Black Youth Project
Religion

Paula Nicole Booke
University of Chicago

Introduction

Religion[1] is of central importance in the African American community. Christian

Protestantism[2], as well as other religions such as Islam and various forms of African spiritualism

(while these latter forms have been subjects of less study), have all been important to cultural

development in African American communities. There has been some disagreement among

scholars as to whether or not the role religion has played in the development of African

American consciousness, sexuality, and politics has been positive or negative. However, the

importance of religion and its institutions in the perceptions of community members has been

virtually unquestioned. Scholarship has shown that religion has a meaningful impact on the

political and psychological consciousness of many African American's, including young adults,

with important consequences for their decision-making processes. This memo highlights some

important periods in the development of Black religion, its effects on politics, and its impact on

the decision making of African American young adults[3] with regard to sexuality, and sexual

practice. Religion is an important part of the African American experience and has the potential

to impact every aspect of life including attitudes about politics, culture, and sexuality.

African Americans as a group believe that religion has had a positive effect on the overall

condition of Blacks in America (Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Taylor et al. 1987). African Americans

---

[1] In this memorandum the concepts of religion and religious institutions are used interchangeable. There may indeed be important distinctive between the experience of Afro-Christianity and the Black Church, however, a vast majority of the literature conflates the two concepts. This is likely due to concerns over operationalization of the concept of religion itself as a variable for analysis. As a result the review of the literature on African American religion will not seek to differentiate between the two concepts.

[2] The focus of this article is limited in scope to the role of generally to Afro-Christianity, though a brief presentation of some important moments in the history of African American Islam is presented. Along with this history, the impact of religion on the sexual decision making of African American youth will be discussed.

[3] Here the term young adults will be used interchangeably with adolescents and will refer to individuals predominantly between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age.

experience higher rates of religiosity when compared to their Anglo-White counterparts[4]. As a group they express higher frequencies of church attendance, prayer, and hold more conservative doctrines than other groups in society (Wilcox 1990). High rates of religiosity are also evident among Black youth who are more likely to attend church more frequently and are more likely to participate in youth groups during their high school years than their counterparts from other races and ethnicities (Smith et al. 2002). Additionally, churches, either through implicit theological teaching or explicit exhortations, are able to influence parishioners' views about the social and political world in a way that may structure their preferences (Wald et al. 1988). Through these means African American religion has come to influence the behavior of group members.

Religion may have important consequences for internal group structure and marginalization. Religion through the value system implicit in its theology, can establish parameters for behavior (Wald et al. 1988). It offers a moral code prescribing which acts are and are not acceptable to community members (Murry 1994). While these prescriptions may not be internalized or embraced by all group members, religion may serve as a benchmark for understanding the appropriateness of the actions of individuals and subgroups. Furthermore, these evaluations may impact the larger group's response to its members.

Scholarship has been divided on the impact that religion has had on the African American community. Gary Marx (1967) has suggested that religion functions as an opiate within the African American community, as a source of quiescence, depressing the political potential of the African American Community. Marx and scholars of his ilk (including: Mays and Nicholson 1969; Nelsen and Nelsen 1975; Frazier and Lincoln 1974) suggest that rather than providing resources for change, Afro-Christianity encourages believers to accept an inferior status in

---

[4] Religiosity refers to the condition of being pious or religious and may be expressed in, but not limited to, activities such as church attendance, prayer, and personal devotions.

society. Later scholars still critical of a political resource role for Christianity in the African American community have made distinctions between churches which have a sect-like position, which is *otherworldly* oriented versus churches which have a church-like posture, which is *thiswordly* oriented. They suggest that churches with the former orientation are sources of political and social quiescence within the African American Community (Hunt and Hunt 1977). Still other scholars have been critical of the social role for the Black Church, suggesting that instead of providing social empowerment it may be for some a source of negative self image. For example, Newman and Muzzonigro's (1993) work imply that religion may function as a source of tension for gay adolescents. Similarly, Woodyard, Peterson, and Stokes (2000) suggest that religion may inspire feelings of guilt among young adults with this sexual orientation.

Other scholars have shown a positive role for the Black Church in the political and psychological life of African Americans. Fredrick Harris (1999) has suggested that religion may provide the structure and resources which make African American participation possible in the face of many factors which have been shown to depress rates of participation. Similarly, Brady, Verba, and Schlozman (1995) suggest that the church may provide Blacks with civic training they may not receive in other arenas, thus enabling political participation. St. George and McNamara (1984) have suggested that religion also promotes mental wellbeing among African Americans. This may have important implications for the decision making processes of youth who face psycho-social stressors due to their developmental state which are compounded by their community's comparatively low socio-economic status. Ball et al. (2003) suggest that religion, for African American adolescents, may serve as a buffer against these stressors providing important protective resources. Scholar's who believe that African American religion offers political and psychological benefits suggest that for some it may function as a balm,

providing resources, free spaces (Evans and Boyte 1986), and oppositional consciousness for community members.

There may be important consequences to the strict Judeo-Christian morality embraced by the Black Church for adolescent political participation and sexual attitudes/behaviors. In particular, Protestant Christian churches have an important role in the transmission of the boundaries of appropriate sexual behavior to youth and do influence their sexual choices (Studer and Thornton 1987, pg. 118) and the normative socialization of community members (Wald et al. 1988) which may influence political preference. While little scholarly attention has been given to this relationship, religion may impact adolescent participation by providing resources, political knowledge, stimulation, and building civic skills needed for political participation. In so far as Black adolescents have been socialized within this tradition, it is likely that their behaviors will be strongly influenced by these norms. The moral prescriptions of churches may have serious consequences for young adult attitudes about sexual activity and practices. Studer and Thornton (1987) suggests that engaging is non-marital sexual practices may result in concerns about the discovered use of contraception, cognitive dissonance as well as fear about the loss of standing both with parents and within the church community.

African American Religion

African American religion is a consequence of the history of negotiations between African religions (including Islam), European Christianity, and the realities of the Black enslaved experience in America. Africans enslaved in the Atlantic trade did not arrive on American's shores as blank slates. Rather, across the Atlantic, enslaved Africans brought with them religions as diverse as Animism and Islam. In pursing the religions of their choice, enslaved people in

America were forced to navigate a complex and difficult path between the restrictions of their servitude and the requirements of their gods.

Slavery was a harsh environment for religion. In many instances Islamic laws regarding food and dress were violated, Animism and African spiritual practices were suppressed, and during the first years of slavery many African Americans were prohibited from learning and practicing Christianity[5]. However, in spite of these difficult conditions, religion flourished among African Americans in slavery. Muslim slaves struggled to maintain their religious identity through abstention from certain foods and continuing their tradition of Arabic literacy (Diouf 1998), while African spiritual practices such as the Ring Shout[6] were incorporated into Christian worship. In these ways, practices which ran far outside the mainstream of Anglo-White religious culture were preserved. However, these efforts were only marginally successful. The disruption of family life and the cultural diversity of the slave communities on plantations were nearly insurmountable obstacles to the successful transmission of African traditions from one generation to another (Diouf 1998).

Afro-Christianity

Afro-Christianity has been distinct from Anglo-White Christianity since its introduction to enslaved people in America. Some scholars have questioned whether African traditions were preserved in Afro-Christianity. Christensen (1894) suggest that African spiritual practices such as the Ring Shout which she speculated originated in African idol worship and fetishism were being observed in the post slavery African American communities. Johnson (1997) suggest that

---

[5] McKinney (1971) and Diouf (1998) suggest that Christianity and Islam, respectively, were active and important aspects of slave communities.

[6] The Ring Shout is a musically based religious group dance performed often as an extension of Christian worship. In the shout participants form a circle and move in a counter clockwise position shuffling and stomping rhythmically while some or all members sing in a call and response format. At first, the movement is slow and comprised only of the feet as the shout progresses the entire body comes into play with the rhythm of the music. (Floyd 2002; Johnson 1997; Christensen 1894)

the Ring Shout were incorporated into Christian worship practices, and thus preserved. Rosenbaum and Buis' (1998) work offers contemporary evidence of this practice in isolated parts of Georgia. The existence of these blatantly African rituals in African American religious practices demonstrates the resilience of this tradition.

Historians suggest that there was some disagreement between slave-owners and Christian missionaries regarding whether or not to expose enslaved Africans to the concept of Christianity in America's early history (Pierre 1916). The disagreement centered on the anti-slavery positions of various denominational sects and on concerns about the status of slaves once converted. Some denominations took anti-slavery positions which in turn strongly discourage slaveholders from allowing African Americans on their plantations access to missionary teaching (Posey 1956; Jackson 1931). The other major obstacle to the proselytization of African Americans in slavery came from concerns about the status of Blacks in slavery after conversion (Taylor 1926; Johnson 1997; Clark 1971). Slaveholders feared that acceptance of African Americans as *joint-heirs* of salvation (with the equality which this entailed) would also entitle them to full personhood and its attending rights. Some missionaries and denominations attempted to belay these fears by imposing restrictive terms under which African Americans would receive baptism and entrance into the church (Daniel 1973; Lambert 2002). These restrictions were intended to reinforce African American identity as slaves.

Other slave-owners, however, found motivation to disseminate Christian teaching among Blacks in slavery because of the social control they believed African American conversion to Christianity would give them. Supported by some pro-slavery denominations, slaveholders encouraged enslaved Blacks to attend classes in Christian instruction which were intended to reinforce their status as slaves by suggesting that their salvation was linked to their performance

and their obedience to their masters (Johnson 1997). This pro-prostylization response grew in popularity and by the mid 18th century slave conversions became wide-spread (Vaughn 1997).

While African Americans of this period accepted the gospel taught by slave-owners some scholars suggest that they saw the message through a very different lens (Smith 1972). Slave-owners intended the gospel to be used as a means of social control over African Americans they had enslaved (Lambert 2002); teaching them to accept their lot in life and linking their obedience to plantation owners to their status before God. However, some scholars suggest that many African Americans reinterpreted certain aspects of the message given them, ultimately understanding the gospel as a message of equality and empowerment (Lambert 2002; Smith 1972; Mitchell 2004). Mitchell (2004) suggests that in the process of emphasizing and de-emphasizing particular aspects of Christianity, African Americans were creating a belief system which ran parallel to the ones they and their forbearers possessed in Africa.

Unfortunately, practicing Christianity brought neither freedom nor equality to African Americans during slavery. During this era enslaved people endured segregated worship services where they were either limited to a section of the church during Anglo-White services or made to attend supervised services after Anglo-White services were completed (Lambert 2002; Daniel 1973). African American preachers in this era also faced grave restrictions (Posey 1956). However, as early as the 1830s Luther Jackson (1931) reports the development of autonomous and semi-autonomous African American Churches with little or no supervision by Anglo-Whites. In the instance of semi-autonomous churches supervisory committees made up of Anglo-Whites were appointed by denominations to oversee Black Churches, appoint leadership, and hold any property in trust.

The earliest independent Black Churches belonged to African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and Baptist denominations. The African American church experienced rapid growth in the post Civil War era and after slavery became instrumental in the education of African Americans (Mitchell 2004). The Black Church provided a means of social cohesion for its community in that it served as a platform to inform and organize group members in pursuit of broadly defined group interests. In this capacity it provided informal education for Blacks, participation in politics, and sponsored African American economic entrepreneurship (McKinney 1971).

The Great Migration was a period of rapid church growth in urban areas. Nelson and Nelson (1975) suggest that this resulted in the African American population being *over-churched*; having too few resources spread among too many churches to make collective action feasible. Furthermore, distinctions among African Americans played a role in church organization and churches were often segregated on the basis of class. Churches made up of Blacks from the lower socio-economic classes received much of the influx of new worshipers from the South. However, in spite of these class distinctions, commitment to the Black Church was still very strong. In urban centers, less than 10 percent of Black congregants were affiliated with White churches (Nelsen and Nelsen 1975).

Harris (1999) suggests that in the Jim Crow era the Black Church became a central element in the African American struggle for equal rights. The church served as a forum which sought to address the problems of racialized politics, using Michael Dawson's term, serving as a "Black counterpublic"[7]. In spite of its precarious financial condition the Black Church aided in this struggle by providing an important part of the organizational and psychological foundations

---

[7] The counterpublic is an alternative and oppositional forum to the mainstream public sphere, while this forum is neither static nor unified it does provide a medium in which various issues can be vocalized.

upon which collective action could be based. This pursuit of social change was very much linked to that idea of the "social gospel." According to McKinney (1971) the "social gospel" brings the biblical narrative of the Black Church to bear on the social, economic, and political plight of the African American community.

Islam

Islam, while having received less scholarly attention than Afro-Christianity, among scholars who study Black religion in American history, has been an important part of the African American religious experience (Gomez 1994)[8]. When the Atlantic slave trade began, Muslims were among the first slaves brought to the Americas (Diouf 1998). Unlike many of the African religious practices such as the Ring Shout which were incorporated into Afro-Christianity, Muslims struggled to keep their traditions and practices separate. Diouf (1998) argues that these Islamic distinctive provided a strong support for the emerging Black community. Gomez (1994) concurs with Diouf's statement that Muslim slaves strove to preserve their Islamic cultural identity and values, including the centrality of literacy. As slaves, many Muslims continued to teach their children both girls and boys how to read and write Arabic (Diouf 1998). Literacy had a profound effect on the Islamic presence in the African American community. Arabic literacy, Diouf suggests, set enslaved Black Muslims apart not only from their fellow African Americans but also from many Anglo-White American colonists. Turner (1997) suggests that Muslim slaves played an important role in the African American community. He sites several examples of Muslims who came to positions of prominence including organizing resistance efforts in Brazil in 1835 (Turner 1997, pg. 23-24). Others, Turner notes, established themselves within the system

---

[8] For examples of recent scholarship on African American Islam and politics see (Smith 1998; Harper 1971; Mazrui 1996). Gomez (1994) suggests some reasons for the lack of scholarship on Islamic history in America may result from lack or ignorance of source material among colonial and antebellum observers. "The other factor contributing to the scarcity of data is the reluctance of the descendants of these early Muslims to be forthright in answering questions about their ancestors" (Gomez 1994, pg. 672).

of slavery, becoming overseers on plantations, charged with the governance of the enslaved African American community.

The long term growth of Islam from this population of enslaved Africans was, however, problematic. Diouf (1998) suggests that the very structure of the slave trade prevented the passage of Islam from believers to progeny. However, the practice of Islam continued after slavery. Some Muslims fanned conversion to Christianity in order to continue their practices without hindrance in the antebellum South (Turner 1997, pg. 38). Through various methods, Black Muslims continued to maintain Islamic traditions in small pockets and sometimes in secret until the first organized Muslim communities were founded in the early 20th century.

20th Century African American Islamic Social Structure

McCloud (1995) suggests that by the early 1900s Black Muslims in America began to organize themselves into formal communities. One of the earliest and most important of these communities was the Moorish Science Temple founded by Noble Drew Ali in Chicago in 1925. A central task of this organization was to create an African American national Islamic identity (McCloud 1995, pg. 12). National identity for Ali was to be found in rejecting the European designation as "negro" and embracing an expressly African, particularly Moroccan Islamic heritage. Drew R. Smith also notes a separatist intention behind the movements' rhetoric, where the process of identity building was to extend even to a geographic separation (Smith 1998, pg. 537). The pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was particularly appealing to many Islamic leaders of Garvey's day, including Ali, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, and Elijah Muhammad (Turner 1997, pg. 80-81). The early stages of Islamic community development included the creation of organizations such as the First Muslim Mosque of Pittsburg and the Islamic Mission of America. Additionally, Muslim women were also not

excluded from creating Islamic organizations of their own; the Red Crescent Club and the Young Muslim Women's Association were created in the mid 20th century.

The Nation of Islam, which has become a key focus of study and media attention, began to grow as an organization in 1930 when Wali Fard Muhammad began to teach African Americans in Detroit about Islam (Marsh 2000). Elijah Poole, who later became Elijah Muhammad, joined the movement in 1931 before the organizational structure was moved to Chicago in 1932. By 1933 the movement had amassed more than 8,000 followers (Marsh 2000, pg. 38). After 1933 Wali Fard Muhammad began to withdraw from the organization, which resulted in a mythologizing of this figure (Marsh 2000). After Wali Fard Muhammad left public life the movement continued to grow and motifs of education and activism continued to develop among organizers.

The Nation of Islam was focused on individual self-improvement which included distinctive dress, social conduct, and dietary restrictions (McCloud 1995, pg. 28). These distinctions drew criticism even among other groups in the larger Islamic community. The project at hand, in the construction of the Nation of Islam was one of culture building with important social and political implications. Afro-centric Islamic education was one component of this project. The University of Islam (later known as the Sister Clara Muhammad Schools) was an educational system which grew out of the Nation of Islam, and its stated goal was to teach young African American Muslims self knowledge, self love, and self determination (Rashid and Muhammad 1992, pg. 179). Rashid and Muhammad (1992) suggest that the school system was a project of identity transformation by members of the Nation of Islam. The curriculum emphasized African American history and the Qur'an. At the time the article was written there were 38 schools Sister Clara Muhammad Schools.

The Nation of Islam activities also had a political penchant. While Islamic leadership did not play as central a role in the mainstream Civil Rights Movement as Christian clergy did, leaders within the Nation of Islam played an important role in and embraced the rhetoric of the Black Power Movement (Turner 1997). Another key and politically provocative notion, present in the Nation of Islam (as opposed to other Islamic sects) was the idea that Anglo-Whites and Blacks originated from different gods and had two fundamentally different natures, the former evil and that latter good (Turner 1997, pg. 157). However, Turner (1997) downplays the racist undertones in this notion, suggesting instead that such statements are works of identity construction and not reverse racism.

In their pan-Africanist and Black Nationalist stance many of the African American Islamic communities were partaking in a political agenda. This commitment was seen in the ideological attention given to establishing cultural and historic connections to Africa, as well as a host of political and economic enterprises, Turner suggests that herein lay the appeal for many converts (Turner 1997, pg. 159). Following in this vein, the ideology of the Nation of Islam under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad was separatist (McCloud 1995; Marsh 2000). Under Malcolm X's leadership, however, the Nation of Islam sought to broker more alliances (Marsh 2000). He was able to recruit African Americans from upper socioeconomic classes, where previously success had been limited to the working class. Under his leadership, the Nation of Islam also took on an active political agenda. Marsh (2000) suggests that Malcolm X took the organization to the forefront of the Black Nationalism movement in the 1960s. After his travels to other countries, Marsh suggests that Malcolm X attempted to temper the racially aggressive tone of the organization and strove to shift the emphasis from Black Nationalism to pan-Africanism.

African American Islam and Afro-Christianity

During much of the mid 20th century, the Nation of Islam was in contention with Afro-Christianity. McCloud suggests that Muslims in the Nation of Islam often felt disdain for Christianity and she speculates that their lack of involvement in the mainstream Civil Rights Movement may have been a consequence of the Christian element within its base (McCloud 1995, pg. 51). Harper (1971) goes a step further, suggesting that Malcolm X as a Islamic leader served as a source of inspiration for Black militants. While objecting to Turner and McCloud's characterization of groups like the Nation of Islam as authentically Islamic, Nance (2002) suggests that this movement spoke to a desire for a spiritual alternative among African Americans.

In spite of these differences, African American Islamic teachings ran parallel to conservative Afro-Christianity's strict interpretation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, particularly as it relates to sex practices and the institution of marriage. The western courtship practice of dating which often include sexual contact of some kind falls outside Islamic ethics as commonly understood (McCloud 1995, pg. 97). McCloud (1995) suggests but does not state specifically her evidence for the belief that African American Muslims have begun to adopt the marriage practices of their eastern counterparts, which rely on third parties or friends to arrange a union. Ghayur (1981) concurs with McCloud's assertion in also suggesting that conservative Muslims in the West are pursuing a middle road between traditional arranged marriages and western conceptions of dating.

Family life is quintessential to the view of the African American Muslim world which McCloud provides. Children in a traditional Muslim home, she suggests, are acculturated to Islamic doctrine and when they enter adolescence undertake full participation in the community

with its attending restrictions and obligations (McCloud 1995, pg. 110-111). These restrictions and obligation include the separation of girls from boys at public events, fasting at Ramadan, and for girls wearing *adab*. McCloud's (1995) view of Islamic child-raring practices in the Black Muslim community is one of relative homogeneity, does not take into account both moderated practices, and differences in commitment to the form of Islam she describes. These variations may give rise to differences in observing these traditions and rituals.

Politics and Religion

While much research has been dedicated to understanding religion's role in influencing participation among African Americans, unfortunately comparatively little work has been done on the relationship between youth and political participation more generally and the role of religion in influencing political participation among African American youth more specifically. A large segment of the youth population, those under 18, is not eligible to vote (the type of the participation which has dominated the literature). And those who are able to participate (those 18 and older) are as a consequence of their position in the conventional life-cycle (age, marital status, mobility, income, and education etc.) less likely to participate in conventional politics (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Religion may serve to counteract some of these factors, by providing information, stimulus, and skills needed for participation. With regard to non-voting participation McVeigh and Smith (1999) suggest that African Americans are more likely than their white counterparts to engage in protest rather than not taking action (McVeigh and Smith 1999, pg. 695). Frequent church attendance (more than once a week) has a significant impact on the likelihood of participating in protest relative to institutional politics (such as voting) (McVeigh and Smith 1999, pg. 696). The section below examines the relationship between religion and political participation among African Americans in general and adolescent

participation. While these studies do not deal specifically with the political tendencies of adolescents, we may infer that these studies are informative in so far as adolescents interact with religion and religious institutions in the same way as adults.

African American Religion as Opiate or Balm

There has been some disagreement among scholars about the role of Afro-Christianity as an agent of social change. On the one hand, some scholars (Frazier and Lincoln 1974; Hunt and Hunt 1977; Marx 1967; Nelsen and Nelsen 1975; Mays and Nicholson 1969) have suggested that religion functions as an opiate, source of quiescence or suppressing African American political participation. They suggest that Afro-Christianity's *otherworldly* orientation prevents adherents from focusing on the social concerns of the present in favor of the afterlife. This, they suggest, results in a sectarian escapism and promotes the status quo. On the other hand, some scholars (McKinney 1971; McKenzie 2004; Harris 1999; Brady et al. 1995) suggest that religion provides political resources and compensates for those deficiencies in civic skills which result from the marginalization of African Americans. These scholars suggest that religion enables the Black community to be socially efficacious by providing psychological engagement, civic resources, and mobilization.

Religion as Opiate

Mays and Nicholson, in their seminal work *The Negro's Church* (1969) first published in 1933, were among the most influential scholars to suggest the opiate interpretation of African American religion. They suggested that Afro-Christianity was *otherworldly* in its focus and consequently passive in its stance towards social life and change in world affairs. Similarly, Frazier and Lincoln (1974) as well as Gary T. Marx's in his (1967) article "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy Among Negroes?" suggest that for African Americans,

religion is either mutually exclusive with or a severe impediment to the radicalization of African American politics. He suggests that variance in African American militancy is a consequence of denominational affiliation and levels of personal orthodoxy are expressions of varying degrees of otherworldliness.

Larry L. Hunt and Janet G. Hunt (1977) expand on Marx's (1967) work by providing further empirical tests of Marx's theory about religion as a pacifying force. Their findings moderate Marx's findings that Afro-Christianity suppresses political action. They suggest that religion suppresses political activism only when the denomination is highly sectarian—that is, when the denomination possesses an *otherworldly* and somewhat isolationist orientation. This orientation is in opposition to a churchlike stance which is more *thiswordly* oriented and takes more progressive positions on social issues.

In their analysis, Hunt and Hunt (1977) determine the sect-like orientation (that is, an *otherworldly* and disinterested stance) using a series of variables which include belief in the existence of the devil, salvation through Jesus only, prohibition of non-believers from teaching in public high schools, and a wrathful God who punishes Jews for not accepting Jesus (Hunt and Hunt 1977, pg. 5). Churchlike, or *thisworldly*, orientation in contrast is determined by more moderate doctrinal tenets that require belief in the Judeo-Christian heritage of the Ten Commandments, an afterlife, Jews as God's chosen people, and the existence of God (Hunt and Hunt 1977, pg. 5). There may be room to question how the sect-like orientation measurements capture the concepts of *otherworldly* escapism. However, their work represents an advance over previous research on this question. Equally as important, their findings bring into question Marx's other conclusions. A more recent study (Jacobson 1992) confirms Hunt and Hunt's findings in a midsized Midwestern city; suggesting that religion my have an opiate effect in sect-

like churches. Hunt and Hunt also show that when socio-economic factors are controlled, the negative relationship between militancy and orthodoxy diminishes and that there are not greater levels of militancy in Anglo-White denominations. Jacobson (1999) also suggests that religion may for African Americans inspire a fatalistic or opiate response. Jacobson found that religiosity was positively associated with fatalism for both Blacks and Anglo-Whites, that is, those individuals who claimed religious affiliation were more likely to be fatalistic in their outlook.

Religion as a Political Resource

In sharp contrast to Hunt and Hunt (1977), Allison Calhoun-Brown (1998) affirms the *otherworldly* orientation of African American religion. However, rather than standing in concord with scholars such as Mays and Nicholson (1969) or Marx (1967) she suggests that this worldview can provide the context for certain separatist oriented racial empowerment (Calhoun-Brown 1998). Her work draws a novel contrast between the concept of integrationist (churchlike) and separatist (sectlike) oriented political and social empowerment. The former mode of empowerment uses system based tools such as the electoral process to bring about change while the latter mode focuses on the promotion of community cohesion and self-control of institutions in order to affect social and political change. Callhoun-Brown suggests that there is a central role for the "political" Black Church in African American political mobilization. She suggests that, "it offers a mechanism by which identification may be politicized into consciousness and political efficacy may be developed for action" (Calhoun-Brown 1996, pg. 952). Brian McKenzie (2004), while not embracing her position on the *otherworldly* orientation of Afro-Christianity, builds on Calhoun-Brown's (1996) work and suggests that congregant interactions in African American context promotes non-voting political activism.

Other scholars have suggested that African American religion does not have an *otherworldly* orientation (For examples see: Glenn and Gotard 1977; Harris 1999; Wald et al. 1988). Fredrick Harris (1999) suggests that African American religion supports political liberation and activism by means of its institutions, empowerment, and culture. For Harris, one important element of the political strength of Afro-Christianity can be found in the indigenous leadership at its disposal. Clergy and other religious leaders serve as organizers and recruiters, informing other elites and Black communities about important political issues and sensitizing them to which candidates can best serve the needs of the group. According to Harris (1999) through participation parishioners gain social capital[9] through the dense and interconnected networks that characterize the Black Church. Additionally, while their roles may be contested women in the Black Church can and do hold important positions including the pastorate. In this way, the church provides opportunities for parishioners, including men, women, and young adults to practice organizational and speaking skills.

Harris also recognizes the complexity of the psychological impact of religion when he suggests that strength of attachment may lead to low rates of participation in community-based activism while at the same time encouraging social change through acts such as voting. Harris' (1999) suggests that there are two types of church participation with divergent consequences for political action. Frequent church attendance, Harris suggests, discourages community based activism but encourages individual acts such as voting while church activism encourages collective action (Harris 1999, pg. 132). Additionally, the religious culture of the African American church may serve as a symbol under which to unite and may cast political issues in moral terms thereby encouraging political action.

---

[9] The term social capital refers to the value (evidenced in trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation) the individual receives from the social networks (e.g. social groups and churches) in which he is embedded (Putnam 2000).

Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) also share Harris' (1999) views concerning the impact of church participation on civic skills. They suggest that congregational churches serve as the "training ground" for skills needed in political participation. The congregational church organization characterizes African American church structure and allows for lay people to perfect public speaking, organizational, and other civic skills. This venue compensates for the lack of skill development in other environments such as school or the work place.

Allen, Dawson, and Brown (1989) suggest that religiosity may play an important role in inspiring Black political participation as a key element in African American racial belief system. The African American racial belief system which also includes exposure to Black media (television and print), functions as an information and organizational shortcut or heuristic which allows the individual to draw conclusions about the world (Allen et al. 1989, pg. 422). Allen et al. (1989) suggest that the African American racial belief system is composed of multiple schemas, 1) Black autonomy, 2) closeness to Black mass, 3) closeness to Black elites, 4) propensity to adopt positive stereotypical beliefs about African Americans, and 5) propensity to adopt negative stereotypical beliefs about African Americans.

Religiosity is important to the racial belief system in that, Allen et al. posit, religion results in integration into social networks within the Black community, resulting in a sense of racial identity and consciousness. Religion can inspire belief in both positive (God identifies with poor and oppressed, a situation in which many Blacks find themselves) and negative (humanity is sinful) stereotypes, has a positive effect on exposure to Black media, and all the racial belief system schemas (Allen et al. 1989, pg. 425). Allen et al. argue that religiosity does not result in an uncritical attitude towards the community and can inspire belief in negative stereotypes. This

aspect of African American religiosity may have important consequences for group responses to community members who deviate from Judeo-Christian precepts.

Church communities have a political culture which provides both the mechanism for the communication of political information and a means of encouraging adherents to be responsive to this message (Wald et al. 1988). Religious leaders are particularly important for social change in this understanding of religion. Wald, Owen, and Hill Jr. (1988) suggests that clerics provide a source of direct or indirect political messages to parishioners. Similarly, Reese and Brown (1995) suggest that (civic awareness and political activity) religious messages may have a political impact by increasing tendency toward system blame among African Americans. Study findings suggest that increasing exposure to civic awareness messages are correlated with increasing levels of racial identity and sensitivity to power imbalances. These factors are essential to feelings of system blame[10]. In turn, congregations are able not only to act on these messages but also to encourage others to do so as well. The social interactions of congregants in religious institutions provide a means of reinforcing these social and political messages by withdrawing approval from those who deviate from church prescriptions.

Adolescent Political Participation

Hanks (1981) suggests that participation in voluntary organization may predict participation in politics. Voluntary organizations took two forms in this analysis; instrumental organizations (student council, honorary societies, yearbook etc.) and expressive organizations (athletic teams, drama, hobby clubs etc.). Hanks concluded that participation in both instrumental and expressive voluntary organizations are related to political participation in adulthood. While religious participation in adolescents is not addressed in this paper, it is

---

[10] System blame is "the degree to which members of a disadvantaged group believe their socioeconomic status is a result of societal problems and not the action of individuals in the group" (Reese and Brown 1995).

important to note that churches are voluntary organizations and participation in youth groups and youth choirs (as well as a host of other youth focused church activities) may affect adolescents in much the same way as participation in organizations such as student councils or drama club. Thus, Hank's findings may have important implications for understanding adolescent religiosity and later participation.

Beck and Jennings (1982) examine the four models of pre-adult precursors to participation; socioeconomic status, political activity, civic orientations, high school activities. Study findings suggest that each model was influential in affecting later participation. When all the models where combined each model or pathway was still shown to have an impact on the likelihood of political participation in adulthood. Importantly, Beck and Jennings singled out the parental civic orientation model as a key instrument of political learning in adolescents. This may suggest an important role for religion which may influence civic orientation given the findings of Wald et al (1988) and Reese and Brown (1995) which suggest that church communities play an important role in the development of civic awareness and political culture.

Unfortunately, little work has been directed towards understanding the impact of religious participation on the political attitudes and behaviors of adolescents and young adults. However, while the articles here do not directly examine this relationship, they do offer some avenues for future research. Hanks' work can be expanded to include the impact of participation in religious organizations (such youth groups) on later political activity. Similarly, Beck and Jennings' work could be revised to include the impact of parent religious orientation separately or as mediated through civic orientation as a model of political socialization. Given the centrality of religion in the lives of African Americans generally and Black youth in particular (see section

Adolescent Religiosity), including religious variables in any discussion of youth and politics may add valuable insight.

Religion as Psychological Resource

Some scholarship (Ross 1990; Ellison 1991; Pearce et al. 2003) has suggested that religion plays an important role in psychological wellbeing for Americans. African American religion and Afro-Christianity more specifically, has important implication for African Americans' psychological well being. Scholarship on the African American church suggests that it may engender feelings of self-respect and self-worth for members, serve as a (Ellison 1995) buffer against stresses, and offer members the opportunity to occupy positions of leadership they are prevented from occupying in the larger society. However, for those who fall outside of its values system the Black Church may become a source of cognitive dissonance, creating feelings of guilt and lowering self-esteem (Woodyard et al. 2000). Given the complex psychological impact of the Black Church, it seems likely to have an important impact on the decision-making of African American youth, especially those decisions complicated by concerns about self image and peer-pressure.

Christopher Ellison (1993) suggests that involvement in church communities, through interpersonal contexts and private devotional experiences, positively impacts self-esteem. Church communities serve to reinforce shared beliefs and validate the individual's moral perceptions, while devotional experiences, such as prayer, are intended to establish a relationship between the participant and God. Ellison suggests that this connection to the Divinity establishes a sense of self-worth. Moreover, his findings also suggest religion may, in the long term, serve as a buffer against environmental stressors and negative self-perception.

Moorhead (1984) as well as Mays and Nicholson's (1969) landmark work findings suggest a relationship between religion and mental wellbeing that is similar to Ellison's view. Morehead argues that the message of the Black Church was intended to teach congregants self-respect and self-esteem (Moorhead 1984)[11]. A more recent study suggests that church membership may for African American women be correlated with good mental health (van Olphen et al. 2003). Specifically, van Olphen et al. suggest that payer was associated with fewer reports of depressive symptoms and higher frequency of church attendance corresponded positively social support[12]. Nelson and Nelson (1975) agree with this assessment when they suggest that the Black Church plays an important psychological role in its community because it allows for the creation of self-respect, empowerment and full personhood. Clark (1971) describes the psychological impact of the Black Church in slightly different terms. He sums up the centrality of this organization to African American social change by saying, "For the Negro, his church is his instrument of escape, his weapon of protest, his protective fortress behind which he seeks to withstand the assaults of a hostile world and within which he plans his strategies of defiance, harassment, and, at his frontal attacks against racial barriers" (Clark 1971, pg. 145). He suggests that Black Church membership offers parishioners the opportunity to vent their frustration with a society that does not value them. In his understanding, the church is a "haven" and an opportunity for autonomy in a world of dependence. In church, African Americans can fully actualize their potential through modes from which they are excluded wider society. Thus

---

[11] Mays and Nicholson (1969) reach a similar conclusion in spite of their generally negative view of the political veracity of Afro-Christianity. The Church, in this view, is significant for African Americans because it offers the chance for ownership, a social condition rarely experienced by those African Americans, they observed in their study. Blacks were unhindered from attaining positions of power, control of the organizational structure, and (with more difficulty) the financial condition of their church.

[12] Importantly, van Ophen et al note that religiosity was correlated with reports of poor physical heal "membership in a religious organization was negatively associated with health in other instances (worse self-reported general health, higher reports of chronic conditions)" while positively correlated with others (van Olphen et al. 2003, pg. 554).

the African American church offers members a wealth of psychological resources that may surmount the impediments they face.

Ellison's (1995) article notes however that the psychological benefits of church attendance may not be a universal phenomenon. Ellison's work points to a complicated role for religion in mental wellbeing. His study finding suggests that among African Americans in the Southeastern United States no clear relationship between religious attendance and depressive symptoms, while individuals who practice personal devotions such as prayer and bible reading report higher instances of depressive symptoms. Bowie et al. (2006) also point to complex relationship between religion and mental health. In their longitudinal study of alcohol use among Black youth, they found that for African Americans with higher rates of church attendance were less likely to be depressed and as a consequence less likely to have alcohol problems. However, those who were depressed and attended church frequently where more likely to have alcohol problems.

In research dedicated to adolescent religiosity much the same case has been made. Research (Steinman and Zimmerman 2004; Wallace Jr. and Forman 1998) has suggested that religion may for some serve as a protective agent reducing expressions of risky behavior in adolescents. Some studies suggest that religious participation among adolescents may function in increasing the age of first intercourse, decreasing the frequency of sexual encounters, and increase the use of protective measures regarding contraception and STD prevention (Thornton and Camburn 1989; Smith et al. 2002; Ball et al. 2003). Among other scholars (Herek and Capitanio 1995; Newman and Muzzonigro 1993; Woodyard et al. 2000), however, religion may have negative effects for those who stray to far outside of the bounds of religion's normative prescriptions

Unfortunately, much less research has been done, and none is presented here regarding the influence of Islamic religious practices on the psychological resources provided for congregants. However, in so far as the African American Mosque functions in much the same way as the African American church, providing the same opportunities and benefits it is likely that the resources gained will be the same.

Adolescent Religiosity

Any understanding of adolescent religiosity must take into account the complexity of the religious/ethnic contexts in which these youth live and the realities of their modern lives in America. Using three surveys, Monitoring the Future (1996), Survey of Adolescent Heath (1995), and The Survey of Parents and Youth (1998), Smith et al. (2002) examine the nature of Adolescent religion as measured through religious affiliation, frequency of attendance at religious services, and youth group participation. Smith et al.'s (2002) findings suggest six important conclusions about young adult religiosity in American: 1) The majority of American youth do claim religious affiliation; 2) The Christian tradition is in decline among American adolescents; 3) about ½ of adolescents' participate in religious organizations; 4) religious activity declines with age; 5) female adolescents have slightly higher rates of religiosity than boys; and 6) religiosity varies by region as well as race among adolescents.

African American young adults are significantly different from their counterparts with respect to religion, exhibiting higher rates of religiosity based on all the measures utilized in this study. When compared to their Anglo-White and Latino counterparts as well as other ethnic groups, African American adolescents have the highest rates of church attendance (Smith et al. 2002, pg. 607). African American youth are more likely than their Anglo-White counterparts and also twice as likely 'other' ethnic groups to attend religious youth groups throughout their 4

years of high school (Smith et al. 2002, pg. 607). Moreover, these youth tend to be concentrated in African Methodist, Holiness, Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptist (most predominantly conservative) Christian denominations as well as in the Islamic community. This study suggests that religion is an important part of the lives of American adolescents.

Religion and Adolescent Sexual Decision-Making

This section examines the relationship between adolescent religion and sexuality, the mechanisms through which adolescent's sexuality may be mediated by their religious beliefs, as well as the relationship between adolescents' religiosity and age of first intercourse, number of sexual encounters, both contraception and STD/AIDS preventative behaviors, and homosexuality. Research into the relationship between religion and sexuality has garnered attention within scholarly circles as a potential limiting agent for adolescent sexuality. One motivation behind research which limits adolescent sexuality is tied to sexual activity's potential for negative consequences in this population. Pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, are outcomes associated with adolescent sexuality which are thought to be particularly deleterious (Hardy and Raffaelli 2003, pg. 731). African American women are 3.4 times more likely to have non-marital births when compared to their Anglo-White counterparts (Trent and Crowder 1997, pg. 530). These occurrences are thought to be linked to poor life outcomes. Ball, Armistead and Austin (2003) suggest that religion may function as a protective resource, improving life-outcomes for African American young women who are more likely to suffer from "poverty, violence, drug abuse, and premarital pregnancy than are other adolescent populations" (Ball et al. 2003, pg. 431). Delaying age of first intercourse is seen as one way of forestalling the negative outcomes such as HIV positive status in adolescents (Murry 1994). Similarly, religion is thought

to reduce the number of sexual encounters and encouraging contraceptive and STD preventative practices are seen as ways to improve life outcomes in this population.

Sex and Religion in Adolescent Decision making

As children emerge into young adulthood, they find themselves in positions of greater autonomy with regard to decision making. Unfortunately, they also find themselves without the experience and information of older adults. Scholars have suggested that in the face of limited decision making resources young adults operate using different models or heuristics to arrive at a decision.[13] Judith G. Smetana (2000) suggests that the African American church is seen by both parents and adolescents as a legitimate source of authority regarding "conventional" and "moral issues" because of the importance of the Black Church in the African American community. Billy, Brewster, and Grady (1994) suggest that community context plays an important part in the sexual decision making of young women. They suggest that the communities in which these women exist may serve to structure and constrain their choices, through the influence of cost benefit analysis young women undergo, through determining the normative structure of their environment, and determining what constitutes acceptable behavior in that environment (Billy et al. 1994, pg. 388). The study also suggests that religion may serve as just such a context.

Billy, Brewster, and Grady (1994) listed three types of opportunity structures which may be relevant sexual decision making. The first is the availability of paths to social mobility. With a greater opportunity for social mobility young girls would choose to delay sexual activity. The second opportunity structure is the adolescent's knowledge of information and reproductive services. The third structure, deals with the availability of suitable partnerships. Both opportunity structures and normative environments may be affected by the individual's religiosity. Billy et al.

---

[13] Schvaneveldt and Adams (1983) summarize the major models of adolescent decision-making. These models range from check lists to styles dependent on intuition.

(1994) hypothesize that religious communities which are conservative are one context which may influence young women's sexual decision making, particularly discouraging non-marital sex. As a member of a religious community a young woman would internalize the community's attitude resulting in limiting sexual behavior. Similarly, community environment may effectively constrain the individual's behavior regardless of her own religious commitment by reducing the amount of willing partners to whom she has access.

Billy et al. (1994) test their hypothesis using data from the Cycle III of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG-III) from 1982 and aggregate level data describing the communities in which respondents to the NSFG-III live. The respondent's community context was measured in terms of socio-economic status (income, educational attainment, poverty and housing values) and religiosity (orthodoxy of the religious organizations and pervasiveness of religious attendance). Study findings suggest that religiosity is one element of the community context which affects likelihood of pre-marital sexual intercourse. Other important factors include family characteristics such as mother's and respondent's educational attainment.

Social Control

Religion may have important consequences for young adult sexual attitudes and behaviors (Woodroof 1985). Through effects on the decision making cost benefit calculus which young adults undergo and through the apparatus of social control religious institutions may influence the behavior and attitudes of young people (Hardy and Raffaelli 2003). The church, along with family, friends, and media are primary instruments of the socialization of adolescents (Rostosky et al. 2003; Studer and Thornton 1987). The religious institutions often make claims about what sexual acts, which contexts, and which partners are acceptable. In this way religious

institutions prescribe the appropriate bounds of sexuality and established norms of sexual conduct for those socialized with a given tradition (Studer and Thornton 1987).

In addition to establishing the bounds and norms of sexual activity for a given community, religious institutions may also provide sanctions for individuals who violate these prescriptions, these sanctions may include community disapproval, rejection, and loss of place in the afterlife (Studer and Thornton 1987, pg. 118-119). For young adults who internalize this religious culture engaging in prohibited sexual activity may result in cognitive dissonance as well as feelings of guilt, same and unworthiness (Hardy and Raffaelli 2003, pg. 732). In the African American community where the Black Church has a central role, the influence of religion may be particularly important for understanding the sexual choices of adolescences. This far reaching influence of religion may affect young adult choices about the type and number of partners, frequency of sexual activity, and both STD and pregnancy preventative measures taken.

Reciprocity in Religion and Sexuality

Many scholars have been interested in the effects of religion on adolescent sexuality. But does sexuality have an effect on adolescent religiosity? Hardy and Raffaelli (2003) examine whether or not choices about sexuality affect the subsequent religiosity of young adults. Indeed, Hardy and Raffaelli found that religion does have a significant impact on the sexual decision making of African American young adults. However, their study showed no significant reciprocal relationship. That is, changes in sexual behavior (e.g. experiencing first intercourse during the course of the study) did not significantly affect the individual's religiosity (e.g. self-identification as religious or levels of the importance of religion to the individual) (Hardy and Raffaelli 2003, pg. 737). These findings ran counter to expectations as Hardy and Raffaelli hypothesized that increase sexual activity would negatively impact religiosity because of the

cognitive dissonance produced when the individual's actions run counter to the religious social structure in which the individual is embedded.

Thornton and Camburn (1989) suggest that engaging in premarital sexual behavior may negatively influence religious participation. However, the relationship observed in their study did not rise to the level of statistical significance. Here Thornton and Camburn agree with Hardy and Raffaelli in hypothesizing that there is a reciprocal relationship between religious participation and sexual behavior. However, both studies were unable to prove their assertions with the data available to them. Additionally, in concordance Hardy and Raffaelli (2003) and Meier (2003) found that there was no reciprocal effect, that is levels of sexual activity had no effect on levels of religious activity.

One study did, however, provide a counterpoint to the findings noted above. Steinman and Zimmerman's (2004) study which examined the likelihood of sexual intercourse among Black youth suggests that there may be a reciprocal relationship between religion and sexuality among women. While, in the sample as a whole initial levels of religiosity were not shown to have bearing on changes in sexual intercourse, for African American young adult women greater than average decreases in religion resulted in greater than average increases in sexual intercourse (Steinman and Zimmerman 2004, pg. 158). However, this effect was not evident among other groups in the sample and other levels of sexual intercourse.

Sexual Patterns Among African American Youth

When compared to their Anglo-White counterparts (Mott et al. 1996) and even when religion is controlled (Casper 1990) African American youth are more likely than other young adults to engage in sexual activity. Using data from the 1976 National Survey of Young Women, Brown (1985) examines the existence of a uniformed sexually permissive culture within the

African American community. The study was designed to examine the perception that a culture of sexual permissiveness exists within the Black adolescent community. Among a sample of women ranging in age from 15-19 years, study findings suggest that there is no uniformed sexual permissive culture in the African American community. Frequency of church attendance was one of the factors related to adolescent sexual activity, while the sexual attitudes of respondent's peers is another (Brown 1985, pg. 385). Attitudes about sexual permissiveness among adolescent may be important in understanding this variance. Indeed, Murry (1994) suggests that Black female adolescents with high rates of church attendance are less likely to approve of sexually permissive behavior.

Increasing Age of First Intercourse

Many scholars have suggested that religion, for African American adolescents, is associated with a later age of first sexual intercourse (McCree et al. 2003; Hardy and Raffaelli 2003). Meier (2003) employs the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to examine the relationship between religiosity and attitudes about first intercourse. The study sample included adolescent virgins ages 15-18 at the first interview (in 1995) who neither married nor had experienced forced sexual encounters by the second interview (in 1996). In this study, attitudes about sex are the central indicator of age of sexual activity for both men and women (Meier 2003, pg. 1047). Meier suggests that there is a significant effect of religion on age of first sex among women. Religion's function in this context is to mediate attitudes about sex.

Mott et al. (1996) examined the likelihood for first intercourse by age 14 for African American, Anglo-White, and Latino individuals. The sample was composed individuals ages 14-21 and included over-sampling of both African Americans and Hispanics. The analysis included the role of religion and religious peer groups in early ages of first intercourse. The study found

that being African American was correlated with younger age of first intercourse. Indeed, Black adolescents were 2.78 times more likely to have had sex by age 14 when compared to their Anglo-White counterparts (Mott et al. 1996, pg. 17). Among African American men in the sample the likelihood of first intercourse by age 14 was 8 times that of their Anglo-White male counterparts (Mott et al. 1996). In their overall analysis Mott et al. suggested religious activity functioned to delay sexual activity but that this functioned in a cohort, that is, the effect is strongest when individuals and their peers attended the same church.

Billy, Brewster, and Grady's (1994) paper entitled "Contextual Effects n the Sexual Behavior of Adolescent Women" offers a comprehensive look at the sexual behavior of women. Among the factors which increased the age of first intercourse were mother's level of education, family income, respondent's educational attainment and religiosity. For Brewster et al. (1998) denomination affiliation may play an important explanatory role in the ages of first intercourse for both African American and Anglo-White adolescent.

Velma McBride Murry (1994) describes the demographic and social differences between African American women who have an early age of first intercourse (age 15 and younger) versus those who have a late age of first intercourse (age 18 and older). Using the 1998 National Survey of Family Growth Cycle IV (with an over-sampling of African Americans), Murry examined the responses of 582 women. Higher frequency of church attendance was one of the descriptors of young women who had later ages of first intercourse. Indeed, this was the second strongest predictor of later age of first intercourse (Murry 1994, pg. 345). Other descriptors of late age of sexual intercourse included slightly higher family income, mother's education, mother's age of first birth, and later age of puberty.

Fewer Sexual Encounters

In addition to its effects on age of first intercourse, participating in religious activity may reduce the likelihood of sexual activity for African American Adolescents (Steinman and Zimmerman 2004). Steinman and Simmerman (2004) examine the relationship between adolescent religiosity and risky behavior. Using a sample of 705 African American high school students from a Midwestern city, Steinman and Simmerman (2004) questioned these students about their religiosity (frequency of church attendance) and frequency of alcohol, cigarette, marijuana usage and sexual activity. In regard to sexual behavior, the study found that there was a strong negative relationship between frequency of church attendance and sexual intercourse, that is, as levels of church attendance increase likelihood of having sexual intercourse decreased (Steinman and Zimmerman 2004, pg. 157).

Contraception and STD/AIDS Preventative Behaviors

Struder and Thornton's(1987) study suggests that religion is important to adolescent decision making about contraception. Religion, they argue, functions as a socializing force which prescribes what are appropriate values regarding sexual behavior (Studer and Thornton 1987, pg. 117). Using an intergeneration panels study with a sample of families with births in 1961, Struder and Thornton's study drew on family member interviews in 1962 and 1980. While this study does not address African Americans in particular it does examine important themes in religion and contraceptive usage among young adults. The study's findings suggest that increasing levels of church attendance is correlated with a decreasing likelihood of using medical methods of contraception (those mediated through medical professionals) such as the pill. This relationship was both statistically significant and was stable even when other factors such as family background, parental marriage stability, and individual's own recent sexual activities were controlled (Studer and Thornton 1987, pg. 126).

McCree et al. (2003) examine the relationship between religiosity and conduct aimed at preventing sexually transmitted diseases. The study sample was comprised of 522 sexually active African American females between the ages of 14 and 18 years of age who were questioned about preventative practices in their sexual behaviors. McCree et al. (2003) hypothesized that risk aversive sexual practices were an extension of the protective resources which religion is said to possess. The study found a positive relationship between religion and protective choices about sexual decision making. The authors' suggest, "Greater religious involvement was associated with less sexual risk-taking, greater self-efficacy, and more positive attitudes toward using condoms" (McCree et al. 2003, pg. 6). When compared to their less religious counterparts, individuals who identified as more religious were more likely to practice risk aversive behaviors and to hold risk aversive attitudes including willingness to communicate with partners about STD/AIDS and pregnancy prevention, willingness to refuse unsafe sexual encounters, and hold positive views towards condom usage. Indeed, 88.2 percent of more religious individuals reported condom usage in the last six months compared to 11.7 percent of their less religious counterparts (McCree et al. 2003, pg. 6).

Using data pooled from NSFG national surveys conducted in 1982 and 1988 Brewster et al. (1998) compared the relationship between religiosity and the contraceptive behavior of Black and Anglo-White young adults ages 15-23 in the early and then later part of the 1980s. Brewster et al. (1998) suggests that this period is of particular research interest because of the political activity of church-based groups in the public debate over reproductive rights. Fundamentalist denominations exhibited higher percentages of Black adolescents who remained virgins in both cycles of the survey, they were 50 percent more likely to remain virgins than their catholic and 'other' religious group counterparts (Brewster et al. 1998, pg. 500).

Regarding contraceptive usage, Brewster et al. (1998) noted that among Black adolescents contraceptive usage at first intercourse was extremely low (Brewster et al. 1998, pg. 500). African American fundamentalists were the least likely to engage in contraceptive usage, at this stage while their Catholic counterparts were only slightly more likely to use methods such as the pill and condoms. These findings represents 46 percent of African American adolescents affirming the use of contraception at first intercourse (Brewster et al. 1998, pg. 500). Study findings suggest marked differences between contraceptive usage at first intercourse and at most recent intercourse. In response to the question of contraceptive use during sexual activity in the past 4 weeks, 60 percent of African American and 62 percent of whites ages 15-19 answered that they had engaged in some type of contraceptive usage (Brewster et al. 1998, pg. 500). This represents a 2 percent increase for Anglo-Whites and a 14 percent increase for African Americans in contraceptive usage between their first intercourse and the period of the most recent panel cycle. At this latter stage the most preferred method of contraception was the pill, a method which does not prevent transmission of STDs and AIDS.

The relationship between religion and sexual activity among African American adolescents may seem quite paradoxical. African Americans exhibit concurrently both higher rates of sexual activity and religiosity. A number of factors have been shown to be determinants of adolescent sexuality (age of first intercourse, contraception usage, and frequency of sexual activity) among them are economic opportunities, community context, family income, mother's level of education, and mother's age for first intercourse. African Americans are more likely to have lower family incomes, and their mothers are more likely to have had lower levels of education and first sexual encounter at an early age. Religion can be understood as mitigating these risk factors in this group. Anderson (1989) points to the importance of socio-economic

factors in explaining sexual behavior and its attending outcomes such as teen pregnancy.

Similarly, Furstenberg et al. (1987) also suggest that socio-economic variables (mother's highest

level of education) and social isolation may affect the timing for first intercourse. They suggest

that the racial gap between timing of first intercourse for Anglo-whites and Blacks may be

affected by segregation which may influence youth decisions to have intercourse at an early age.

Billy et al. (1994) suggest community effects may be another important explanatory element in

the story of adolescent sexuality. They argue "Communities characterized by a paucity of

economic resources, racial segregation, and social disorganization seem to provide young people

with little motivation to avoid behaviors with potentially deleterious consequences, such as

unprotected intercourse and consequent nonmarital birth" (Billy et al. 1994, pg. 338). Billy et al.

suggests that religion helps shape sexual behaviors and counteract these contexts by providing

normative constraints and structures for adolescents.

Norms also play an important role in adolescent sexuality (Anderson 1989; Billy et al.

1994; Furstenberg et al. 1987). Furstenberg et al. also point to normative causal sources of the

sexual intercourse in adolescents. They suggest that peer sexual activity is the best indicator or

individual sexual activity[14]. Their study findings suggest that students who attended

predominantly Black schools (80 percent or more) were more likely to report having sexual

intercourse than those in racially mixed schools. However, Brown (1985) and Murry (1994)

contest the notion that there is a uniformed norm of sexual permissiveness in the African

American community. High rates of deleterious sexual activity among African American

adolescents may be a consequence of their marginalized status mediated by such phenomena as

---

[14] However, it is important to note that Furstenberg's acknowledge a problem in their reliance on peer sexual behavior and individual sexual behavior because they were unable to discern how the variable is at work in their sample. They acknowledge that the responses they receive may be a result of misperception (individuals perceiving their friends as like them in sexual behavior) or self selection into a group that is similar in sexual behavior.

low income and limited economic opportunities. The scholarship on religion and youth sexuality

suggests that religion may serve to mitigate these factors.

Religion and Homosexuality

While many of the studies addressing heterosexual adolescents noted the protective and

self-esteem building properties of African American religion, these protective properties may not

always be in play for gay and lesbian adolescence. Adolescence is a tentative time for these

groups as they must navigate a coming out period where they come to terms with their sexual

identity (Newman and Muzzonigro 1993). As with their heterosexual counterparts religion may

have important consequences for the sexual choices and experience of gay and lesbian African

American adolescents (Newman and Muzzonigro 1993). The centrality of the Black Church in

the African American community may have important consequences for gay and lesbian young

adults as they wrestle with issues surrounding their orientation and its perceptions in their

communities.

Within the African American community homosexuality and same-sex attractions, sexual

encounters, and relationships have traditionally been met with resistance. These attractions and

their attending sexual activities run against the community's cultural grain and its theological

penchant. The African American church has traditionally held their conservative anti-same-sex

intercourse position as being a part of biblical cannon. Scholars have noted a negative

relationship between religiosity and affect towards homosexuality. In particular African

American religiosity has been thought to support homophobia and homonegativity (Herek and

Capitanio 1995; Marsiglio 1993). Indeed, increasing levels of religiosity have been shown to

correlate with increasing levels of homonegativity (Herek and Capitanio 1995). While some

churches deviate from this pattern accepting openly or else secretly gay and lesbian members

into the church fold, most African American Churches openly decry homosexuality (Woodyard et al. 2000).

Newman and Muzzonigro (1993) examine the impact of "traditional" family values which includes family religiosity on the coming out process gay adolescents. The questionnaire employed during this study uses religion (namely, the importance of religion to their family), as well as race, class, age and education in order to assess levels of traditional values in the families of the gay adolescents in their sample. Families which stressed religion, marriage, and bearing children as important were deemed traditional. Newman and Muzzonigro (1993) argue that male adolescents in more traditional families experienced greater feelings of difference from their peers in childhood than did male adolescents in less traditional families and they reported earlier experiences of same sex attraction.

Newman and Muzzonigro (1993) report that adolescents in more traditional families who disclosed their sexual orientation to their family experience greater feelings of family disapproval than their counterparts in less traditional families. Among those who did not disclose their orientation, gay men from more traditional families felt that their families would be less responsive to their homosexual identity than their counterparts in less traditional families. Among African Americans in the study 67 percent were categorized as being in less traditional families, while 33 percent were in more traditional families. Unfortunately, the total sample size of the study was only 27 men and African American men represent 7 individuals or 26 percent of the respondents. The small sample size greatly restricts the generalizability of the study and its conclusions.

Woodyard, Peterson, and Stokes (2000) examines the relationship between same-sex intercourse among African American men and religious participation. In this study researchers

examined the frequency of attendance and religious affiliation of men who have sex with men

(MSM) [15]. The sample used in the study consisted of 65 interviews with individuals who had

formal or informal relationships with African American men who have sex with men. These

interviews were followed by key participant interviews with 76 African American men ages 18-

29 years old who had sex with men in the past six months prior to their being interviewed. The

men were questioned about their sexuality and religiosity during in-depth semi-structured

interviews. The study findings suggest that African American men who engaged in same-sex

intercourse who took on both less and more masculine gender role felt that neither they nor their

counterparts were deterred from religious affiliation (Woodyard et al. 2000, pg. 454).

MSMs, Woodyard et al. suggest, may be divided into two groups based on their

sexual/gender roles; one "less masculine" than heterosexuals[16] and the other indistinguishable

from heterosexuals with regard to their masculinity (Woodyard et al. 2000, pg. 454). For less

masculine MSM, Woodyard et al. suggest that the church environment may provide a place

within the African America community where their less masculine behavior may be accepted.

The more masculine MSMs were described in the study as being present in church with

heterosexual partners or absent from church. Study participants described the African American

church as a place where they could find other same-sex partners and a place where their

identities as African American men (separate from their sexual preferences) were affirmed

(Woodyard et al. 2000, pg. 455).

The study, however, does acknowledge that same-sex intercourse is counter to the

theological culture of African American churches and respondents noted numerous instances of

---

[15] Woodyard, Peterson, and Stokes (2000) do not use the terms homosexuals, bisexuals, or individuals who are curious about bisexuals in their study but rather use the term "men who have sex with men" (MSM). This term collapses notions of the above mentioned without making distinctions among their male respondents or asking them to categorize themselves.
[16] Woodyard's terminology here belays the variance is levels of "masculinity" among heterosexuals.

African American pastors disavowing the practices in which MSMs were engaged. The researchers noted that these negative messages were incorporated into respondents' conception of self, negatively impacting MSMs' self-esteem. Study respondents expressed feelings of guilt, condemnation, embarrassment, and alienation as consequences of their church involvement and the anti-same-sex messages they receive there. In spite of some respondents reports that the church served as a meeting place for MSMs, Woodyard, Peterson, and Stokes (2000) suggest that study participants who were active in church in African American churches were affected by the anti-same-sex theology of the Black Church resulting in more secretive and fewer same-sex encounters (Woodyard et al. 2000, pg. 458).

Negy and Eisenman (2005) compare the attitudes of African Americans and Anglo-White colleges students towards gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) individuals. The study participants were comprised of 70 African Americans and 143 Caucasian students in the southeastern United States. The study's findings suggest that African Americans were more likely to have negative feelings towards LGB than their Anglo-white counterparts (Negy and Eisenman 2005, pg. 295). However, when other factors such as frequency of church attendance, religious commitment, and socioeconomic status were controlled the difference in Anglo-White and Black negative affect for LGB individuals dissipated. Negy and Eisenman (2005) suggest that for both Anglo-whites and African American young adults religious commitment is a major factor in homonegativity. Indeed, particularly for African Americans in the data presented, religious commitment was the instrument which was most correlated with respondents' affective response to LGBs. Ultimately, Negy and Eisenman (2005) speculate that as the frequency of church attendance increases so does reinforcement of homonegative conceptions.

Conclusion

Religion is an important part of the African American community and the lives of Black adolescents. Much of the history of the African American community has been told through the lens of its religious institutions. Enslaved Africans fought to keep their religious traditions alive in the New World and even in embracing Christianity they forged a new path that was different from Anglo-White Christianity. Similarly, Islam in the Black community strove to create a separate identity from slavery for African Americans. Religion has important consequences for African Americans at every stage of their development. African American religion has played a central role in determining the bounds of appropriate behavior for community members and has served as a socializing agent. Whether in complying or deviating from its normative prescriptions, African Americans view themselves and each other in its light. Consequently, we may be able to understand much of adolescent sexual and political behavior by understanding the role religion plays in their decision making process.

Defining religiosity has been a key factor in studies on adolescent sexuality examined in this paper. Frequency of church attendance and the importance of religion are two of the measures most frequently used in studies which examine the role of religion in the life of adolescents and its impact on their decision making. While these measures do often yield statistically significant results it is not clear what concepts of religion and its impact these studies are measuring. Combining theological measures that directly access the parts of the religious tradition and exposure in which scholars are interested may yield more explanatory power in their investigation of the influence of religion on young adult decision making.

What scholars in this field are most likely trying to capture is whether or not the youth in their studies have internalized the theological messages about sexuality within the religious tradition to which they have been exposed. They then wish to compare levels of internalization

with the behaviors of interest. Unfortunately, frequency of church attendance and importance of religion may not be good proxies for the internalization of religious measures. These measures do not make explicit notions of belief and internalization which are very likely the sources of behavioral change. For example, a person who willingly attends religious services once a week and someone who attends 3 times a week because of cohesion may have different rates of internalization, even though repeated exposure may dispose anyone to a particular viewpoint.

Similarly, the issue of the importance of religion may not capture the specific areas of religious practice intended. Individuals may define religion differently, and affirming the importance of religion may not mean the same thing for each individual. For example, an individual may in response to these questions intend to affirm a particular church but not a particular theological tenet. Without directly addressing the theological tenet it is difficult to understand these measures as they relate to issue of sexuality. More explanatory power may be gained by examining the relationship between levels of belief in particular theological tenet and participation in certain activities or likelihood of exhibiting particular attitudes.

Bibliography

Allen, Richard L., Michael C. Dawson, and Ronald E. Brown. 1989. "A Schema-Based Approach to Modeling an African-American Racial Belief System." *The American Political Science Review* 83 (2):421-41.

Anderson, Elijah. 1989. "Sex Codes and Family Life among Poor Inner-City Youths." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 501:59-78.

Ball, Joanna , Lisa Armistead, and Barbara-Jeanne Austin. 2003. "The relationship between religiosity and adjustment among African-American, female, urban adolescents." *Journal of Adolescence* 26 (2003):431–46.

Beck, Paul Allen, and M. Kent Jennings. 1982. "Pathways to Participation." *The American Political Science Review* 76 (1):94-108.

Billy, John O. G., Karin L. Brewster, and William R. Grady. 1994. "Contextual Effects on the Sexual Behavior of Adolescent Women." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (2):387-404.

Bowie, JV, ME Ensminger, and JA Robertson. 2006. "Alcohol-Use Problems in Young Black Adults: Effects of Religiosity, Social Resources, and Mental Health." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 67 (1):44-53.

Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *The American Political Science Review* 89 (2):271-94.

Brewster, Karin L. , Elizabeth C. Cooksey, David K. Guilkey, and Ronald R. Rindfuss. 1998. "The Changing Impact of Religion on the Sexual and Contraceptive Behavior of Adolescent Women in the United States." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (2):493-504.

Brown, Shirley Vining. 1985. "Premarital Sexual Permissiveness Among Black Adolescent Females." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 48 (4):381-7.

Calhoun-Brown, Allison. 1996. "African American Churches and Political Mobilization: The Psychological Impact of Organizational Resources." *The Journal of Politics* 58 (4):935-53.

———. 1998. "While Marching to Zion: Otherworldliness and Racial Empowerment in the Black Community." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (3):427-39.

Casper, Lynne M. 1990. "Does Family Interaction Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 22 (3):109-14.

Christensen, Abigail M. Holmes. 1894. "Spirituals and "Shouts" of Southern Negroes." *The Journal of American Folklore* 7 (25):154-5.

Clark, Kenneth B. 1971. "The Power of the Church." In *The Black church in America*, ed. H. M. Nelsen, R. L. Yokley and A. K. Nelsen. New York,: Basic Books.

Daniel, W. Harrison. 1973. "Southern Presbyterians and the Negro in the Early National Period." *The Journal of Negro History* 58 (3):291-312.

Diouf, Sylviane A. 1998. *Servants of Allah : African Muslims enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press.

Ellison, Christopher G. 1991. "Religious involvement and subjective well-being " *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 32 (1): 80-99.

———. 1993. "Religious Involvement and Self-Perception among Black Americans." *Social Forces* 71 (4):1027-55.

———. 1995. "Race, religious involvement and depressive symptomatology in a southeastern U.S. community." *Social Science & Medicine* 40 (11):1561-72.

Evans, Sara M. , and Harry Chatten Boyte. 1986. *Free spaces : the sources of democratic change in America*. New York: Harper & Row.

Floyd, Jr., Samuel A. 2002. "Ring Shout! Literary Studies, Historical Studies, and Black Music Inquiry." *Black Music Research Journal* 22:49-70.

Frazier, Edward Franklin, and C. Eric Lincoln. 1974. *The Negro church in America*. New York,: Schocken Books.

Furstenberg, Frank F., Jr., S. Philip Morgan, Kristin A. Moore, and James L. Peterson. 1987. "Race Differences in the Timing of Adolescent Intercourse." *American Sociological Review* 52 (4):511-8.

Ghayur, M. Arif. 1981. "Muslims in the United States: Settlers and Visitors." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454:150-63.

Glenn, Norval D. , and Erin Gotard. 1977. "The Religion of Blacks in the United States: Some Recent Trends and Current Characteristics." *The American Journal of Sociology* 82 (2):443-51.

Gomez, Michael A. 1994. "Muslims in Early America." *The Journal of Southern History* 60 (4):671-710.

Hanks, Michael. 1981. "Youth, Voluntary Associations and Political Socialization." *Social Forces* 60 (1):211-23.

Hardy, Sam A., and Marcela Raffaelli. 2003. "Adolescent religiosity and sexuality: an investigation of reciprocal influences." *Journal of Adolescence* 26 (2003):731–9.

Harper, Frederick D. 1971. "The Influence of Malcolm X on Black Militancy." *Journal of Black Studies* 1 (4):387-402.

Harris, Fredrick C. 1999. *Something within : religion in African-American political activism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Herek, Gregory M., and John P. Capitanio. 1995. "Black Heterosexual's Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States." *The Journal of Sex Research* 32 (2):95-105.

Hunt, Larry L. , and Janet G. Hunt. 1977. "Black Religion as BOTH Opiate and Inspiration of Civil Rights Militance: Putting Marx's Data to the Test." *Social Forces* 56 (1):1-14.

Jackson, Luther P. 1931. "The Planting of Negro Churches." *The Journal of Negro History* 16 (2):181-203.

Jacobson, Cardell K. 1992. "Religiosity in a Black Community: An Examination of Secularization and Political Variables." *Review of Religious Research* 33 (3):215-28.

———. 1999. "Denominational and Racial and Ethnic Differences in Fatalism." *Review of Religious Research* 41 (1):9-20.

Johnson, William Courtland. 1997. ""A Delusive Clothing": Christian Conversion in the Antebellum Slave Community." *The Journal of Negro History* 82 (3):295-311.

Lambert, Frank. 2002. ""I Saw the Book Talk": Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening." *The Journal of African American History* Vol. 87, The Past before Us:12-25.

Marsh, Clifton E. 2000. *The lost-found Nation of Islam in America*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Marsiglio, William. 1993. "Attitudes Toward Homosexual Activity and Gays as Friends: A National Survey of Heterosexual 15- to 19-Year-Old Males." *The Journal of Sex Research* 30 (1):12-7.

Marx, Gary T. 1967. "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy Among Negroes?" *American Sociological Review* 32 (1):64-72.

Mays, Benjamin E., and Joseph William Nicholson. 1969. *The Negro's church*. New York,: Russell & Russell.

Mazrui, Ali A. 1996. "Between the Crescent and the Star-Spangled Banner: American Muslims and US Foreign Policy." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 72 (3):493-506.

McCloud, Aminah Beverly. 1995. *African American Islam*. New York :: Routledge.

McCree, Donna Hubbard, Gina M. Wingood, Ralph Diclemente, Susan Davies, and Katherine F. Harrington. 2003. "Religiosity and Risky Sexual Behavior in African-American Adolescent Females." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 33:2-8.

McKenzie, Brian D. 2004. "Religious Social Networks, Indirect Mobilization, and African-American Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly* 57 (4):621-32.

McKinney, Richard I. 1971. "The Black Church: Its Development and Present Impact." *The Harvard Theological Review* 64 (4):452-81.

McVeigh, Rory, and Christian Smith. 1999. "Who Protests in America: An Analysis of Three Political Alternatives--Inaction, Institutionalized Politics, or Protest." *Sociological Forum* 14 (4):685-702.

Meier, Ann M. 2003. "Adolescents' Transition to First Intercourse, Religiosity, and Attitudes about Sex." *Social Forces* 81 (3):1031-52.

Mitchell, Henry H. 2004. *Black church beginnings : the long-hidden realities of the first years*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.

Moorhead, James H. 1984. "The Erosion of Postmillennialism in American Religious Thought, 1865-1925." *Church History* 53 (1): 61-77.

Mott, Frank L., Michelle M. Fondell, Paul N. Hu, Lori Kowaleski-Jones, and Elizabeth G. Menaghan. 1996. "The Determinants of First Sex by Age 14 in a High-Risk Adolescent Population." *Family Planning Perspectives* 28 (1):13-8.

Murry, Velma McBride. 1994. "Black Adolescent Females: A Comparison of Early versus Late Coital Initiators." *Family Relations* 43 (3):342-8.

Nance, Susan. 2002. "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago." *Religion and American Culture* 12 (2):123-66.

Negy, Charles, and Russel Eisenman. 2005. "A Comparison of African American and White College Students' Affective and Attitudinal Reactions to Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals: An exploratory Study." *The Journal of Sex Research* 42 (4):291-8.

Nelsen, Hart M., and Anne K. Nelsen. 1975. *Black church in the sixties*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Newman, Bernie Sue, and Peter Gerard Muzzonigro. 1993. "The effects of traditional family values on the coming out process of gay male adolescents." *Adolescence* 28 (109):213-26.

Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 1998. "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community." *American Sociological Review* 63 (6):767-84.

———. December 1998. "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community." *American Sociological Review* 63 (6):767-84.

Pearce, Michelle J., Todd D. Little, and John E. Perez. 2003. "Religiousness and Depressive Symptoms Among Adolescents." *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology* 32 (2):267-77.

Pierre, C. E. 1916. "The Work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Among the Negroes in the Colonies." *The Journal of Negro History* 1 (4):349-60.

Posey, Walter B. 1956. "The Baptists and Slavery in the Lower Mississippi Valley." *The Journal of Negro History* 41 (2):117-30.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rashid, Hakim M., and Zakiyyah Muhammad. 1992. "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America." *The Journal of Negro Education* 61 (2):178-85.

Reese, Laura A., and Ronald E. Brown. 1995. "The Effects of Religious Messages on Racial Identity and System Blame among African Americans." *Journal of Politics* 57 (1):24-43.

Rosenbaum, Art, and Johann S. Buis. 1998. *Shout because you're free : the African American ring shout tradition in coastal Georgia*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Ross, Catherine E. 1990. "Religion and Psychological Distress." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (2):236-45.

Rostosky, Sharon Scales, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret Laurie Comer Wright. 2003. "Coital Debut: The Role of Religiosity and Sex Attitudes in the Add Health Survey." *The Journal of Sex Research* 40 (4):358-67.

Schvaneveldt, Jay D. , and Gerald R. Adams. 1983. "Adolescents and the Decision-Making Process." *Theory into Practice* 22 (2):98-104.

Smith, Christian, Melinda Lundquist Denton, Robert Faris, and Mark Regnerus. 2002. "Mapping American Adolescent Religious Participation." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (4):597-612.

Smith, R. Drew. 1998. "Black Religious Nationalism and the Politics of Transcendence." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66 (3):533-47.

Smith, Timothy L. 1972. "Slavery and Theology: The Emergence of Black Christian Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America." *Church History* 41 (4):497-512.

St. George, Arthur, and Patrick H. McNamara. 1984. "Religion, Race and Psychological Well-Being." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23 (4):351-63.

Steinman, Kenneth J., and Marc A. Zimmerman. 2004. "Religious activity and risk behavior among African American adolescents: concurrent and developmental effects." *American journal of community psychology* 33 (3-4):151-61.

Studer, Marlena , and Arland Thornton. 1987. "Adolescent Religiosity and Contraceptive Usage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 49 (1):117-28.

Taylor, A. A. 1926. "Religious Efforts Among the Negroes." *The Journal of Negro History* 11 (3):425-44.

Taylor, Joseph Robert, Michael C. Thornton, and Linda M. Chatters. 1987. "Black Americans' Perceptions of the Sociohistorical Role of the Church." *Journal of Black Studies* 18 (2):123-38.

Thornton, Arland , and Donald Camburn. 1989. "Religious Participation and Adolescent Sexual Behavior and Attitudes." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51 (3):641-53.

Trent, Katherine, and Kyle Crowder. 1997. "Adolescent Birth Intentions, Social Disadvantage, and Behavioral Outcomes." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59 (3):523-35.

Turner, Richard Brent. 1997. *Islam in the African-American experience*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

van Olphen, Juliana , Amy Schulz, Barbara Israel, Linda Chatters, Laura Klem, Edith Parker, and David Williams. 2003. "Religious Involvement, Social Support, and Health Among African-American Women on the East Side of Detroit." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 18 (7):549-56.

Vaughn, Steve. 1997. "Making Jesus Black: The Historiographical Debate on the Roots of African-American Christianity." *The Journal of Negro History* 82 (1):25-41.

Wald, Kenneth D., Denise E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill Jr. 1988. "Churches as Political Communities." *The American Political Science Review* 82 (2):531-48.

Wallace Jr., John M. , and Tyrone A. Forman. 1998. "Religion's Role in Promoting Health and Reducing Risk Among American Youth." *Health Education & Behavior* 25 (6):721-41.

Wilcox, Clyde. 1990. "Religious Sources of Politicization among Blacks in Washington, D.C." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (3):387-94.

Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who Votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Woodroof, J. Timothy. 1985. "Premarital Sexual Behavior and Religious Adolescents." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24 (4):343-66.

Woodyard, Jeffery Lynn, John L. Peterson, and Joseph P. Stokes. 2000. ""Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord": Participation in AFrican AMerican Churches Among Young African American Men Who Have Sex With Men." *Journal of Pastoral Care* 54 (4):451-60.