



A STUDY OF FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORKERS' INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENT SEXUAL HEALTH AND DECISION-MAKING

An NIH (R21)-Funded Study

A collaborative study between Johns Hopkins' Urban Health Institute and Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc. (STAR)

TODAY'S AGENDA

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Review the research study and objectives
- 3) Clarify roles and responsibilities
- 4) Review the ethnographic research design and conceptual framework
- 5) Identify training needs
- 6) Outline administrative follow-ups and key next steps

RESEARCH PROJECT OVERVIEW: STUDY AIMS

STUDY AIMS

To understand the influence on adolescents of youth ministers within African American churches located in low income, urban communities with disproportionately high rates of teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and STD infections.

This study will contribute to the development of more effective sexual and reproductive health promoting strategies engaging those within the faith community who most directly work with young people.

RESEARCH PROJECT OVERVIEW: CORE OBJECTIVES

THREE CORE OBJECTIVES DRIVE THE STUDY:

- a) to determine the influence youth ministers have with: **a)** the pastors and ministers of their church; **b)** the parents and guardians of church-going adolescents; and **c)** their direct influence on the adolescents themselves.
- b) to investigate the extent to which youth ministers currently address sexual and reproductive health issues: **a)** both formally (through established programs and interventions) and informally (through providing individual guidance as requested), as well as **b)** directly (through programs that are specifically related to sexual and reproductive health) and indirectly (through enhancing other protective factors that have been shown to positively affect sexual and reproductive health outcomes)
- c) to identify both opportunities and barriers in the Black Church to the implementation of evidence-based comprehensive sex education and reproductive health promoting strategies that will reduce the adverse sexual health outcomes that low income, inner city communities currently face.

THE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH TEAM

The study will be conducted through a collaboration between Johns Hopkins' Urban Health Institute and Sisters Together and Reaching, Inc. (STAR).

- Provide guidance on accessing the faith community
- Review and critique the IRB package
- Assure that research findings are disseminated into the local community and the scientific community
- Lead the transition from research to relevant social and behavioral intervention development

Debra Hickman, Mdiv
Co-PI

Bob Blum, MD, MPH, PhD
Co-PI

- Provide scientific leadership over the research project
- Oversee the ethnographic research design and implementation
- Review and critique the IRB package
- Assure that research findings are disseminated into the local community and the scientific community
- Oversee business and administrative aspects of the project

- Prepare/manage comprehensive work plan
- Develop ethnographic research plan
- Coordinate IRB package
- Coordinate training and field work preparation
- Oversee ethnographic field work
- Coordinate analysis and dissemination tasks

Quinn Gentry, MBA, PhD
Ethnographic Study Manager

Eric Rice, PhD
Ethnographic Research Scientist

- Critique the ethnographic research design
- Collaborate with the project staff on developing all the ethnographic data collection protocols
- Co-train field researchers
- Contribute to the data analysis and dissemination tasks

- Serve as participant observers, ethnographic interviewers, rapid survey data collectors, and focus group facilitators

JHU-Graduate Students (2)

Community-based researchers (3)

PRELIMINARY ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

PHASE 1

Identify
Epidemiological
Indicators

Direct indicators of sexual risk-taking

- Chlamydia rates
- Teen birth rates
- HIV infection rates

Indirect indicators of sexual risk-taking

- Drug and alcohol utilization patterns
- Incarceration recidivism rates
- Sexual and domestic violence

Conduct
Geographical
Mapping of Faith-
based
Organizations
within each
Epidemiological
Catchment Area

Locations of large churches
(membership greater than 1000)

Locations of small churches
(membership less than 1000)

Names and contact information for
pastors and youth ministers

Identify Potential
Advisory Board
Members

Faith leaders from epi-catchment areas

Additional faith leaders of influence

Youth advisors from epi-catchment areas

PHASE 2

Implement strategies for obtaining entry into faith-based community to
conduct ethnographic research

JHU/CB RESEARCH TEAM 1

Faith-based Organization 1
Faith-based Organization 2
Faith-based Organization 3

JHU/CB RESEARCH TEAM 2

Faith-based Organization 4
Faith-based Organization 5
Faith-based Organization 6

JHU/CB RESEARCH TEAM 3

Faith-based Organization 7
Faith-based Organization 8
Faith-based Organization 9
Faith-based Organization 10

PLANNED ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA SET

Within each faith-based organization, research teams will pursue to the extent possible opportunities to collect ethnographic data as follows:

- 1) **Direct/participant observation** (30 hours at each church for a total of 300 hours)
- 2) **Ethnographic interviews** with faith pastors (1 at each church for a total of 10)
- 3) **Ethnographic interviews** with faith youth minister (1 at each church for a total of 10)
- 4) **Ethnographic interviews** with other people of influence in each faith-based setting (8 at each church for a total of 80)
- 5) **Rapid surveys** with young people per faith-based setting (50 at each church for a total of 500)
- 6) **Focus groups** (2 at each church: 1 with young people who attend church regularly; 1 with young people who do not attend church regularly for a total of 20)
- 7) **Debrief meetings** at the end of the project with representatives from each faith-based organization for a total of 10

MOBILIZATION AND FIELD WORK TIMELINE AT A GLANCE

Year 1: Complete ethnographic fieldwork and data collection (phases 1 & 2)

Year 2: Complete data analysis and data utilization (phase 3)

Submit IRB package: 12/19/10

ONCE IRB APPROVAL GRANTED:

2 months of resource mobilization

- Selecting, hiring, and training student and community ethnographers
- Convene advisory groups

6-8 months of field work

2-3 months to debrief and exit the field

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Faith-based Roles and Settings where Youth are Influenced

Faith-based Leader

Faith-based Youth Ministry Leader

Faith-based Youth Ministry Workers

1. Religious education teachers
2. Sports and recreation
3. Mentoring and Tutoring Programs
4. Rites of Passage and life skills Programs
5. Music, dance, and drama programs
6. Youth and family counseling

Other faith-based stakeholders

Diverse types of Adolescents

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Levels of religious attachment
4. Sexual risk behavior

Caregivers of Adolescents

1. 2-parent families
2. Single parent families
3. Grand families
4. Other types of caregivers

External Environment Influences and Influencers on Adolescent Development

1. Peers
2. Older siblings
3. Non-church attending kin
4. Community-based programs (mentoring or after-school programs)
5. School (adults and programs)
6. Interactive media
7. Neighborhood social norms

A THEORY OF FAITH-BASED INFLUENCE AND ADOLESCENTS

The **conceptual model** contains several clusters of factors helpful in conceptualizing the influence youth ministers and faith leaders have on adolescents.

THE FAITH-BASED SETTINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Our model identifies a range of settings and activities where youth ministers interact with young people beyond the physical confines of the church facility.

The faith leader: The faith-leader (senior pastor) is the church leader. In this role, she or he articulates church doctrine and teachings on all issues including sex and sexuality. However, our model suggests that there is an interaction between youth ministers and pastors such that the influence is bidirectional.

The Church (pastors and youth ministers) are influenced by the young people who are involved with their programs even as they are influencing those young people.

The Church leadership is influenced by the adult parishioners as well as the broader community in which the church is located.

A THEORY OF FAITH-BASED INFLUENCE AND ADOLESCENTS

The faith-based youth ministry leader and workers (youth ministers): In the collective of the “youth ministry”, we hypothesize that faith-based youth ministers have unique influence over adolescent decision-making and risk taking behaviors. So too, because of their credibility with young people these youth ministers have unique influence with both caregivers and faith leaders.

Adolescents: Adolescents are at the center of this model. The influence that youth ministers (or anyone else) has over adolescents is determined in part by their characteristics: age, gender, exposure to sexual risks and risk behaviors, religiosity.. The relative influence of youth leaders, we hypothesize, is a function not only of the youth minister characteristics, the adolescent characteristics but also the activities and settings within which youth and youth ministers interact.

Caregivers of Adolescents: The important role of parents and other caregivers cannot be underestimated; and this model allows us to account for their influence both directly and in interaction with youth ministers.

A broader set of influences: While not interacting directly with the faith-based youth ministry, adolescents live in a much wider sphere of influences including peers, non-church going family members, neighbors etc. This set of influences, separately and together, counterbalance, reinforce or potentially both the messages of youth ministers.

DEFINING DIMENSIONS OF INFLUENCE

Our conceptual framework will be analyzed by exploring various aspects and *dimensions of influence* within the faith-based setting:

- 1) *Phenomenon of influence:* **a)** What is meant by influence within the context of the faith community?; **b)** How does it differ among various groups (e.g., youth ministers, pastors, parents and youth)?; and **c)** How is influence manifesting both directly and indirectly?
- 2) *People who influence:* **a)** What are the key characteristics and demographics of the youth ministers who are viewed by young people to be most influential?; and **b)** How does it vary by characteristics of young people (e.g., age, gender, sexual risk behaviors, and religiosity)?
- 3) *People who are influenced:* **a)** Who are the adolescents most influenced by youth ministers?; and **b)** How does the setting, youth minister characteristics, activity with which the young person and youth minister interact and characteristics of the young person interact to determine influence?
- 4) *Programs that constitute influence:* What programs and activities influence which adolescents (e.g., are low church going adolescents influenced by any interactions with youth ministers when compared with high church going youth)?
- 5) *Process of influence:* What are the strategies, tactics, and activities used by youth ministers to influence adolescent behaviors?

DEFINING DIMENSIONS OF INFLUENCE

- 6) *Points of influence*: At what point(s) of interaction is influence attempted or achieved with adolescents?
- 7) *Purpose of influence: a)* What are the explanations provided by youth ministers to explain both behavioral and verbal interactions with young people?; and *b)* What were they trying to accomplish and why?
- 8) *Periods of influence*: To what extent does amount of exposure to a youth minister impact adolescent sexual and reproductive health behaviors?
- 9) *Perceptions of influences external to the faith-based environment*: How do youth ministers and pastors understand and interpret the external influences that compete or complement faith-based approaches to influence?
- 10) *Potential for greater influence: a)* Based on the perspectives of faith leaders (pastors and youth ministers), care givers and youth themselves, what opportunities does each see for the Black Church to have a more positive influence on the lives of its young parishioners; and *b)* What are the barriers to taking advantage of those opportunities?
- 11) *Public health impact and influence: a)* In what ways—if any--do youth ministers understand the broader risk and protective factors that reduce adolescent sexual and reproductive health risks?; and *b)* To what extent and how do youth ministers use those understandings programmatically?; and *c)* Is it possible to transform positive influence into replicable interventions?

ETHNOGRAPHIC INSTRUMENTATION

The research questions and inquiries raised in the various dimensions of influence will be answered using 12 data sources commonly used in ethnographic research designs

- 1) Epidemiological indicator form
- 2) Faith-based profile form
- 3) Direct observation form
- 4) Participant observation form
- 5) Ethnographic interview guide-pastors
- 6) Ethnographic interview guide-lead youth ministers
- 7) Ethnographic interview guide-other youth workers
- 8) Ethnographic interview guide-older adolescents or young adults
- 9) Ethnographic Interview guide-parents/guardians
- 10) Rapid survey-youth only
- 11) Focus group guide
- 12) Field exit discussion/debrief guide

TRAINING MODULES

TRAINING MODULE 1:

- A Comprehensive Perspective of the Conceptual Framework

TRAINING MODULE 2:

- Human Subject Protection and Informed Consent

TRAINING MODULE 3:

- Ethnographic Fieldwork 101
- Introduction to Ethnography from a Public Health Perspective
- Ethnographic Interviewing
- Direct and Participant Observations
- Rapid Survey Techniques
- Focus Group Planning and Implementation

TRAINING MODULE 4:

- Ethnographic Data Management and Analysis

TRAINING MODULE 5:

- Fieldwork Ethics, Integrity, and Safety

KEY NEXT STEPS AND FOLLOW-UPS

- ❑ Planning phase meetings and updates
- ❑ Memorandum of Agreements
- ❑ Budgeting and Invoicing
- ❑ IRB submission



WE GOTTA HAVE

Faith!

