Single Parents in Black Adventism

Discipleship, Nurture and Retention

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Introduction

• The purpose of this presentation is two fold. First it will give an overview of the literature addressing single parenthood in the Black Seventh-day Adventist Church. Second it will present a proposal for a pilot project arising from the literature review on single parents, in order to develop a single parent-friendly model for the intent of which is to strengthen SDA discipleship, nurture and retention among this population in the SDA Church.
Background: Undetected Presence

- **African Americans** have the highest percentage of single parent homes in America, 73%. (New York Times, 2012)
- This issue, however, is **multicultural**, with Latinos at 59% and Caucasians at 29% respectively. (New York Times, 2012)
- Left unattended, the epidemic has become **multinational**: Latin America is (55-74%), South Africa (59%), and Sweden (55%). (Child Trends, 2013)
- **Divorce** and **unwed childbearing** costs taxpayers, $112 Billion annually. (Institute for American Values, 2008).
Overview

• **FOCUS:** The focus of this literature review was to investigate the literature on single parenthood and its impact on Black Adventism.

• **SCOPE:** The literature on single parenthood in Black Adventism over a period of two decades was reviewed to evaluate the prevalence of studies conducted on this issue and the extent to which this phenomenon impacts Black Adventism.
Overview

RESULTS:
• A single study was found that addresses this critical issue facing our church. This was documented by Dr. Deborah Harris’ “Black Seventh-Day Adventists And Single Parenthood” (Perspectives, 1996). Dr. Harris’s findings had **good** and **bad news** for the church.

Bad News for the Church:
• Some single parenthood trends in the Black Adventist Church **paralleled** the trends of the broader society (p. 143).
• Dysfunctional families create dysfunctional society (p.141).
• Children of these dysfunctional homes will soon comprise the majority of SDA Church membership (p.144).
Overview

RESULTS CONTINUED:
• Within the Black SDA church, 52% of 394 respondents were single parents due to divorce, while 31% were never married (p.142).
• Attitudes toward the church reflected “stress and disappointment with how their churches responded to their needs” (p.142).
• Their primary needs were identified as the need for encouragement and acceptance (p.146).

Good News for the Church!
• Survey respondents indicated that the majority of their 10 yr. old children were faithful members of the church (p.142).
Overview: Single Parent Comments

“I just want the church to treat my children as members.”

“Don’t offer support, then charge me.”

“Just listen to me.”

“Just be there and offer support.”

“Recognize I am a part of the family of God too.”
Overview: Single Parent Comments

“Don’t judge me.”

“Don’t assume I am man hungry.”

“Don’t pity us or make us feel like second-class members.”

“Accept me as a whole person, even if I don’t have a husband.”

“Don’t make me feel so ashamed of being a single parent.”
Overview: More Results

**Revolving Door Bad News!**

- Our single parents felt more comfortable relying “on *non-Adventist friends* as confidents”. (p. 146)

- While a group of single parents were *retained* in the church, a portion *departed* due to perceived rejection.

- (p. 146)
The Single Parent Family is a New Growing Demographic in SDA Church

1. Undetected
2. Unaddressed
3. Unreached
4. Underserved

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Lk.1:17
Overview Conclusion

• It is alarming that given the \textbf{critical nature} of single parenting, approaching a worldwide \textbf{pandemic}, which is also \textbf{growing} in Adventism; virtually no work has been published, since Dr. Harris’ article.

• More quantitative and qualitative studies are needed, in order to develop a \textbf{single parent-friendly model} that can serve to \textbf{strengthen} our discipleship, \textbf{nurture}, and \textbf{retention} of this population of our members.
Proposed Pilot Study

- It is proposed that a pilot project be conducted to develop a single parent-friendly model for intervention that strengthens SDA discipleship, nurture, and retention of this population in the SDA Church.
Research Questions:

• Since the 1996 Harris study, has single parenthood in the Black SDA Church paralleled, decreased or exceeded national percentages?

• What variables can be identified leading to the 2013 status of this issue in the SDA Church?
Methodology:

• The proposed study will use **mixed methods**. The methods will include a **quantitative** survey, and a **focus group qualitative** study, to help with the development of questions, assessment of **issues**, **needs**, **challenges** and **causes**.

• Survey packets of 35 to 50 will be sent to church clerks in larger churches of major cities. Clerks will be asked, in conjunction with family life people, to **distribute** the surveys to single parents and to **collect** the completed surveys from them.
Methodology:

• Self-addressed, stamped envelopes will be provided, so clerks can return the completed surveys to the primary investigator.

• Packets will be preceded by cover letters to the conference presidents, the family life directors, pastors of selected churches, church family life leaders and church clerks.
Methodology:

• Collected data will be analyzed by a statistician, identifying from the data, trends, and themes for evaluation.

• Results will be reported to NAD and published.

• Data collected will be used to develop intervention strategies and to develop a single parent-friendly model, based on a fresh approach to Rev.14:6-12, that provides hope, help and wholeness.
Hypotheses

• It is perceived that embedded in the summative messages of Rev.14:6-12, provided by the Spirit to prepare all people-groups for the great Harvest, all the necessary ingredients and qualities essential for healing and transformation are to be found.

• If the numbers have increased or paralleled the national statistics, the question is why?

• Has there been a shift in the evangelistic presentation and emphasis of Rev.14:6-12, are there other variables, or have our distinctive principles been discarded?
The Changing Face of Single Parenthood

- 73%
- 59%
- 29% +

Can Seventh-day Adventists Afford to Leave ANY PEOPLE-GROUP behind?
References


References


In the Warfare Between Good and Evil...

Proposed: Pilot Project – Single Parent Friendly-Model
Bringing Hope and Wholeness!

Challenge and Appeal:
join us in discipleship, nurture and retention of our single parents and their children.
“Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth” Isa 43:6

“Every Nation, Every Tribe, Every Language and Every People-Group” Rev.14:6-12

“Whosoever Will...” Rev.22:17

“Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.”

Isa 49:22