Black Church Culture, Social Programs and Faith-Based Policy: Using Organization Theory to Reconcile Rhetoric and Reality

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Abstract

This empirical study applies competing theories of organization culture to examine policy assumptions about the Black church's role in providing faith-based social programs. Findings refute conventional wisdom by showing that, on average, Black churches have few social programs; denomination marginally predicts the number and types of programs offered; and congregations typically offer a narrow range of social programs that are not directly aligned with faith-based policy goals. Results further show that congregations offered 38 different types of programs, reflecting a broad range of community needs to which churches are responding. Mixed findings suggest limitations of extant theories when applied to faith-based organizations, highlighting the need for research to understand how repertoires and routines become part of their culture.

Introduction

Faith-based policy seeks to exploit synergies between theology, geography and demography to provide more accessible human services. In general, the helping mission of American congregations creates a climate of compassion and supportive relationships that can potentially lead to deep personal transformation. Moreover, when congregations are located in communities of need they are more geographically accessible, culturally similar, and therefore presumably more attractive to poor and underserved populations than secular social services (http://www.cpjustice.org). Relative to African Americans, faith-based policies seek to capitalize upon the much cited and even mythical "culture" of black churches (Frazier, 1962), and their history of providing a broad array of human services (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

The notion is that Black churches have historically provided programs in functional areas of interest to the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), namely the Departments of Education, Housing, Justice, Labor, and Health and Human Services. However, prior to the faith-based initiative, Black churches and smaller congregations were excluded from competition for government grants to provide those services. New policies, however, encourage cabinet departments to partner with previously excluded religious organizations, including Black churches, to improve social service delivery. The presumption is that Black churches' historic culture and practices will enable them to have a profound and lasting impact on the most intractable social problems – if they have the necessary financial resources. But how closely is rhetoric aligned with reality?

The Black church is one of the oldest institutions in this country and is therefore vulnerable to culture shifts that are inherent in organizational life. More specifically,

research shows that although organizations espouse and enact certain values as part of their culture, enactment of those values can diminish over time (Swidler, 1986). Thus, rather than rely solely on historic culture as a barometer of Black churches' capacity to provide social programs, we need to understand contemporary culture as well.

This study seeks to understand the contemporary culture of historically and predominantly black churches as manifested in program activities. First, historical background about the social program repertoire of black churches is provided. Next, exploratory secondary data analysis of the National Congregation Study (Chaves, 1998) is conducted to examine relationships between denominational, normative, and program cultures (e.g, number and types of programs) of a sample of Black churches (n=156). Implications for policy, practice and research are then discussed.

Theoretical Background

Culture can be construed as *values* that unify a social collective and guide its actions (Smircich, 1983; Schein, 1990), or as *actions* that emerge, endure because of their functionality, and become valued over time (Swidler, 1986). Both perspectives elucidate the culture of program activity among contemporary Black churches. In this study, programs are analyzed as both outcomes and antecedents of church culture.

Culture as Value-driven Action among Black Churches

Culture is a set of values, beliefs and norms that undergird all actions and patterns of activity within an organization and its responses to the external environment (Smircich, 1983; Schein, 1990). This deterministic view suggests that people with shared values will behave in similar ways. For example, organizations with demographically similar members (e.g., predominantly African Americans) or organizations within a religious denomination will have common ideologies and pursue similar goals. Research provides some support for this perspective.

Relative to ethnic culture, Black churches have played a pivotal role in the African American community since slavery (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Franklin and Moss, 1994; Blackwell, 1991). In addition to their spiritual mission, these organizations served as community centers that promoted a sense of belonging and helped members cope with existential crises. As a result, Black churches engaged in secular activities related to economic, social and intellectual development, arts and entertainment, social welfare, health, psychological well-being, and, most notably, political activism (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Blackwell, 1991). Although historic data about the actual number and types of programs that Black churches offered is scant, the persistence of certain programs in contemporary churches suggests remnants of historic cultural values.

Various studies show that secular service programs are still part of Black church culture, with the average number of programs per study ranging from 4 to 18 (Williams, Griffith, Dodson & Young, 1993; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Billingsly & Caldwell, 1994). In some cases, those programs are aligned with OFBCI cabinet departments: education,

recreation, housing, parenting, prison ministries, and job training (Williams, Griffith, Dodson & Young, 1993; Dudley & Roozen, 2001; Billingsly & Caldwell, 1994). The range of average number of programs suggests that, for some churches, espoused values and actions are loosely coupled. Although these organizations historically valued providing an array of programs, their current program repertoire is limited. One explanation for variations in average number of programs is organizational structure.

Structure enables organizations to align themselves with environmental demands to achieve their goals (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Studies show direct relationships between the number and types of outreach programs offered and structural variables such as geographic region, church size, church age, leadership characteristics and wealth (Billingsley, 1995; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994, Chaves, 1998; Chaves & Tsitsos, 2000; Dudley & Roozen, 2001). And so, while religious organizations may value social programs, they may lack the infrastructure to implement and support them (Dudley & Roozen, 2001). Indeed, this is the primary rationale for faith-based policy. Therefore, based upon ethnic culture and the historic role of Black churches in African American life, we might expect that:

> H1: Most Black churches will offer numerous secular social programs,
> reflecting a vibrant program culture, although the number may vary due
> to simple structural factors (e.g., census tract, demographics).

Denominations provide values, beliefs and behavioral norms that guide actions, which can also be considered artifacts of culture. Studies show that denomination predicts program activity. For example, Progressive National Baptist Convention churches are significantly more likely to engage in community outreach than other churches in the Baptist convention (Billingsley, 1995). Thus, we might expect that aside from structural factors:

> H2: Denomination will predict:
> a. the number of social service programs that a congregation offers.
> b. the type of social service programs that a congregation offers.

and that:

> H3: Denominations with cohesive behavioral norms will provide related
> preventive or rehabilitative programs.

Yet studies have shown considerable within-denominational differences in the goals pursued and programs offered. Those differences are not mere artifacts of ethnic or structural differences (Billingsley, 1995; Chaves & Tsisos, 2000; Dudley & Roozen, 2001); an alternative view of culture is needed.

Culture as a Toolkit of Adaptive Actions among Black Churches

Culture has been defined as an organization's repertoire of actions or "toolkit" of competencies. Toolkits evolve in response to disruptive environmental jolts. Adaptive actions that prove beneficial are repeated, reinforced through rituals and symbols that convey meaning, and provide a unified framework for how people should behave amidst chaos, uncertainty and unsettled life. Thus, actions *become* ideology, tradition and common sense, valued ways of behaving (Swidler, 1986).

Once established as valued artifacts of culture, toolkits may then be transported to different physical and historical contexts. For example, slaves used imagery, songs, call and response interactions, and prayer as part of the "worship toolkit" in Black churches (Patillo-McCoy, 1998). That toolkit was transported to different settings (e.g., informal gatherings and formal meetings) and across historical settings (e.g., slavery through civil rights). Similarly, a congregation's repertoire of social programs can be considered a toolkit of actions that the organization developed to help members cope with changes and problems in the community. Swidler's (1986) action driven view of culture explains differences in program activities among congregations with similar demographic, structural and denominational characteristics; different competencies were developed due to specific challenges in the environment. Research on congregations provides support for this view.

National studies show that, in general, religious congregations provide a broad array of social programs, likely due to an enduring need to help the nation's poor (Chaves & Tsisos, 2000). Within geographic regions, congregations confronting similar environments offer similar types of programs, despite denominational or ideological differences (Dudley & Roozen, 2001). For example, in response to specific challenges confronting their African American members, Black churches are significantly more likely than white churches to offer community programs such as feeding the needy, community service, social justice and promoting civil rights (Chaves & Higgins, 1992; Dudley & Roozen, 2001). Moreover, as community crisis increases, so does the likelihood that Black churches will have a developed program culture (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994).

However, as organizations age or as life becomes "settled," some elements of the toolkit persist while others recede in importance. "People profess ideals they do not follow, utter platitudes without examining their validity, or fall into cynicism or indifference with the assurance that the world will go on just the same" (Swidler, 1986: 280). To what degree does the church's program toolkit reflect a historic institution and the "settled lives" of an expanded black middle class or the "unsettled lives" of an ever-increasing underclass? What are the implications of culture for the Black church as social service provider in an era of faith-based policy? It could be argued that because of the Black church's institutional age and African Americans' lives being relatively more "settled" than during slavery, we might expect that:

> *H4 Black Churches will have a narrow repertoire of programs that reflects competencies developed in response to historic challenges during the early years of the church's founding.*

If the data show that values predict the number and type of programs offered, as asserted in hypotheses one through three, then the Bush administration's assumptions will be well-founded and Black churches' or certain denominations' program cultures should enable them to readily adapt to the faith-based initiative with the help of government funding. However, if hypothesis four is supported, unless the range of programs parallels OFBCI departments there will be little reason to believe that Black churches are well equipped to align with the goals of the faith-based initiative.

Methods

The National Congregation Study (NCS) is used to examine the culture of black churches. The NCS is a cross sectional study of 1,236 congregations. NCS used the hyper-network approach to sampling by selecting a nationally representative random sample of English speaking individuals to generate a random sample of congregations (see Chaves & Tsitsos, 2000 for additional details; Chaves, 1998). The probability that a congregation appears in the study is directly proportional to its size. One-hour telephone interviews were used to collect data from a key informant in the organization such as clergy, a staff person, or someone in a leadership role. When telephone contact failed, face-to-face interviews were used to retain advantages afforded by the hypernetwork sampling strategy.

Secondary data analysis was conducted using a sub-set of 156 predominantly African American congregations whose membership is comprised of more than 75% African Americans. More specifically, 83% of congregations in this sample had 90%-100% African American membership; 17% had between 80-90% African American membership. Denominations in the sample included both historically Black and traditionally Eurocentric denominations such as Lutheran and Presbyterian.

Measures & Analyses

Independent Variables: Denomination and Behavioral Norms

Denomination. Congregations in this sample vary by denomination, size, geographic location, and other structural characteristics. Denominational affiliations include Baptist (50.6%), Pentecostal (11.5%), Methodist (9%), Other Christian not otherwise specified (7.1%), Roman Catholic (6.4%), Other conservative, evangelical, or sectarian Protestants (6.4%), Presbyterian or Reformed (3.2%), Lutheran (1.3%), Episcopal (1.3%), Other moderate or liberal Protestants (1.3%), Non-Christian (1.3%), and No identifiable tradition (.6%). Almost a third (31%) of the congregations were located in a census tract where 30% or more residents live below the poverty level. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the congregations are located in census tracts that are populated by 80% or more African Americans. On average, congregations indicated that 22% of regular adult participants live within a ten-minute walk.

Behavioral Norms: *Use of Substances.* Respondents were asked to reply "yes" or "no" to the following questions: "Does your congregation prohibit smoking tobacco?" Does your congregation prohibit the use of alcohol?" Items were combined to create a substance use norm variable (*alpha* = .76)

Behavioral Norms: *Relationships*. Respondents were asked to reply "yes" or "no" to the following questions: "Does your congregation have any special rules or norms about who single people date or become romantically involved with?"; "Does your congregation have any special rules or norms regarding cohabitation of unmarried adults?"; and "Does your congregation have any special rules or norms concerning homosexual behavior?" Items were combined to create a single relationship norm variable (*alpha* = .79).

Dependent Variables: Number and Type of Social Service Programs

The dichotomous variable used to measure social service programs asked respondents to answer the following question: "Has your congregation participated in or supported social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing projects of any sort within the past 12 months? Please don't include projects that use or rent space in your building but have no other connection to your congregation." This variable was coded SOCLSERV and responses were coded 1 or 0, such that 1 equals "does have at least one program of this type" and 0 equals "no program of this type named by respondent." Respondents were then shown a list which displayed 40 different types of programs which yielded a total number of programs for each congregation that participated in the study. A partial list of the programs includes Short Term Emergency Help, Feeding the Hungry, Education that is Not Religious or Mentoring, Home building or repair, Housing, Health, Immigrants issues, Homelessness, Seniors, Gender Specific, Give/Loan Money, Programs for People who are ill, Substance Abuse, Habitat for Humanities, Tutoring/Mentoring Youth, Prisoners & Their Families, Crime Prevention, Social Justice, Beneficiaries outside U.S., Community Service, Furniture/household items/ rent$, Visiting People, Domestic Violence, Training People for Work Skills, Help with Obtaining a Job, and Family Related Issues.

In addition to descriptive statistics, Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between denomination and the total *number* of social service programs; logistic regression was used to examine relationships between denomination and dichotomous variables, including the *types* of programs offered and behavioral norms. When discussing general findings, responses from all congregations were reported; when making comparisons, denominational categories with fewer than 10 respondents were excluded.

Results

Simple descriptive statistics show that H1 was not supported: Results provide little support for organizational or ethnic cultural values predicting the total number of programs. On average, congregations in this sample offered even fewer secular programs than in previous congregation studies (mean=2.5 programs; sd=2.8), ranging from 0 to 13

programs. Moreover, while 69% of congregations offered secular programs, 31% had no programs at all. Regarding census tracts, 63% of congregations in high poverty areas offered social service programs compared to 71% of congregations in more affluent neighborhoods.

Ordinary least square linear regression analyses showed statistically significant relationships between denominational culture and program culture. Results provide partial support for H2.a, showing that denomination was associated with the number of social service programs for some congregations but not others. Model 1 (adjusted R^2 =.07) shows that Baptist (*beta =.26***) and Roman Catholic denominations (*beta=.23***) were significantly associated with providing social service programs (Table 1). Relative to structural differences, although Roman Catholic (20%), Methodist (21%) and Other Christian (18%) congregations were less frequently located in high poverty census tracts, among these denominations only the Roman Catholic denomination was associated with the number of programs offered. Moreover, there was considerable variation within denominations in the number of programs offered, such that Other Christian (64%), Baptist (61%), Methodist (36%), Other Evangelical (50%), and Pentecostal denominations (28%) offered between 1 and 5 programs; while 50% of Methodist, 50% Other Evangelicals, and 67% of Pentecostal congregations reported having no social service programs at all.

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine relationships between denomination and types of social service programs, providing partial support for H2b. Models 2, 5 and 6 (Table 1) showed that Baptist congregations were significantly more likely to provide programs for home building and repair (*beta=.94**) and unspecified programs (*beta=1.54***). Baptist were also more likely to provide programs for people who are ill (*beta= 1.26+*), but the difference was only marginally significant. Model 3 showed that "Other Christian" congregations were significantly more likely than other denominations to provide for the homeless (*beta =2.04***).

Hypothesis 3 was not supported, showing that denomination was a marginal predictor of behavioral norms (e.g., relationships and substance use), but behavioral norms were not associated with the types of programs offered. More specifically, although 62% of congregations had explicit norms about dating, cohabitation and homosexuality, Model 8 (R^2 =.06) showed that only the Pentecostal denomination was significantly associated with having relationship norms (*beta=2.39***), and Baptist was a significant negative predictor of having relationship norms (*beta= -0.72**). Further, only 38% of congregations had explicit norms prohibiting the use of tobacco and alcohol. Model 9 showed that only "Other Conservative Evangelical" denomination was positively associated with substance use norms, but the difference was only marginally significant (*beta=1.96+*). Behavioral norms were highly variable within denominations, and neither relationship nor substance use norms was associated with offering related programs.

Results show mixed support for hypothesis 4, the action-based view of program activity. Congruent with expectations about institutional age and relatively more "settled" African American life, congregations in this sample commonly offered a narrow repertoire of

programs that reflected historic challenges within the African American community when the church was founded (mean= 2.5 programs; sd=2.8). These included programs to meet short term emergency needs (37%), feed the hungry (35%), focus on children (26%), and promote home building or repair (24%); 21% had programs with an unspecified purpose. Between 10% and 20% offered programs related to education; men, women or seniors' issues; blankets and homelessness; loans; services for people who are ill; and a variety of long term assistance (e.g., counseling, rehabilitation, etc.)

Relative to the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, there was little evidence that Black church culture was aligned with policy aims. More specifically, while 24% of congregations had housing programs and 16% offered educational or mentoring programs, fewer than 10% of congregations offered programs of interest to departments Justice, Labor, or Health & Human Services (e.g., crime prevention, services for prisoners and families, job training or placement, counseling, domestic violence or physical health).

Finally, despite the organization's age and the relatively more "settled" life of African Americans, congregations in this sample offered a range of 38 different types of programs, which suggested they were responding to myriad environmental jolts.

Discussion

Strengths of this study include the application of organizational theory to Black churches and faith-based policy, and the juxtaposition of organizational culture theories to better understand them. Rather than narrowly define culture as values that predict action (Schein, 1990), Swidler's (1986) theory of culture as actions that reflect organizational life cycle, environmental challenges, (un)settled life, and valued responses is used. The former view that shared historic values inspire action provides an intuitive, albeit inaccurate frame for understanding Black church program culture. Faith-based policy is predicated upon this view, but results do not support it. Overall, congregations in this sample offered few programs and among the twelve denominations, only Baptist and Roman Catholic predicted the number of programs offered. Only Baptist churches were significantly more likely to provide home building and repair programs and "unspecified" programs, and "Other Christian" churches were significantly more likely to provide for the homeless. For the remaining ten, denomination did not predict the types of programs offered.

The Pentecostal denomination was significantly associated with having relationship norms, and "Other Evangelical Christian" denomination category was marginally associated with having substance use norms. However, church norms about relationships or substance use was not associated with having related types of programs. In sum, neither ethnic nor denominational values overwhelmingly predicted program activity, and few denomination-specific program niches emerged.

The latter action-driven definition of culture provides an alternative lens through which to analyze political rhetoric and contemporary Black church reality. Findings show mixed

support for this perspective as well. The number and types of programs that churches offered highlights variations in African American life and limitations of the study. Congruent with organizational age and relatively more "settled" life, churches in this sample commonly offered a narrow range of programs, with 24% to 37% meeting short term emergency needs, feeding the hungry, caring for children, and building or repairing homes. These programs reflect common challenges of African Americans during the early years of the church and persistent challenges in contemporary life. Contemporary challenges however, are not confined to that narrow list. The broad range of programs (38) offered by congregations in this sample suggests that life remains "unsettled" and churches, to varying degrees, continue to respond to this challenge.

The study has methodological and conceptual limitations that should be explicitly addressed. First, although this is a national sample, a small subset of predominantly African American churches was examined, which limits the statistical power of the analysis. The sample is drawn from economically and geographically diverse regions; however this study did not control for those differences.

Second, mixed results suggest that neither theory of culture adequately captures nuanced and idiosyncratic ways that congregations may differ from secular organizations in their espoused and enacted values and complex rationales for action; in short, reasons why churches offer certain programs, conditions under which their program repertoire expands or contracts, and values underlying those changes are not bound by a linear logic. For example, a new counseling program may be established because a member possesses skills upon which to base that ministry. Although the church's explicit value may be to develop a new counseling program, the church's implicit core value to attract, engage and retain new members may be the overriding impetus for implementing the program. Conversely, programs may become extinct when the leader dies or relocates before a continuity plan has been established. In that case, the program is no less valued, the organization's infrastructure simply cannot sustain it. Further, a church program may persist due to a sole member's commitment to maintaining it, without regard to its practical usefulness. Continuation of such a program reflects the organization's value of the member and not a program per se.

The measure used did not capture different levels of complexity or explain the duration or effectiveness of particular programs. Nevertheless, this study elucidates fruitful directions for research about this historic organization. Moreover, it highlights opportunities to expand organizational theory to increase our understanding about the ways that congregations and other faith-based organizations differ from secular organizations (e.g., secular and religious hospitals) in the role that culture and values play in their performance and survival. Results also delineate variables that may influence the delivery of faith-based social programs and pertinent policy concerns.

Religious Culture, Ethnic Culture and the Black Church: Policy Implications

As part of their religious mission, churches pursue Biblical mandates to care for women, children and the poor. Black clergy and churches have long espoused values that support

a range of social programs, but those values are not uniformly or vigorously enacted across the organizational landscape. Data from this study show that 20% of Black churches offer programs that fulfill Biblical mandates to care for vulnerable populations. And while some congregations have as many as 13 programs, denoting remnants of a vibrant program culture, they are outliers among their organizational peers. Yet government casts Black churches as ideal organizations to provide social programs. Results from this and other studies provide little evidence that Black churches have a "culture" of providing myriad programs aligned with the faith-based policy initiative.

Previous studies have examined structural factors that predict Black church program activities, a rational for increased funding and technical assistance of faith-based organizations. Future studies should examine cultural factors that predispose Black churches to expand their mission to include an array of social services beyond their Biblical mission. For example, given their historic activism and program activities, how do contemporary Black churches envision their role in the social service arena? To what degree are social justice and social welfare topics of clergy sermons? What role do they believe government should play in providing social services? Answers to these questions may explain low levels of social programs offered by churches in this sample.

Denominational Culture, Poverty & Program Activity

Denominational differences relative to census tract are noteworthy. Roman Catholic congregations are significantly more likely to provide programs, but least likely to be located in high poverty census tracts. The propensity to provide programs may be related to a congregation's affiliation with established Catholic social service agencies. Conversely, Pentecostal churches are most likely to be situated in high poverty census tracts, yet least likely to offer social service programs. Relative to faith-based policy, organizations that are most likely to provide programs are least accessible, and the most accessible congregations do not have a culture of providing programs to meet environmental demands. Misfits between organizational infrastructure, culture and environment will not be easily remedied with grants and technical assistance. Organizational culture must support those structural changes in order to sustain them. But culture is resistant to change; it requires questioning long held basic assumptions (Schein, 2004).

Baptist congregations were significantly more likely to provide social programs and were situated in both high and low poverty areas. What factors predispose and enable congregations in high poverty areas to provide programs while others do not? How do they sustain their program culture? And how can those capabilities be replicated across communities of need? Further, 37% of congregations in high poverty areas did not provide social programs, compared to 29% of congregations in non-poverty census tracts, a marginally significant difference. Although many structural and cultural factors account for this difference, future studies might examine why congregations that have historically provided programs, and that are located in more affluent areas, *refrain* from program activity (e.g. Methodists churches in this sample).

Finally, denomination partially predicted types of programs offered and showed some trends that indicate potential program niches. Where such niches or trends exist, creating a community network of complementary, denomination- or organization- specific programs should be explored to capitalize on the strengths of active congregations while building the capacities of others.

Practical Implications of Normative Culture

Normative culture, shared values and behavioral rules can enhance or undermine the effectiveness of faith-based programs. More specifically, empirical evidence shows that faith-based programs are more effective than their secular counterparts (DeHaven et al, 2004). Observed differences may be attributable to religious values that reinforce secular content (Chatters, 2000), promote deep personal transformation, and therefore enhance social services. In contrast, studies of faith-based interventions have shown that denominational or organizational norms may limit the effectiveness of faith-based interventions by inhibiting participation. For example, extreme moralizing associated with breast cancer, smoking, weight loss, and nutritional interventions was a repeated factor in low participation, drop outs and low follow up rates (Skinner et al, 1998; Stillman et al, 1993; Voorhees et al, 1996; Yanek et al, 2001). In this study, Pentecostal churches have a strong normative culture against substance use, yet those norms did not predict providing substance abuse programs. But norms don't negate need.

Prior to implementing programs, churches may need organizational interventions to modify their culture and norms to support program aims and to prevent spiritual alienation of participants. Future studies should examine the ways a church's normative culture enhances or inhibits participation and program goals.

Organizational Life Cycle, Settled Lives & Program Repertoires

Results reflect both the organizational life cycle of the Black church and the state of African American life, but in perhaps unexpected ways. From a theoretical perspective, it can be argued that a narrow program repertoire among most churches reflects the institution's age, core mission, its response to the institutional environment, and unique challenges and opportunities in the lives of its members.

Given the institution's multi-centenarian age and the socio-political context of its origins, it is not surprising that values supporting a vibrant program culture are loosely coupled with action. As organizations age they settle into a narrow repertoire of activities that were valued during the time of its founding. The Black church in America was founded in response to myriad environmental jolts and social upheaval during slavery, which demanded a broad repertoire of programs to manage chaotic life. At its core however, it remains a religious institution with specifically religious aims. Common programs in the organizational toolkit denote the convergence of ethnic culture, organizational culture, religious culture, and programs designed to manage early environmental jolts by promoting existential and generational survival (e.g., shelter, food, emergency needs, and care for children). A formerly expansive program toolkit may have contracted as the

organization aged, its religious mission increased in salience, and the institutional landscape began to provide secular programs that helped stabilize African American life (e.g., policies and government agencies). Therefore, rather than shift government funds from one sector to another, Black churches and government agencies must continue their complementary and parallel social service efforts. While Black churches are legendary for using scarce resources to move mountains, it is unrealistic to think that diverting government funds from agencies to Black churches will enable churches to do what government and other agencies have not been able to do – meet the unmet needs of African Americans.

In addition to institutional age, apparent contractions in the program repertoire of Black congregations may reveal the institution's resilience and adaptation to broad historic trends. The Black church's history is punctuated by prodigious levels of social program activity and collective activism that contracted after major social, political and economic gains. For example, the proliferation of church sponsored "Historically Black Colleges and Universities" during the mid 1800s was a faith-based effort to educate African Americans who aspired to and acquired freedom and occupational choice (Ashley & Williams, 2004); the faith-based Negro Health Movement of the early 1900s successfully coalesced Black clergy and professionals to improve African American mortality and morbidity by highlighting the economic consequences for emerging industrialism (Brown, 1937); and church based Civil Rights activities of the 1950s and 1960s resulted from Black clergy, members and communities collaborating to advocate for social equality (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), each highlighting episodes of vigorous church-based social programs that spawned major social movements (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). This historical context casts recent studies of the average Black Church's program activities in a different light. Based upon previous 50-year cycles, evidence may indicate a cyclical contraction and that another faith-based social movement is simmering in Black churches -- renewal and expansion are imminent.

The notion of cyclical change raises interesting but under-examined questions for scholars and clergy who want to understand factors that foreshadow and facilitate organizational renewal. How are community issues identified as social problems? Who frames the problem and establishes the national agenda for social change, individuals or organizations? Secular or spiritual leaders? Who sounds the clarion call to mobilize collective action? According to history, it wasn't the government; it came from the community. What is the impetus for organizations to expand their scope of programs beyond a religious mission to reorganize social life more broadly? The aforementioned initiatives resulted *in* national policy change, not *from* national policy prescriptions. Finally, and more importantly, how can the program repertoire expand yet again, with or without government funds? Answers to these questions are consequential because of the current state of African American life.

Program Repertoires and Unsettled Life

In contrast to a narrow core of programs, this study also found that Black churches offered 38 different types of programs, suggesting that although contemporary African American life is relatively less chaotic, it is still far from "settled." Millions are still

plagued by poverty, violence, HIV-AIDS, family dissolution, poor literacy, health disparities, economic inequities, over-representation among the incarcerated, and racial injustices (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997; Wilson, 1996; Stream, 1996; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Smedley, Stith & Nelson, 2003). Yet these social challenges have not resulted in the prodigious program activity and collective action that previously fueled social movements. Policy aims aside, research is needed to understand how to revive the dormant social program repertoire of average black churches (as opposed to resource rich mega-churches) in the wake of daunting community problems, because organizational resilience and renewal are not inevitable (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). In addition, we may need to examine ways to accelerate and lengthen the cycle of prodigious program activity and to shorten the hiatus, not to support policy but for the Black church itself. Historic faith-based social programs and movements were high touch and low tech, predating television, the internet, and government support, yet they changed the nation. "A crucial task for research is to understand how cultural capacities created in one historical context are reappropriated and altered in new circumstances" (Swidler, 1986:283). In the spirit of *Sankofa,* an Akan word that means to "return and get it," Black churches must awaken their organizational memory, learn from lessons of the past, and inspire collective action again. Persistent jolts and unsettled lives demand it.

Table 1:   Regression Analysis of Denominations and Social Service Program Culture of Black Churches

	Model 1 # Progs	Model 2 The ill	Model 3 Homeless	Model 4 Loan Money	Model 5 Un-specified	Model 6 Home Bldg/ Repair	Model 7 Short Term Emergency Needs	Model 8 Relationship Norms	Model 9 Substance Norms
	Std.Beta	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff	Log Coeff
Baptist (79)	**.26****	1.26+	-.43	-.25	**1.54****	**.94***	-.26	-.72*	-.35
Pentecostal (18)		-.71	-7.06	.40	-.16	**-1.71**+	-6.53	2.39*	8.11
Methodist (14)		-7.19	-.30	-7.20	-1.23	-1.48	.28	-.62	-.69
Roman Catholic (10)	**.23****	.82	.10	1.03	-6.90	.37	.68	-.16	-8.72
Other Conservative Evangelical Protestant (10)		-7.16	.10	1.03	-6.90	-1.06	.68	.88	**1.96**+
Other Christian (11)		-7.17	**2.04****	-6.17	-.96	.22	.56	.46	.25
Adjusted R²	**.07**								

+p ≤ .10, *p ≤ .05, **p ≤ .01, ***p ≤ .001

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