowe-Thompson, Martinez et al., 2012; Francis & Liverpool, 2009; Griffith, Campbell, Allen et al., 2010; Williams, Palar & Derose, 2011

Significance of Partnerships

- Movement to increase partnerships between health professionals and faith communities
- Through partnership approaches we can collectively bring diverse areas of expertise together to reduce and eliminate disparities
- Evidence of successful partnerships in the public health literature to build from

Community-Based Participatory Research

- Involves all partners in the research process
- Recognizes the unique strengths that each partner brings
- Begins with a research topic of importance to the community
- Aims to improve health outcomes and eliminate health disparities

Study Purpose

- Describe findings from a qualitative study of African American faith leaders' readiness to address sexuality and sexual health teachings in their congregations.



Methods

- Recruitment and Eligibility
 - Professional and Personal networks
 - Electronic Listserv, letters and flyers
- Co-Development of Measures
 - Focus group/interview protocols
 - Demographic questionnaire
- Qualitative Data Analysis
 - Focus groups independently coded by 2 individuals
 - Coders compared and contrasted categories via open coding
 - Disagreements resolved by discussing disputed text

Levels of Readiness

- Church structure
- Denominational characteristics
- Leadership
- Church efforts to address HIV
- Congregation knowledge of efforts
- Congregation knowledge about issue
- Congregation attitudes and climate
- Resources

Survey Measures

- **Demographic information** (e.g., age, sex, educational attainment)
- **Theological training** (if applicable)
- **Denominational characteristics** (e.g., congregation size, average age of congregation, faith tradition, pastoral views on sexual health, congregants living with HIV/AIDS)
- **Comfort level** (e.g., addressing sexuality and sexual health related issues with youth and adult congregants)

Sample Characteristics

Demographic	Faith Leaders (N=26)
Gender	65% female
Education	31% seminary school
Marital Status	54% married
Denomination	65% Baptist
Leadership Role	35% Pastor

Comfort Level

Topic	% Very Comfortable	
	Adult	Youth
Condoms	61.5	57.7
Homosexuality	61.5	57.7
Anal Sex	42.3	36.0

Theme 1 - Importance of Scripture: “it's our job to teach Bible”

The Bible says teach them to observe all things.

Awareness and education ... we have had members who were living with HIV and they have been embraced. ...but I'm not saying anything about condoms.

We go back in Biblical teaching concerning relationships. We feel that you should be married couples before you indulge in sexual activities.

I think that's part of the reason why the church has been sort of negligent in addressing the issue around HIV because of the homosexual -- the church's stance on homosexuality.

There is not a lot of room in our teaching for homosexuality. Homosexuality in our bylaws is not received. Our teaching is that God made man and woman and that's the teaching.

Theme 2 - The Price of Stigma: “the church has to stop judging and start ministering”

I say the stigma's there we will have brochures on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, risk factors and everybody that will pass by, like, they don't see it...But if you leave those out and after everything is over you go back they're all gone because people do want to know, but it's just the stigma. They don't want to be seen there.

The guys are not going to come out and talk openly about it because of the stigma that's attached to the homosexual behavior that's going on in the jails and it is a lot of it, believe me. I mean our young men -- African American males are participating in this behavior big time in the jails. Then they come out of the jails, get back with their girlfriends and that's why you see the numbers.

Theme 3 - The Danger of Silence: “It's silence....That's the word.”

But in the rural areas people are very secretive. They don't talk so, I think, you know, that needs to be broken. If you can break the shell of that you can get more, you know, education to them. But they're very secretive and they will not let you into what's going on with them so that's one of the things that I picked up on.

Until it hits home you really don't pay attention until, one of your friends have it, your cousin, somebody. That's when you want to talk about it.

Many of the people we deal with were brought up in poverty, and it has its own culture. If you're in a culture where you don't have a lot of money what do you promote -- your, sexuality. I'm a man, you know, I can make babies. That becomes a dominant thing. The more babies you got, the more man you are, you know, in their own thinking.

Summary

- Faith leaders were not monolithic in their teachings of sexual health
- While promoting abstinence as the ideal, faith leaders recognized educating congregations about prevention was necessary as many were aware of church members' premarital sexual activity.
- Discussion around sexuality had implications on perpetuating stigma

Implications and Conclusion

- Incorporating Screening in Prevention Efforts
 - Encouraging knowledge of HIV status
 - Normalizing HIV/STI testing
- Faith-based Interventions
 - Vulnerable/at risk populations
 - The context of suicidal ideations
- Communicating with Families
 - Children/teens
 - Elderly

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