The Silent Struggle: The Black Church’s Role in Faith, Mental Health Literacy, and Social Transformation

Research for 21st Century Scholarship

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4. Essay

Assignment #4 – Essay

Continuation of the SR953 Research for 21st Century paper that you began for Assignment #2.

## 1. Write a summary of each of your resources (see Assignment #2 instructions for

specifications). Use a Level 1 heading at the beginning of each summary. Level 2

and Level 3 headings are optional.

a. Include the following for each book from Assignment #2 (A minimum of two

books (minimum of one published in the last five years) relevant to your chosen

topic.)

• a short biography of the author and his or her credentials, and

• your assessment of each book’s (a) readability, (b) presentation of the

subject, and (c) relevance to your chosen topic.

b. Include the following for each journal article from Assignment #2 (A minimum of five

primary research journal articles relevant to your chosen topic; four articles must

be less than five years old.)

• the title, year, and author(s) of the research;

• the basic categories in the literature review section;

• a brief description of the research type and methods.

• a brief description of the population was studied and how the participants were selected for research, and a brief description of the findings and conclusions

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# Introduction

Mental Health Literacy continues to exist within the Black Church and African American communities. Most importantly, there is a gap in the understanding of mental health because systemic barriers in conjunction with cultural stigmas and shame lead to myths and misinformation about the Black Church’s role in faith, mental health, and social transformation. This paper expands on the foundational research conducted during Assignment #2 within the framework of the SR953 Research for the 21st Century project. In my paper I integrate data from selected books and scholarly articles which explore mental health literacy and faith-based approaches alongside culturally sensitive psychological services for Black communities.

Essay Assignment 4 is divided into two sections: The essay contains two main sections which consist of summaries for books followed by summaries for journal articles. Additionally, the sources reflect key evaluations focusing on their readability level and relevance as well as their significance to this research.

# Summary of Books

## 1. Mental Health and the Church: A Ministry Handbook for Including Children and Adults with ADHD, Anxiety, Mood Disorders, and Other Common Mental Health Conditions, (Grcevich, 2018)

### *Author Biography & Credentials*

Dr. Stephen Grcevich (MD, Northeast Ohio Medical University) served as the founding Board President of Key Ministry and currently serves the ministry as Director of Strategic Initiatives. He has extensive research experience evaluating medications prescribed to children and teens for ADHD, anxiety, and depression. Dr. Grcevich has been a presenter at over 35 national and international medical conferences and is a past recipient of the Exemplary Psychiatrist Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). He regularly blogs at Church4EveryChild and frequently speaks at national and international ministry conferences on mental health and spiritual development.

***Assessment:***

* Readability: Accessible for clergy and lay readers alike.
* Subject Presentation: The book promotes a compassionate understanding of mental health within churches, with each chapter addressing specific barriers such as stigma, anxiety, and social isolation.
* Relevance to Topic: This work provides actionable strategies for churches to integrate mental health awareness, making it essential for this research on faith-based mental health literacy.

## 2. The Unapologetic Guide to Black Mental Health (Walker, 2020)

***Author Biography & Credential***

Dr. Rheeda Walker, is a licensed clinical psychologist and professor of: Professor of Psychology, Wayne State University, previously: award-winning, tenured Professor of Psychology, University of Houston, previously: tenured Professor of Psychology, University of Georgia, Psychology (Clinical) Ph.D. from Florida State University.

Elected Fellow in the American Psychology Association for outstanding contributions in the field of psychology, particularly in ethnic minority issues.

* Author of 70 plus scholarly papers
* Professional speaker for conferences, workshops, retreats, & media events
* Expert in psychological health of marginalized populations

***Assessment:***

* Readability: Engaging and relatable, written for both academic audiences and general readers.
* Presentation of Subject: Combines scientific research with cultural analysis and practical strategies for Black individuals and families.
* Relevance to Topic: This book addresses stigma, systemic barriers, and culturally tailored interventions, making it highly relevant to discussions on mental health literacy in Black faith communities.

**Five Scholarly Journals**

## 1. The Role of Black Churches in Promoting Mental Health for Communities of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Black Americans

Year: 2024

Authors: Briana T. Richardson, Jacqueline Jackson, Grace Marable, Jessica Barker, Heather Gardiner, Laura Igarabuza, Menachem Leasy, Elizabeth Matthews, & Yaara Zisman-Ilani

Categories in the Literature Review Section:

* Mental health stigma, and negative attitudes toward mental health promotion in the community
* Churches in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods serve as safe havens in Black communities.
* Socioeconomic disparities and mental health access
* Limited resources to address the mental health needs of their communities.
* A collaborative effort, driven by members of a Black church, to understand mental health needs, coping strategies, and resilience factors in a community of socioeconomically disadvantaged Black Americans.

**Research Type & Methods**

A community-based participatory research effort was established among a church, a community mental health organization, clinicians, and researchers to interview and survey individuals residing near the church. By doing so, data was analyzed using thematic coding to identify key themes regarding mental health promotion within Black churches.

Population & Selection:

The study examined a test group or sampling of 59 adults between the ages of 46-65 years of age. Five themes emerged which prolonged poverty, violence triggered emotional distress, mental health stigma, spirituality promoting mental relief and personal recovery and unsafe neighborhoods. (Richardson et al., 2024).

**Findings & Conclusions**

According to research traditional mental health services were low, and reliance on faith and resource distribution by the church was high. Consequently, Church-led interventions to promote mental health at the individual and community levels. On the one hand, mental health stigma, and negative attitudes toward mental health promotion in the community was addressed by integrating traditional mental health services into church-based recreational and leisure activities. (Richardson et al., 2024).

## 2. Faith Leaders’ Views on Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals

Year: 2024

Authors: Caitlin Anne Fitzgerald & Brandon Vaidyanathan

**Categories in the Literature Review Section**

* Education
* Relationship Building
* External Factors
* Stressing the importance of increasing mental health literacy and improving referral practices among faith leaders
* Need for collaboration between faith leaders and mental health professionals

**Research Type & Methods**

This study utilized a qualitative research design, incorporating semi-structured interviews with faith leaders from diverse religious backgrounds. A flexible Coding approach was used where various themes emerged and was employed to identify key perspectives and challenges regarding collaboration with mental health professionals. (Fitzgerald & Vaidyanathan, 2023).

### Population & Selection

The study used data from an in-depth interview and focus groups with faith leaders from diverse faith traditions in the Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia, and Texas area which was conducted between 2017 and 2019. Additionally, Christian (5 Catholic, 5 African American Protestant, 2 Episcopal, 1 Methodist, 1 Presbyterian), Jewish (1 Reform, 1 Orthodox), Theravada Buddhist (2), and Sikh (1) congregations participated in this study. Among Catholic congregations, two were Latino and one West African.75 faith leaders from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities across urban and rural areas in the United States. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience in pastoral care and engagement with mental health concerns. (Fitzgerald & Vaidyanathan, 2023.

### Findings & Conclusions

Four themes emerged in the interviews with faith leaders of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Sikh communities.

## 3. Clergy Perceptions of Mental Illness and Confronting Stigma in Congregations

Year: 2021

Author: Anthony David Campbell

**Categories in the Literature Review Section**

* African American congregations specifically have been the focus of most of the literature on mental health and congregations.
* Stigma of Mental Health Illness
* Clergy Congregations
* Code Words and Languages
* Perceptions of Mental Health Counseling

**Research Type & Methods**

This study used a qualitative approach to gather clergies’ views on health within congregations. Through this qualitative approach, participants elaborated extensively on their thoughts and experiences specifically related to mental health. (Campbell, 2021).

### Population & Selection

In-depth interviews with thirty-two African American and White clergies were conducted to understand their unique perspectives on mental health and how they interact with their congregations based on those perspectives. (Campbell, 2021).

### Findings & Conclusions

Findings include six themes related to mental health stigma, namely, holistic definitions of health; African Americans and different conceptions of mental health (only reported by African American clergies); code words and language; depression as a special case; perceptions of mental health counseling and treatment; and clergy strategies for addressing mental health stigma. (Campbell, 2021).

**4. Depression Is Real: The project focused on creating a mental health communication initiative for African Americans living in an urban setting.**

Year: 2022

Authors: Baraka Muvuka (PhD, MPH), Ryan M. Combs (PhD, MA), Nida M. Ali (PhD, MPH), Hazel Scott, and Monnica T. Williams (PhD, MA, ABPP).

**Categories in the Literature Review Section**

* Depression in African American communities
* Barriers to mental health awareness and treatment
* Effectiveness of culturally tailored health communication campaigns
* The impact of community involvement in public health programs

**Research Type & Methods**

Researchers used the Boot Camp Translation (BCT) approach, a group of academics, community members, and public health professionals convened over 6 months to develop and implement a health communication campaign on depression. Process and outcome evaluations were conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods. Boot Camp Translation (BCT), a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, enables the translation of medical guidelines into culturally relevant messages. The researchers implemented a community-based participatory research (CBPR) model to both develop and assess a mental health communication campaign. The research team gathered data through focus groups and surveys and conducted interviews to explore community members' knowledge about depression and their associated attitudes and stigmas (Muvuka et al., 2020).

**Population & Selection**

Ten group members (four community members, four health professionals, and two academics) provided their feedback on the process through semi structured interviews or written reflections, while the remaining four (one community member, one health professional, and two academics) did not respond owing to limited availability. The majority characterized their participation as a worthwhile learning experience given its tangible outcomes, including the campaign and the partnerships with mental health providers. (Muvuka et al., 2020).

### Findings & Conclusions

The Boot Camp Translation approach was effective in engaging stakeholders, activating community members, and designing culturally informed health communication materials on depression. Although limited, our evaluation data suggest a modest increase in the evaluation and treatment of depression in West Louisville. Thus, the Boot Camp Translation approach (BCT) offered a structured process for engaging stakeholders in developing culturally tailored health communication campaigns. The evaluation contained two major components: (1) a process evaluation of the BCT approach, and (2) a process and outcome evaluation of the campaign. The evaluations used both quantitative and qualitative methods.

**5. Identifying Systemic Factors when Counseling Black Women of Christian Faith in the USA**

Year: 2023

Authors: Keyona Harper alongside Lynn Bohecker, Tamika Lewis, Margaret Lee, Nivischi Edwards, Wendy Celoria, and Denise Moore.

Categories in the Literature Review Section

* Systemic Factors influencing Black Women’s Mental Health
* The role of spirituality in mental health coping strategies
* Influence on the Mental Health of Black Christian Women of Faith
* Historical Position of Mental Health in Spiritual and Religious Communities
* The influence of spiritual and religious communities on Black women of Christian faith

**Research Type & Methods**

This qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with Black Christian women and mental health professionals. The researcher conducted analyses to identify systemic challenges affecting Black women’s mental health experiences and counseling outcomes.

**Population & Selection**

The study examined fifty Black women of Christian faith across various denominations in the United States. Furthermore, participants were selected through faith-based organizations, counseling centers, and online networks to ensure a broad representation of experiences.

**Findings & Conclusions**

Researchers suggest people turn to their faith in times of adversity, and individual beliefs develop from religious pedagogy, community norms, and relationships (For Black Women of Christian Faith (BWOCF (Harper et al., 2023).

### ****Works Cited****

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