

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 248

UD 032 189

AUTHOR Steward, Robbie J.; Jo, Hanik
TITLE Does Spirituality Influence Academic Achievement and Psychological Adjustment of African American Urban Adolescents? /
PUB DATE 1998-02-27
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Adjustment (to Environment); *Adolescents; Affective Behavior; Attitudes; Beliefs; *Blacks; Coping; High School Freshmen; High Schools; *Religion; Social Support Groups; Urban Youth; *Values
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; *Spirituality

ABSTRACT

In a study of 121 African-American urban adolescents, the use of spiritual support as a means of coping was found to be significantly related to psychological well-being and adjustment. The participants were high school freshmen in a midwestern city in an area where the student attrition rate had ranged from 55 to 65% over a 5-year period. Participants completed the Affects Balance Scale (Derogatis, 1975), a self-report mood scale, and the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (Patterson and McCubbin, 1981). The practice of religious principles and spirituality appear to be an effective means of coping to maintain psychological well-being in this group. Those who reported themselves to be most spiritual were also the most well-adjusted, with the highest academic performance. They were also the most likely to use family and social support networks in coping. (Contains 2 tables and 10 references.) (SLD)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Running Head: African American Urban Adolescents

Does Spirituality influence Academic Achievement
and Psychological adjustment of
African American urban adolescents?

Robbie J. Steward

Associate Professor

Michigan State University

Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology

436 Erickson Hall

East Lansing, MI 48824

517-432-1524 (office)

517-353-6393 (FAX)

devine@msu.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Hanik Jo

Michigan State University

February 27, 1998

Submitted for review for reproduction in

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

R. J. Steward

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

**Does Spirituality influence Academic Achievement
and Psychological Adjustment of
African-American urban adolescents?**

Abstract

In a study of 121 African American urban adolescents, the use of spiritual support as a means of coping was found to be significantly related to psychological well-being/adjustment. Those adolescents who practiced such beliefs were found to also have higher GPAs and have distinctly different coping behaviors than those who did not.

Does Spirituality influence Academic Achievement
and Psychological Adjustment of
African-American urban adolescents?

Introduction

African American, in general have consistently been found to report stronger religious affiliation, express higher levels of spirituality, and regard religion as being personally more important than majority group members in this country (Johnson, Matre, & Armbrecht, 1991; Neff & Hoppe, 1993). For example, Black individuals tend to attend religious services more often than Whites and base global self-evaluations more on religious beliefs than Whites (Blaine, Crocker, & Tomaka, 1992). It would seem that religion serves some critical role within the culture of African Americans in a manner that highlights it as a more critical component to 'living' than among White peers.

Empirical research has shown that there is a strong, positive, and significant relationship between these strong religious practices and values to psychological well-being of African Americans and Whites in this country, but that this was particularly true in the case of Black Americans (St. George & McNamara, 1984). These researchers hypothesized the existence of some underlying processes operating in religious commitment and participation to psychological well-being.

Hathaway and Pargament (1990) suggested that this relationship between spirituality and psychological well-being might be best explained by conceptualizing religion as a coping mechanism. For example, formalized, traditional religious practices and values provide individuals' with: a system for understanding and explaining life events that might not otherwise

be available; a means of enhancing feelings of control and self-esteem; and a protection and enhancement of self-perceptions by acknowledging God's love and unconditional acceptance (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985). Consequently, those who practice and value a belief in a higher power or God, would be those who would cope most effectively with negative situations and outcomes that appear to be unfair according to the world's definition of fairness. Research has shown such religious affiliated cognitive strategies to be predictors of successful coping and mental health (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Though several authors have specifically examined the relationships between religious practices and beliefs and coping effectiveness, these studies have typically been predominately White populations. In addition, when African American populations are examined, the data is analyzed in such a manner to only compare the differences between the two groups. In one such study, Blaine and Crocker (1995), in an examination of Black and White university students, found that religious belief and psychological well-being were moderately positively correlated, however, only among Black students. Once again religion was identified as a critical role in the lives of Black Americans, but only in comparison to Whites. The questions remain: Do these religious values and practices distinguish among the varying levels of psychological well-being represented among African American populations who live under circumstances that most in general society would describe as challenging financially, psychologically, and interpersonally? Is there a set of unique coping strategies associated with those African Americans who report a value in spirituality that differentiates them from those who do not? The purpose of this study is to examine these questions with a population of African American urban adolescents: a population at considered to be extremely high risk for failure in this country. It would be hypothesized that

those students who practice and value spirituality would also be those who would most likely be the most psychologically adjusted. It is also hypothesized that those who report being religious would also coping with life circumstances in a distinctly different manner than those who did not.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-one African American freshmen enrolled in an urban high school in a mid-western state volunteered to participate in this study after the researchers had acquired parental consent for participation in this study. The mean age was 16.2 years. Seventy-eight (65%) males and 43 (35%) females were distributed research packets. The school (population = 1100) and surrounding community were predominantly African American and located in a high-risk district for poverty, unemployment, and crime. The current attrition rate for the 9th grade had been found to range from 55-65% over a 5-year period.

Instruments

Affects Balance Scale (ABS) (Derogatis, 1975). The ABS is a self-report adjective mood scale that has its construct base rooted in the idea that healthy psychological adjustment or well-being is represented by the manifestation of positive affects or emotions, as well as the relative absence of negative emotions. Mood and affect states are reflected in the ABS by 4 positive affect dimensions (Joy, Contentment, Vigor and Affection) and 4 negative affect dimensions (Anxiety, Depression, Guilt, and Hostility). The overall score on the test, the Affect Balance Index, reflects the balance between positive and negative affects expressed in standardized scores. The larger the Affect Balance Index the more positive psychological adaptation is represented. The ABS is composed of 40 items and requires only 3-5 minutes to complete.

Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) (Patterson & McCubbin, 1981). The A-COPE is a coping inventory that has been designed to identify the behaviors adolescents find helpful in managing problems or difficult situations. The normal developmental tasks of adolescents center on the search for identity, both as part of a group and as individuals, with attention focused on physical, social and psychological aspects of the self. The need to develop enough independence from one's family to discover one's separateness and uniqueness frequently creates an atmosphere of conflict in the family. The 95 items were grouped conceptually into the following patterns for coping: **ventilating feelings** (expression of frustrations and tensions such as yelling, blaming others, saying mean things, and complaining to friends or family); **seeking diversions** (efforts to keep busy and engage in relatively sedate activities that are a way to escape from or forgetting about the sources of tension and stress such as sleeping, watching TV or reading); **developing self-reliance and optimism** (directing efforts to be more organized and in charge of the situation, as well as to think positively about what is happening to him or her); **developing social support** (efforts to stay emotionally connected with other people through reciprocal problem solving and expression of affect); **solving family problems** (use of communication with family members and following family rules to minimize conflict); **avoiding problems** (use of overlooking or minimizing events); **investing in close friends** (seeking closeness and understanding from peers); **seeking professional support** (getting help and advice from a professional counselor or teacher about difficult problems); **engaging in demanding activity** (engaging in challenging activities which allow achievement toward a goal such as strenuous physical activity, improving oneself, or working hard on schoolwork); **being humorous** (not taking the situation too seriously by joking or making light of a situation); and

relaxing (engaging in activities to reduce tension such as daydreaming, listening to music, or riding around in a car). The subscale, **seeking spiritual support** (religious behaviors), was chosen as the dependent variable in this study to examine how each of the other coping behavior sets and psychological adjustment influence this means of managing life environment. Each coping style represents a subscale that has an individual score. The instrument is based on the premise that adolescents will use more than one style of coping with day to day problems. Completion time is approximately 10 minutes.

Procedure

Classrooms were randomly sampled by hour and from among teachers of core freshmen course work. Parental consent was provided for 135 students, however, due to absences, incomplete packets, students' unwillingness to participate, and students' unwillingness to complete one of the instruments, only 121 completed packets were returned. In exchange for teacher participation, researchers engaged classes in mini-workshops addressing characteristics related to coping skills.

Data Analysis

T-tests for independent samples were performed in order to compare independent variable subscale scores of the upper 25% of the subscale scores (n=49) on the Seeking Spirituality Subscale with the lower 25% (n=46).

One multiple regression analysis was performed in order to examine the contribution of each of the 11 coping style scores as measured by A-COPE (independent variable) to the dependent variable, the 12th coping style subscale score. The level of significance chosen for this study was $p < .05$.

Results

Seeking Spiritual Support Subscale scores were found to be significantly and positively related to psychological adjustment ($r = .26$; $p = .001$); avoiding problems ($r = .20$; $p = .005$); demanding activity ($r = .34$; $p = .000$); diversion ($r = .26$, $p = .000$); friends $r = .24$; $p = .001$); professional support ($r = .22$, $p = .002$); relaxing ($r = .14$; $p = .04$); self-reliance ($r = .35$; $p = .000$); social support ($r = .47$; $p = .000$); and family ($r = .40$; $p = .000$).

Table 1 presents the results of the independent t-tests that were found to be significantly different for those reporting high spirituality and those reporting low spirituality. Significant differences were found in psychological adjustment, grade point average, and seeking diversions. The upper 25 % were found to have higher GPAs and report engaging in these coping behaviors significantly more often than the lower 25 %.

(Insert Table 1 here.)

Table 2 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis having Pre-encounter Status scores (Stage I) as the dependent variable. The model of independent variables was found to significantly contribute to the variance in reporting religion as a means of coping (r square = .34; $F=8.39$; $p=.0000$). Engaging in avoiding problems ($p = .02$), the use of social support networks ($p = .0003$) and the use of family ($p = .0003$) as means of coping were found to be significant and positive contributors to the variance in reports of religious practices. ($p=.03$).

(Insert Table 2 here.)

Discussion

The practice of religious principles and spirituality appears to be an effective means of coping to maintain psychology well-being used among African American urban adolescents. The

more spiritual were also found to be the most well-adjusted, the highest academic performance, the ones most likely to use family and social support networks as a means of coping. In addition, those who do believe and practice such values appear to engage in unique coping behaviors that distinguish them from those who do not. Multiple regression analysis results appears to also indicate that religious practices might serve as a means of avoiding problems by minimizing negative events. These results are consistent with those results found in the literature.

However, these results also indicate that there is a degree of variance in the practice of religion as a means of coping within the African American urban adolescent population. Given that it has been found to be effective, attending to spirituality within the community, schools, and other organizations specifically targeting the development of children might be critical. It would seem important that counselor-trainees who would choose to work with this population would also be comfortable exploring religious beliefs and giving credence to the validity of such practices in one's every day existence.

References

Blaine, B. & Crocker, J. (1995). Religiousness, race, and psychological well-being: Exploring social psychological mediators. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21,10, 1032-1040.

Blaine, B., Crocker, J., & Tomaka, J. (1992). Sources of self-esteem: Structural analysis and individual differences. Unpublished manuscript, State University of New York at Buffalo.

Carver, C.S., Scheier, M.F., & Weintraub, J.K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56, 267-283.

Derogatis, L.R. (1975). Affects Balance Scale (ABS). Riderwood, Maryland: Clinical psychometric research, Inc.

Hathaway, W.L., & Pargament, K.I. (1990). Intrinsic religiousness, religious coping, and psychosocial competence: A covariance structure analysis. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 29, 423-441.

Johnson, G.D., Matre, M., & Ambrecht, G. (1991). Race and religiosity: An empirical evaluation of a causal model. Review of Religious Research, 32, 252-266.

Neff, J.A., & Hoppe, S.K. (1993). Race/ethnicity, acculturation, and psychological distress: Fatalism and religiosity as cultural resources. Journal of Community Psychology, 21, 2-20.

Patterson, J.M., & McCubbin, H.I. (1983). A-COPE: Adolescent coping orientation for problem experiences. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

St. George, A., & McNamara, P.H. (1984). Religion, race, and psychological well-being. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 23, 351-363.

Spilka, B., Shaver, P., & Kirkpatrick, L.A. (1985). A general attribution theory for the psychology of religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 24, 1-20,

t-tests for Independent Samples of GROUPSPR

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
ABIINDEX affect balance index				
lower 25% sprituality	49	.6571	.935	.134
upper 25% sprituality	46	1.2315	.881	.130

Mean Difference = -.5744

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= .041 P= .840

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	-3.08	93	.003	.187	(-.945, -.204)
Unequal	-3.08	93.00	.003	.186	(-.944, -.204)

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
DIVERSIO Seeking Diversions				
lower 25% sprituality	59	23.7458	6.186	.805
upper 25% sprituality	49	27.2449	3.854	.551

Mean Difference = -3.4991

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 13.648 P= .000

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	-3.44	106	.001	1.017	(-5.515, -1.484)
Unequal	-3.59	98.81	.001	.976	(-5.435, -1.563)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

t-tests for Independent Samples of GROUPSPR

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
AVERGPA Average GPA				
lower 25% spirituality	48	1.4294	.960	.138
upper 25% spirituality	39	1.8349	.918	.147

Mean Difference = -.4056

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= .116 P= .735

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	-2.00	85	.049	.203	(-.809, -.002)
Unequal	-2.01	82.72	.048	.202	(-.807, -.004)

Variable	Number of Cases	Mean	SD	SE of Mean
TOTABSEN Total Absence				
lower 25% spirituality	31	29.3548	33.148	5.954
upper 25% spirituality	29	23.4483	22.752	4.225

Mean Difference = 5.9066

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances: F= 5.087 P= .028

t-test for Equality of Means					95%
Variances	t-value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff	CI for Diff
Equal	.80	58	.427	7.390	(-8.886, 20.699)
Unequal	.81	53.33	.422	7.300	(-8.734, 20.547)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Listwise Deletion of Missing Data

Equation Number 1 Dependent Variable.. SPIRISUP Seek Spiritual Support

Block Number 1. Method: Enter

AVOIDPRO DEMANDIN HUMOR INFRIEND PROSUPPO RELAXING SELFRELI SOCISUPP
 SOLVFAMI VENTILAT DIVERSIO

Variable(s) Entered on Step Number

- 1.. DIVERSIO Seeking Diversions
- 2.. AVOIDPRO Avoiding Problems
- 3.. PROSUPPO Seek Pro. Support
- 4.. VENTILAT Ventilating Feelings
- 5.. INFRIEND Investing in Friends
- 6.. RELAXING Relaxing
- 7.. SOLVFAMI Solving Family Problems
- 8.. HUMOR Humor
- 9.. SOCISUPP Developing Social Support
- 10.. SELFRELI Developing Self Reliance
- 11.. DEMANDIN Demanding Activity

Multiple R .58663
 R Square .34413
 Adjusted R Square .30314
 Standard Error 2.12423

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	11	416.69604	37.88146
Residual	176	794.17098	4.51234

F = 8.39509 Signif F = .0000

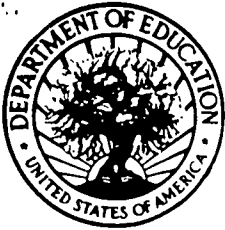
* * * * MULTIPLE REGRESSION * * * *

Equation Number 1 Dependent Variable.. SPIRISUP Seek Spiritual Support

----- Variables in the Equation -----

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
AVOIDPRO	.105066	.046420	.150777	2.263	.0248
DEMANDIN	.078358	.060571	.109872	1.294	.1975
HUMOR	-.009210	.086800	-.007977	-.106	.9156
INFRIEND	.087297	.091730	.067606	.952	.3426
PROSUPPO	.102572	.107161	.064630	.957	.3398
RELAXING	.113620	.073239	.105244	1.551	.1226
SELFRELI	.046873	.047732	.078553	.982	.3274
SOCISUPP	.169757	.045769	.289717	3.709	.0003
SOLVFAMI	.107281	.036297	.209638	2.956	.0035
VENTILAT	-.068479	.053777	-.083590	-1.273	.2046
DIVERSIO	-.034948	.043613	-.071056	-.801	.4240
(Constant)	-1.058204	1.733390		-.610	.5423

End Block Number 1 All requested variables entered.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE
(Specific Document)

UD032 189

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Does Spirituality influence Academic Achievement and Psychological Adjustment of African American urban adolescents?	
Author(s): Robbie J. Steward & Hanik Jo	
Corporate Source: Michigan State University	Publication Date: 2/27/98

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following options and sign the release below.



Sample sticker to be affixed to document

Sample sticker to be affixed to document



Check here

Permitting microfiche (4" x 6" film), paper copy, electronic, and optical media reproduction

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Level 1

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY _____ Sample _____ TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Level 2

or here

Permitting reproduction in other than paper copy.

Sign Here, Please

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Signature: Robbie J. Steward	Position: Associate Professor
Printed Name: Robbie J. Steward	Organization: Michigan State Univ.
Address: 436 Erickson Hall East Lansing, MI 48824	Telephone Number: (517) 432-1524
	Date: 2/27/98

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of this document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents which cannot be made available through EDRS).

Publisher/Distributor:	
Address:	
Price Per Copy:	Quantity Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name and address of current copyright/reproduction rights holder:
Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:
ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education Box 40, Teachers College Columbia University New York, NY 10027

If you are making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, you may return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

~~ERIC Facility
1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 300
Rockville, Maryland 20850-4305
Telephone: (301) 258-5500~~