

8-2021

Clinically Healing by Faith for Black Christian Women: A Proposed Model for Collaborative Religious and Psychological Treatment for the Aftermath of Infidelity

Aldra Forrester
National Louis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss>



Part of the [Multicultural Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Forrester, Aldra, "Clinically Healing by Faith for Black Christian Women: A Proposed Model for Collaborative Religious and Psychological Treatment for the Aftermath of Infidelity" (2021). *Dissertations*. 572.

<https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/diss/572>

This Dissertation - Public Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@NLU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@NLU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@nl.edu.

Clinically Healing by Faith for Black Christian Women: A Proposed Model for Collaborative
Religious and Psychological Treatment for the Aftermath of Infidelity

Aldra Forrester, M.A.

National Louis University

Gary Howell, Psy.D., Chair

Patricia Dixon, Psy.D., Member

A Clinical Research Project submitted to the Faculty of the Florida School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology.

Tampa, Florida
April 2021

The Doctorate Program in Clinical
Psychology Florida School of Professional Psychology
at National Louis University

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

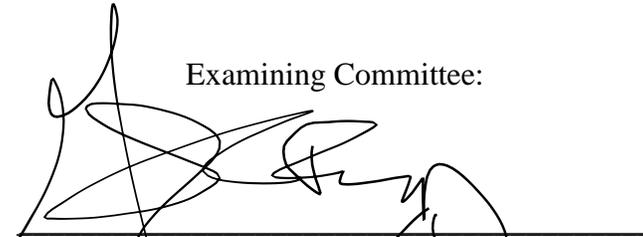
Clinical Research Project

This is to certify that the Clinical Research Project of

Aldra Forrester, M.A.

has been approved by the
CRP Committee on April 16, 2021
as satisfactory for the CRP requirement
for the Doctor of Psychology degree
with a major in Clinical Psychology

Examining Committee:



Committee Chair: Gary Howell, Psy.D.

Patricia S. Dixon, Psy.D

Member: Patricia Dixon, Psy.D.

Abstract

Infidelity rates are high in the United States and one of the leading causes for divorce between married couples. Research indicates that the Black community has a higher proclivity to infidelity compared to Whites. Black women have a higher chance of ending up in undissolved marriages than other races (Jarama et al., 2007). Previous studies have explored reasons behind the increased rates of high marital instability among Black women, including: the sex ratio imbalance, high mortality, and incarceration among Black men. Since African Americans are considered more religious than the general population, this literature review identified the need for an intervention to help clinical psychologists and spiritual leaders assist Black Christian women in addressing the impact of infidelity and its aftermath. Three research topics were explored (a) the effect of Christianity on the perception of infidelity, (b) the use of Christian practices to deal with infidelity, and (c) the exploration of various ways clinical psychologists and Black church clergy could treat infidelity. Undoubtedly, the importance of maintaining cultural competence is necessary while working with diverse groups. Future directions could include a review of the research regarding how Black Christian women cope as the adulterer in marriages and collecting data on Black Christian men and men in other minority racial/ethnic groups as it relates to infidelity.

**CLINICALLY HEALING BY FAITH FOR BLACK CHRISTIAN WOMEN: A
PROPOSED MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
TREATMENT FOR THE AFTERMATH OF INFIDELITY**

©April 2021

Aldra Forrester, M.A.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my little sister, LaMara. May you always trust God and NEVER give up on your dreams!

Don't ever give up.

Don't ever give in.

Don't ever stop trying.

Don't ever sell out.

And if you find yourself succumbing

to one of the above for a brief
moment, pick yourself up, brush
yourself off, whisper a prayer,
and start where you left off.

But never, ever, ever give up.

—Richelle E. Goodrich

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Praise God, the Almighty! To God be the Glory! Special recognition goes to the Florida School of Professional Psychology for granting me the opportunity to complete my doctoral studies in clinical psychology. I also would like to send special regard to my committee chair, Dr. Gary Howell, and committee member, Dr. Patricia Dixon, for their expertise, patience, time, support, and guidance. Thank you to all the professors, supervisors, and mentors who played a role in my academic milestones and professional development. Last, but certainly not least, my deepest gratitude and much reverence go to my mother, family members, and friends for their unwavering emotional support, love, and encouragement throughout the years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Copyright	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents	v
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Divorce Rates Statistics	1
Leading Causes of Divorce.....	2
Marital Infidelity in Black Couples	3
Reactions to Infidelity.....	3
Christianity in Black Community	4
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Literature Review	5
Research Questions.....	6
Research Procedure.....	6
CHAPTER II: EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE PERCEPTION OF INFIDELITY.....	7
Infidelity as a Disregard of Marriage.....	7
Infidelity as an Objection of Traditional Attitudes	8
Infidelity as an Outcome of Unsanctified Marriage	10
Infidelity Signifies Loss of Marital Spirituality.....	11
Infidelity Signifies Loss of a Committed Relationship	13

Christianity Helps People View Marriage as Sacred.....	14
Christianity Reduces the Odds of Infidelity.....	15
CHAPTER III: THE USE OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICES TO DEAL WITH INFIDELITY	17
Prayers.....	17
Wise Counsel from Clergy.....	22
Divorce.....	25
Address the Issues.....	26
CHAPTER IV: COLLABORATION BETWEEN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND BLACK CHURCH CLERGY TO TREAT INFIDELITY	27
Examining the Context of Collaboration	27
Collaboration through Consultation.....	28
Collaboration through Referrals	31
Collaboration through Workshops	33
Challenges to Collaboration.....	35
CHAPTER V: CLINICALLY HEALING BY FAITH FOR BLACK CHRISTIAN WOMEN: A PROPOSED MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT FOR THE AFTERMATH OF INFIDELITY	38
Treatment Modality	38
Role of Spiritual Leaders	39
Role of Clinical Psychologists	40
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).....	41
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	41
Mindfulness Techniques/Here-And-Now Moments.....	42

Interpersonal Process Approach Group Therapy	42
Conclusion	43
References.....	44
Appendix: Clinically healing by faith proposed model	57

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Divorce Rates Statistics

The United States has consistently ranked as the country with one of the highest divorce rates globally, behind Luxembourg, Spain, France and Russia, with the divorce rate in the United States at 46% in 2017. However, in 2019, the divorce rate declined, falling to a 50-year low. This is because in 2019, of every 1,000 marriages in the United States, only 14.9 ended in divorce, with 2020 expected to record even lower divorce rates (Griffith, 2020). However, it is important to note that the divorce rate also varies greatly racially (Yau, 2018). For instance, Native Americans have been established as having the highest divorce rates, with 45% of men and 44% of women having been divorced or married more than once. Asian Americans had the lowest divorce rates, with only 18% of women and 16% of men reporting that they have been divorced or married more than once (Yau, 2018). For the study population, Black people's divorce rate is higher than that of Asians, Whites, and Latinxs in the United States. This is because the divorce rate among Black Americans is 42% for both men and women (Yau, 2018), concluding that divorce rates are relatively higher for the Black population.

Aside from race, another key factor that influences the rates of divorce is religion. In most religions, marriage is considered a sacred union, and for that reason, divorce is frowned upon. Based on this factor, the rate of divorce among Christian couples is much lower. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), the divorce rate among non-Christians is 38%. This is high compared to the divorce rate among Evangelical Christians, whose likelihood of divorce is 26%. Alternatively, for Catholics, the rate of divorce is 28%. Rates of divorce for mainline Protestants are much lower, at 14%. Considering the low rate of divorce among Christians compared to non-Christians, it suffices to suggest that the divorce rate among Black

Christians is just as high. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), indeed, the rate of divorce among historically Black Protestants is low, as the study established that the likelihood of divorce in historically Black Protestant couples is 9%. Based on these statistics, the variable when it comes to divorce in Black communities is religion.

Leading Causes of Divorce

In most jurisdictions, before being granted a divorce, a couple must show the decision authorities the cause for divorce. One of the leading factors is infidelity. Eyo (2018) suggested a range of causes of divorce, and he classified these as religious, economic, and social. In concurrence with Eyo (2018), Bell and Harsin (2018) speculated while religion plays a role in guaranteeing the stability of marriage, it also affects instability by suggesting that religious incompatibility could contribute to high rates of divorce. Aside from religious causes, other economic factors lead to divorce. According to Lin (2020), an increase in the unemployment rate, which would bring about financial constraints in the family, was linked to increased divorce behaviors. Blbasa (2019) echoed these findings, postulating that unemployment was a leading cause of divorce, given 48% of the female participants got divorced due to employment factors.

Despite research regarding the causes of divorce, one of the largest points of debate is which factor is the most prevalent cause. Tshifhumulo and Daitai (2016) investigated the major cause of divorce and established that affective dimensions of the marriage relationship were the major factors of divorce. However, it is important to note that *affective factors* of the marriage relationship are a highly generalized term, as it includes a variety of factors such as poor communication, violence, and infidelity (Tshifhumulo & Daitai, 2016). The findings by Scott et al. (2013) echoed those of Tshifhumulo and Daitai (2016), as they cited factors such as infidelity and poor communication. Girase et al.'s (2016) findings were different, as the study established

that cruelty and abandonment were the major causes for divorce in the sample studied. Knowing the inconsistency in research, this clinical research project focused on one major factor leading to divorce—infidelity.

Marital Infidelity in Black Couples

Infidelity is a common factor in marriages across different races. However, as Parker and Campbell (2017) established, when examining marital infidelity in Black couples, the first factor is attachment avoidance. According to the study, Black participants expressed the fear of attachment as one of the reasons for infidelity, with participants postulating that through infidelity, they were likely to avoid forming an emotional attachment with their partners. Alternatively, Labennett (2018) claimed that the problem plaguing Black couples is far deeper than could be explored by literature. According to the researcher, deep-rooted race and gender ideologies formed since slavery have pathologized the Black family, and thus, contributed to high rates of infidelity. According to Sublette and Sublette (2015), Black slaves were often subjected to slave breeding, which meant they could hardly stick to one partner and that developed a culture of the inability to stay with one partner. This is one hypothesis about how infidelity was pathologized in the Black community, giving belief to the argument by Labennett (2018). However, it is important to note that there has been limited research on the factors that cause infidelity in Black communities.

Reactions to Infidelity

Research regarding the factors leading to infidelity has suggested that there are sexual variables for infidelity and divorce. According to Tagler and Jeffers (2014), these variables are most prevalent in the reaction to the type of infidelity. This is because male partners were more averse to sexual infidelity based on the assumption that women only engage in sex after being

emotionally attached, whereas female respondents reacted negatively to emotional infidelity. Thomas-Franklin (2020) explored the lived experience of African American women who experienced infidelity. This study established that aside from adopting certain behaviors such as resorting to religion and social support, one key reaction to infidelity by this group of women was divorce. Harris et al. (2018) also agreed that divorce is one of the most common reactions to infidelity, though the researchers postulated that this depends on certain factors of both emotional and physical infidelity.

From the above sections, it emerged that aspects concerning infidelity and divorce are highly complex. Despite the religious, racial, and sexual variables regarding divorce rates and responses to infidelity, even within subgroups, there are variations. However, one of the major gaps in research is that while there are studies that explore the motivations and effects of divorce, little research has focused specifically on how infidelity affects Black Christian women.

Christianity in Black Community

Most of the Black community in developed countries is descended from slaves and immigrants from African countries. One key feature is that during pre-colonial times, these communities were deeply rooted in religious tradition. However, over time, Christianity has been adopted as the predominant religion in the Black community, with 79% identifying as Christian. Masci et al. (2018) indicated that the predominant denomination is Protestant among the Black community in the United States. The Pew Research Center (2015) established that when it comes to denomination distribution in the United States, Blacks predominantly belonged to historically Black Protestant churches, with 14% serving in the Evangelical Protestant Church and only 3% being Catholic. According to Millett et al. (2018), religion is one of the most prominent characteristics of African American families, with prayer and faith playing a central role in

decision-making during marriage and parenting. The researcher suggested that prayer and faith influence African Americans in three major areas: general life, marriage, and parenting. Crain (2017) echoed the finding by Millett et al. (2018), going further to suggest that in accordance with the Christian faith, African Americans often engage in activities such as church attendance, family devotions and baptism. Considering the extent to which these families are rooted in religion, it suffices to conclude that religion would also play a great role in marriage, influencing factors such as infidelity and divorce.

Statement of the Problem

Black women have a higher chance of being in undissolved marriages than other races (Jarama et al., 2007). This is a significant issue among the Black community due to having multiple relationships and more than one sexual partner (De Jesus et al., 2015). In most cases, the high infidelity rate arises from marital instability due to men engaging in extramarital activities (Garner et al., 2020). The sex ratio imbalance between men and women is further exacerbated by high incarceration rates among Black men, while a higher proportion is also facing the risk of mortality (Abraham et al., 2001). Thus, Black women are more likely to be cheated on by men due to having viable alternatives (Turner, 2017). According to Christian practices, involvement in extramarital affairs is perceived to be a sin because marriage is a covenant, and anyone who cheats will have broken the covenant of marriage (Olshewsky, 1979). It is ideal for Black Christian women to heal from the impact of broken trust and decide what is best by using biblical scriptures, Wise Counsel, and spiritual leaders to make an informed decision.

Purpose of the Literature Review

Various studies have explored familial experiences with infidelity and divorce. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research concerning the lived experiences of Black women with

infidelity. There is also a lack of studies that have focused on Black Christian women, their experiences, and how they adjust following experiences of infidelity. This study identified the need for an intervention to help clinical psychologists and spiritual leaders assist Black Christian women in addressing the impact of infidelity and its aftermath. This project proposes a model for clinicians to collaborate with spiritual leaders better.

Research Questions

1. How does Christianity impact the perception of infidelity?
2. How is Christianity used to deal with infidelity?
3. In what ways can collaborating with clinical psychologists and Black churches (clergy) be used to treat infidelity?

Research Procedure

This critical review of the literature includes a comprehensive review of articles and books accessed through EBSCO and Google Scholar. Key terms employed in the search process included *Black woman*, *Christianity*, *Christian faith*, *Black clergy*, and *infidelity*. To gather as broad an overview as possible regarding existing research for this project, search parameters included research from 1979-2021.

CHAPTER II: EFFECT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE PERCEPTION OF INFIDELITY

The conceptual understanding of infidelity varies in all people. The description of infidelity has recently included personal traits and monogamy expectations as some of the factors influencing people and leading them to engage in extramarital affairs (Ebony, 2020). That is, individuals are motivated by their self-interests of pleasure in addition to love to engage in infidelity. Based on this view, it can be assumed that infidelity is the practice of engaging in a sexual relationship outside one's marriage. However, some researchers view infidelity as sexual, romantic, and emotional engagement that occurs outside a marital relationship, constituting a breach of trust in addition to violation of rules guiding the couple (Scheeren et al., 2018). These perceptions about infidelity seem to be shaped by religious beliefs and practices. The current research seeks to illustrate this by demonstrating how Christianity impacts the perception of infidelity.

Infidelity as a Disregard of Marriage

The presentation of marriage as “a lifetime commitment” by Christianity (Mullins, 2016) influences people to view infidelity as a disregard of union. According to Mullins (2016), religious discourse presents marriage as a sacred thing that needs endurance across a lifetime. This assertion is evidenced by most denominations of Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism, as well as Orthodoxy and Protestant denominations that perceive marriage as a sacrament (Liebroer & Rijken, 2019). From the descriptions provided by Mullins (2016) and Liebroer and Rijken (2019), it can be established that people are influenced by Christianity to oppose family decisions together with living arrangements that are believed to be a hindrance to marriage, such as infidelity and divorce. In support, Liebroer and Rijken (2019) explained that the marriage attitudes of most people are influenced by personal religiosity together with religious context. As

an illustration, the chances of a Christian losing their religious identity through adapting non-religious attitudes is high and can lead to the change of their Christian behaviors and practices if exposed to a secular context. Thus, Christianity leads people to think of extramarital affairs as an immoral practice intended to undermine one's marriage. In connection with this claim, Christians are more likely than non-Christians to object to infidelity based on the claim that it undermines the basis of marriage (Wilkins-LaFlamme, 2016). From the findings by Mullins (2016) and Liebroer and Rijken (2019), one can argue that Christianity has influenced many people to think of infidelity as a practice that fosters disregard of marriage commitments and perseverance.

Infidelity as an Objection of Traditional Attitudes

Christianity is a critical social institution that shapes relationship attitudes for all people, including those who only slightly identify as Christians. Evidence is not clear; nevertheless, some studies suggest that people tend to be more inclined toward traditional attitudes than religious contexts (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2013). According to the research, *traditional attitudes* has a broad definition defined by not engaging in behaviors that do not support the importance of marriage (Liebroer & Rijken, 2019; Wilkins-LaFlamme, 2016). Religious teaching is one reason to explain why people likely associate infidelity with disregard of traditional beliefs and attitudes. This is evidenced by the condemnation of extramarital sexual relationships in society by most Christians. Liebroer and Rijken (2019) indicated that Christians strongly observe traditional marriage attitudes compared to non-religious individuals. They value self-respect in marriage as emphasized by traditional beliefs. Recent research by Halman and Van Ingen (2015), and Wilkins-LaFlamme (2016), illustrated this by indicating that non-religious individuals demonstrate less interest in conforming to traditional marriage expectations than believers of the Christian faith. In reference to a traditional couple, Hooff (2017) asserted that infidelity is

perceived as a threatening practice that results in the withdrawal of intimacy and undermines mutual disclosure. According to Hooff (2017), infidelity is the basis of late modern relationships. Thus, Adamczyk and Hayes (2013), Hooff (2017), Halman and Van Ingen (2015) and Wilkins-LaFlamme (2016) demonstrated how Christianity influences people to think of infidelity as a replacement of traditional attitudes with late modern attitudes that encourage the practice of extramarital affairs.

People are also influenced by Christianity to view infidelity as a reflection of detachment from hierarchical subordination that is emphasized by traditional beliefs. Although most Christian denominations emphasize the value of marriage, some denominations stress the importance of individual responsibility (Liebroer & Rijken, 2019). An example is Protestantism, which historically discourages hierarchical subordination while recommending consideration of individual responsibility in making decisions (Liebroer & Rijken, 2019). According to Liebroer and Rijken (2019), such freedom provides leeway for personal decision-making that impacts the practice of infidelity. Liebroer and Rijken (2019) also suggested that most Protestant denominations are reluctant to formulate strict remedies regarding personal behavior.

Consequently, the perception of infidelity by Protestants is likely to be less strict compared to other Christian denominations, like Roman Catholicism. Zapien (2017) supported claims made by Liebroer and Rijken (2019) by indicating that the rate of extramarital affairs has increased significantly due to poor regulation of personal sexual behaviors. The increase in opportunity and technology has helped people gain more independence and freedom that was rare in traditional society (Zapien, 2017). From the findings by Zapien (2017) and Liebroer and Rijken (2019), one can conclude that Christianity has made people believe that infidelity is an

outcome of detachment from traditional practices, such as the respect for hierarchical subordination and exercise of less freedom and independence.

The practice of Christianity has also influenced people to think of infidelity as a rejection of morality that is acknowledged as one of the traditional values. Individuals who are more religious are compelled by normative pressures to follow religious guidelines regarding family matters (Adamczyk, 2013). Liebroer and Rijken (2019) shared a similar view by indicating that Christian denominations have become powerful institutions that influence key rules and regulations involving issues that are considered important. Based on these Christian views, it can be deduced that Christianity has led people to view infidelity as morally wrong. The practice is against religious guidelines that emphasize virtuous behavior, including respect for marriage and demonstration of commitment (Mullins, 2016).

Infidelity as an Outcome of Unsanctified Marriage

Sanctification of marriage is believed by Christians to inspire couples to behave appropriately when in conflict. According to Mahoney (2013), sanctification involves perceiving a feature of life, such as marriage, as having significance and character. Most married Christians view their marriage as having sacred qualities, such as being blessed and sacred, aside from being a portrayal of a higher power to some extent (Kusner et al., 2014). From these findings, it can be assumed that higher sanctification of marriage fosters marital satisfaction (Kusner et al., 2014). Mbwirire (2017) supported the findings by Kusner et al. (2014) by indicating that most religious people associate infidelity with unsanctified marriage. According to Mbwirire (2017), such marriages are often guided by self-interests and are susceptible to challenges associated with vocational choices. Mbwirire (2017) elaborated this assertion by indicating that a couple brought together by unsanctified marriage are likely to engage in infidelity when exposed to an

environment susceptible to extramarital affairs or forbidden by church doctrines. From the perspective of Christianity addressed by Mbwirire, it can be argued that the involvement in infidelity by people in society results from adapting behaviors and practices that provide leeway for extramarital affairs. However, the practice of infidelity tends to be more common in individuals with unsanctified marriages.

Mbwirire (2017) also indicated that some Christians and church leaders believe jobs that separate couples for long durations contribute to the increased practice of infidelity in society. Although Esselmont and Bierman (2014) concurred with Mbwirire regarding the practice of infidelity by separated couples, he argued that this immoral practice is mostly associated with individuals living in unsanctified marriages. According to Esselmont and Bierman (2014), “non-religiously based marital formations” are characterized by choosing wrong persons as spouses (p. 464). A similar claim was made by Rayesh and Kalantar (2018), who conducted a study to determine the implications of praying together with the sanctification of marriage on lowering infidelity. There were negative and significant correlations between sanctified relationships and marital infidelity, along with prayer for the spouse and marital infidelity. Therefore stability, accountability, and fidelity result from married couples utilizing prayer and considering their marriage as a dedication to God to prevent harmful consequences (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2018). Sanctification of marriage for a couple is perceived as a suitable factor for lowering the chances of a person’s association with marital infidelity. These Christian views of marriage shape the understanding of people about infidelity. Thus, it can be concluded that many religious people perceive infidelity as a reflection of an unsanctified marriage.

Infidelity Signifies Loss of Marital Spirituality

An accumulation of evidence demonstrates how Christianity has influenced religious

people to believe that infidelity reflects a reduced marital spirituality. For instance, Kusner et al. (2014) and Li et al. (2018) noted that spirituality helps couples handle differences such as a decline in marital satisfaction that is a primary risk factor of infidelity. According to Li et al. (2018), frequent religious service attendance exhibited low divorce rates among married couples, while widowed women were likely to remarry compared to divorced and separated women. This study suggests regular attendance stability within married couples resulting in longevity and prospects of remarriage for women who lose their partner by death. There was no significant association between regular attendance among women who were separated or divorced and the likelihood to remarry. These researchers also claimed that religious service attendance fosters marital stability through religious teachings that present marriage as sacred. Christianity and other major religions have also concluded that conceiving and raising children within permanent marriages helps in being good role models in life (Kusner et al., 2014). Contingent on these arguments, it can be established that couples who are highly associated with organized religion are likely to be more encouraged to act and treat each other in ways that preserve their marital relationship. In support of this view, Mahoney (2010) indicated couples who demonstrate high religious attendance often experience great marital satisfaction. Mahoney (2010) suggested that religious couples draw upon religious behaviors promoted by their organized religion to help manage experienced marital conflicts effectively. From the findings of these three studies (Kusner et al., 2014; Li et al., 2018; Mahoney, 2010), it can be established that Christianity teachings and doctrines influence religious people to perceive infidelity as a portrayal of reduced spirituality in marital relationships.

Infidelity Signifies Loss of a Committed Relationship

Research shows that Christianity has contributed to the view of infidelity as the portrayal of a broken relationship. Based on a Christian perspective, marriage should involve the commitment of the involved parties (Fife et al., 2011). Committed relationships are characterized by the promise of sexual as well as emotional loyalty by the couple. Infidelity is associated with the breakage of this promise. In connection with this assertion, Fife et al. (2011) indicated that sexual and emotional fidelity results in relationship stability aside from helping present the relationship as exceptional. However, this type of relationship is often lost due to offensive actions associated with infidelity by either half of the couple. According to Joo (2015), biblical teachings about adultery indicate that an extramarital relationship cannot be perceived as a jubilant sexual encounter since it damages the marital relationship. From Joo's (2015) study, it can be established that extramarital affairs violate relationship commitment characterized by sexual or emotional intimacy. This Christian perspective insinuates that such betrayal undermines relationship stability and security, leading to confusion and loss of trust (Fife et al., 2011). Based on the arguments presented by Joo (2015) and Fife et al. (2011), it can be established that the common understanding that infidelity is an outcome of a failed relationship is fostered by Christianity.

The understanding of infidelity varies significantly in different people. This variation is attributed to many factors, including experiences and practices. In the context of this study, the focus was on the influence of Christianity on the perception of infidelity. An accumulation of studies shows how religious people have been influenced by their religion to perceive infidelity as an immoral practice associated with disregarding marriage. Research showed that extramarital affairs are contrary to Christian guidelines and practices regarding marriage. It was established

from the reviewed studies that Christians view infidelity as a portrayal of people's disregard of traditional attitudes about intimate relationships that emphasize individuals in a relationship demonstrating self-respect. Likewise, infidelity is prevalent because of an increased occurrence of unsanctified marriages in addition to the loss of marital spirituality. The research also illustrated that Christianity has influenced people to view infidelity as a signifier of loss for the couple's commitment to marriage requirements.

Christianity Helps People View Marriage as Sacred

Sexuality is a pervasive issue of religious communities, and religious bans against extramarital affairs have focused on intense public discourse over the last decade. For many Christian couples, it is almost unimaginable that a partner would cheat. In reality, however, marriages among religious couples are not immune to occurrences of adultery and divorce. Aside from this, evidence suggests that infidelity among married, religious couples is just as high, with Willard (2011) asserting that the percentage hovers around 60%. DeMaris (2013) also found that even most religious couples have extramarital affairs, and the consequences of such experiences often affect the longevity of their marriages.

Nevertheless, the institution of marriage is highly valued in Christianity (Hunter, 2018). According to Liebroer and Rijken (2019), marriage is a sacrament in most branches of Christianity, including Roman Catholicism, multiple Protestant denominations, and Orthodoxy. The author also noted that this emphasis on marriage has driven several Christian churches to be skeptical or condemn some living arrangements and family decisions that interfere with marriage, including unmarried cohabitation and divorce. From an understanding that all modern Christian religions stress the value of marriage, it is more likely that marriage attitudes are generally conservative among people committed to Christianity. Along this line of reasoning,

Wilkins-LaFlamme (2016) found that non-religious people hold secular perspectives and more liberal views than conservative attitudes on moral issues such as marriage and infidelity than adherents. However, Cohen and Hill (2007) asserted that even though many denominational strands emphasize the importance of marriage, the emphasis is not equal across the Christian denominations. For instance, the author argued that many Protestant denominations are gradually becoming reluctant to establish strict prescriptions regarding personal behavior such as adultery (Cohen & Hill, 2007).

Christianity Reduces the Odds of Infidelity

Moreover, a study conducted by Tuttle and Davis (2015) found that Christianity decreases the odds of extramarital affairs among couples. However, the author noted that the impact of religiosity on the probability of a subsequent divorce is much more complex; it tends to minimize the chances of a corresponding divorce by increasing the degree of marital satisfaction (Tuttle & Davis, 2015). Conversely, Liebroer and Rijken (2019) found that Christian religiosity has a cross-level, contextual, and individual effect on people's perceptions of marriage and infidelity. In essence, the author argued that it is the degree of commitment to Christianity that matters (Tuttle & Davis, 2015). However, the work of DeMaris (2013) contradicted this perspective. The author claimed that very religious married people are more likely to file for divorce after a case of infidelity, regardless of the quality of the marriage.

Furthermore, Ziv et al. (2018) found that being religious and married for a short period is linked with an increased expectation of refraining from adultery. In other words, the author demonstrated that religiosity is one of the crucial factors that help foster conscious decision-making, and therefore, changes how people perceive infidelity. Similarly, Rayesh and Kalantar (2018) also argued that Christianity and religiosity greatly influence reducing infidelity and how

people perceive extramarital affairs. The authors found that prayer for the spouse and sanctification of marriage is an important factor in decreasing the likelihood of a person engaging in extramarital affairs. Burdette et al. (2007) also found that holding any Christian affiliation is linked to a reduced likelihood of engaging in extramarital affairs than non-adherents. A study was conducted with a population size of 7,791 participants from seven years' worth of data conducted by the National Opinion Research Center asking questions about marital infidelity and religious involvement. The authors found that the frequency of attending church is inversely related to the probability of engaging in extramarital affairs (Burdette et al., 2007). The odds of infidelity for persons who attended services several times per week were roughly 66% lower than the odds for persons who never attended service. Results suggest regular involvement in worship services enhances religious plausibility and belief systems. Therefore, those who literally believe the Bible is the Word of God or believe it is inspired by God are less likely to engage in extramarital affairs (Burdette et al., 2007).

Additionally, Esselmont and Bierman (2014) found that personal components of religiosity, such as belief in biblical teachings, fosters an inverse association between religious-based marriage and extramarital affairs, while regular attendance at worship centers does not affect this relationship. In essence, the authors demonstrated that people are more likely to remain faithful to their partners when they have a high degree of religiosity (Esselmont & Bierman, 2014). Sauerheber and Ponton (2017) argued that Christianity greatly influences healing from infidelity because it places great emphasis on forgiveness as the key to real connection and intimacy.

CHAPTER III: THE USE OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICES TO DEAL WITH INFIDELITY

Infidelity is defined as the state of unfaithfulness to one's spouse or partner. Infidelity can also be defined as an act of disbelief in a religion. According to Exodus 20:14, "Thou shall not commit any form of adultery." This is one of the 10 commandments written in the Bible. One leader from the Scotland Church described the commandment as the fearful blindness existing in the soul. However, some people are against the theories surrounding the element of infidelity. For instance, there has been an argument that although sex before marriage seems to be very destructive, it can never be described as infidelity. This concept has also received a great deal of backlash from people who do not believe in the statement. A Swedish theologian asserted that the issue of infidelity found its inception from the people who are learned. It is indicated that although infidelity can destroy marriages and lives of people and cause psychological and mental damage, God has a way of erasing it from one's record. This chapter discusses how Christian practices are used to deal with infidelity in relationships.

Prayers

One of the Christian practices used to deal with infidelity is prayer. The prayers are based on the ubiquitous spiritual activity theory (Fincham et al., 2010). According to Christianity, prayer is perceived to be one of the essential elements of religious worship, depending on the frequency and the content for purposes of experimental manipulation (Singer, 2003). Prayers might be done individually, which seems to increase religious, social networks. It is also perceived to be a concept of spiritual activity that is common among the Abrahamic traditions. The Christians focus their prayer as an informal and petitionary communication with God meant to invoke God's help for certain needs (Fincham et al., 2010). Little or no effort has been

forwarded to provide a model to understand the effects of prayers through interpersonal and psychological processes.

When faced with the problem of infidelity, Christians have encouraged prayers within the context of close relationships. Over the years, prayers have not been explicitly evaluated in religious and relationship research. For this reason, the effect of prayers on the marriage or relationship outcome continues to be highly unknown (Wilson, 2007). For this reason, Christian beliefs have offered insight into the reason prayer can be crucial in the context of marriage or close relationships.

The element of prayer to handle the issue of infidelity is based on the goal theory perspective. According to Christianity, spiritually related activities such as prayers might help the couple think of their partner's desires and needs, be loving and highly forgiving, treat one another with respect, and resolve conflict in an amicable manner (Vansteenwegen, 2008). Christianity highly believes that some different psychological processes and elements link prayers to how couples interact in a relationship. One method linked to prayers is the issue of motivational elements targeting the goals of the couples in a relationship. Christians believe that prayer can affect the choice of objective, the intention and ability of the couple to engage in certain behavior supporting or undermining the relationship goals (Case, 2005). The goal theory perspective on prayer states that such a motivational process seems to be consequential in reducing adverse relationships in the middle of relationship issues. According to the theory, in the process of a destructive interaction, the couple tends to shift from their cooperative objectives to emergent goals, which are described as adversarial. For instance, instead of concentrating on coming up with the couple-level solutions to the concern at hand, partners going through a conflict might end up focusing on their own way.

Based on this kind of analysis, when a couple focuses their infidelity issues into prayers, they tend to solve their problems inconsistent with the objectives of their interventions (Vansteenwegen, 2008). This can only take place when implemented within their conflict. As such, prayers can work as a time out, a common method in skill-based interventions (Weeks & Fife, 2009). Therefore, to solve the issue of infidelity, Christians called out for their believers to solve the issue through prayers.

Moreover, Christian teachings encouraged believers to seek God for wisdom, healing, and guidance when faced with life challenges. Christians tend to pray to God to direct their thoughts, actions, decisions, and words when resolving infidelity cases (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2020). Seeking God in turbulent times is one of the best actions to take if one has realized that their partner has cheated on them. Christians are expected to express their feelings to God by praying to let Him know how they feel. Feelings, such as fear of abandonment, decreased interpersonal trust, and the loss of self-esteem, are addressed to God. Victims were also motivated to pray for the ability to forgive their unfaithful partners, pray for positive outcomes from the challenges, and finally pray to rediscover themselves. In the Bible (New King James Version, 2021, Ps. 77:1-2), David explained how he cried out to God for help in troubled times. The Brethren are called upon to intercede for marriages to protect them from sexual immorality (Rayesh & Kalantar, 2020). Overall, Christians were always motivated to pray so that God would provide positive things to replace their sorrow.

Scriptures from the Bible

Another Christian practice used to deal with infidelity is to turn to the scriptures of the Bible. According to the scriptures of the Bible, God plans for marriages to be a lifelong union between the wife and the husband (Scuka, 2015). As such, marriage is perceived to be an

institution planned and created by God. He stated that it was not good for Adam and Eve to stay alone. The creation of marriages happened before the advent of sin into the world; it was one of God's perfect designs for people. Through the intervention of the prophets, God provided three different principles that would guide marriage (Moreno & Kahumoku-Fessler, 2018). The first principle is that marriage is sacred, God hates divorce, and that marriage is designed to produce children filled with good character. Therefore, if there is infidelity in marriage, the Bible encourages the element of reconciliation. The Bible has everything to do with the concept of repentance and forgiveness.

According to the Bible (New King James Version, 2021):

Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: Return, backsliding Israel, says the LORD; I will not cause my anger to fall on you. For I *am* merciful, says the LORD; I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the LORD. (Jer. 3:12-13)

The above scripture means that God is willing to reconcile himself with sinners if only they accept the mistake and come back to him. Aside from this, if Christians want to deal with infidelity, then, biblically, they need to do the same thing (Gordon et al., 2008). Thus, reconciling after infidelity is perceived to be an act of grace. If the cheating partner provides true and genuine repentance, God can restore everything that has been broken; a new covenant can then be made. However, if there is no repentance, then the Bible (New King James Version, 1 Cor. Ch. 5) guides people on what to do.

The scriptures of the Bible also encourage Christians to deal with infidelity through forgiving and the issue of apology. Infidelity tends to cause serious breaches and tensions in the

relational wellbeing and identity of couples. For relationship healing to occur, infidelity can never be tolerated or accommodated in the relationship (Levin, 2011). For this reason, Christianity advocates for forgiveness. As such, forgiveness plays a crucial function in the healing and reconciliation process. However, in most cases, betrayed persons would never ask to take a chance of going through the psychological and mental pain again. Therefore, during this time, the element of forgiveness happens to be very risky and unwise, especially when the case happens to be inaccurate (Levin, 2011). Most of the time, forgiveness requires extra courage for the partners to embark on the journey of forgiving. For this reason, Christianity encouraged couples to work on the unifying factors to build the root of forgiveness and set the right platform for genuine forgiveness and apology.

Christianity believes that apologizing is a crucial step that people need to take in the process of healing their relationship after a considerable infidelity (Beltrán-Morillas et al., 2019). Apologizing helps in soothing the wounds that have been caused by infidelity and increases the trust level to help solve power imbalances that happen because of infidelity. This is done by establishing a sense of safety and control for the victim of infidelity. It is the responsibility of the person who cheated to come up with a profound empathic link that offers a crucial foundation for genuine apologies.

Genuine apologies need significant effort and preparedness. The partner who had an affair makes an effort to discuss and process the infidelity issues to build and express empathy, seek forgiveness, and take accountability for their actions. Before facilitating the apologies, the unfaithful partners need to be accountable for the damages they caused due to their behavior and be truly remorseful for their offense (Gullickson, 1995). This can be confirmed and ascertained by considering the partners' effort to abide by the responsibilities of their behaviors and

communicate the necessary empathy and understand the harm they have caused. An apology is determined by the actions of the remorseful person other than just saying sorry (Case, 2005). A genuine apology involves understanding the damage one has caused and acknowledge their wrongdoing.

Over the years, Christians have believed that the unfaithful party's most important decision is to seek forgiveness from their spouse. The adulterous member needs to seek forgiveness from God, their spouse, family members, close friends, and neighbors (Judd, 2004). The spouse who took part in the marital breach should take responsibility and be accountable for their actions. Seeking forgiveness instills courage and humility in the wrongdoer in addressing the issue. The Bible (New King James Version, Mal. 2:16) says that God hates divorce, and therefore, Christians should seek pardon. It enables the troubled parties to have peace rather than pain and guilt resulting from terminating the union (Judd, 2004). In the Old Testament (New King James Version, 2 Sam. 12:1-16), God sent Prophet Nathan to David after committing adultery with Uriah's wife. Afterward, David responded by fasting and weeping to seek forgiveness from God.

Wise Counsel from Clergy

It is not easy for the partner who was cheated on to recover from infidelity because this phase has multifaceted elements and emotions. For this reason, it is highly advisable to have clergy or a counselor guide the partners through the healing process. It is prudent for another person to accompany the couple during this difficult time of restoration (Moreno & Kahumoku-Fessler, 2018). The role of the clergy or the counselor during this period is to assist in developing solutions by asking questions and direct conversation in a positive and productive way. The counselor's view seems to be very enlightening and provides an important perspective on what

could have contributed to the marriage breach (Juhnke et al., 2008). A counselor can also provide the right assistance needed to set in place practical guidelines to protect the marriage with the right solutions going forward.

The other way in which Christianity deals with infidelity is by talking to a clergy member. The responsibility of the clergy is to facilitate the process of forgiveness and apology between the unfaithful partner and the betrayed person. Christianity believes that unfaithful partners need to express their sincere remorsefulness during the apology process and address their misconduct. Some of the partners are more likely to experience some form of difficulties in the process of offering genuine apologies (Rokach & Philibert-Lignières, 2015). Under such situations, they are prone to undermine the effectiveness of their apology by coming up with endless excuses, being defensive, and sometimes being manipulative.

The apology seems to be a deciding factor during the forgiveness process. Additionally, expressing empathy and remorse is crucial for the apology to work (Gullickson, 1995). Preparing for the apology is also crucial, and most of the time, it needs an individual private session with the partner who is accused of being unfaithful. It is important that the betrayed person feel that the other person is truly apologetic for the damages they have caused to their relationship. When the victimized sense this, they are more likely to feel safe and ready to forgive the other person (Weeks & Fife, 2009). When the apology is sincerely offered to the victimized, the remorseful activities provided by the unfaithful partner might entail the expression of grief and emotional imbalance over the damaging traits and actions they have subjected to the betrayed person. The empathy that arises from the genuine apology affects the betrayed partners through anger mitigation, reducing the willingness to revenge and reducing the time they need to stay away from the unfaithful partners (Beltrán-Morillas et al., 2019). One apology is not enough, as it

might take some more time for the victimized to accept the apology from the unfaithful partner or trust their sincerity. For this reason, it is the responsibility of the therapist to normalize this issue and ask the unfaithful partners to the patient and offer their apology a couple of times.

The recurring elements of anger, insecurity, and resentment happen to be a setback for couples and are more likely to feel that their work has gone in vain (Ebben, 2014). In such a situation, the lingering elements of betrayal and feeling so much hurt are common occurrences during infidelity. For this reason, there is a need for the therapist to assist both the unfaithful and the betrayed partner to go through the perceived setback effectively and amicably. It is also common for the betrayed partner to be impatient in the process of forgiving. For this reason, there is a need for an unfaithful person to be highly patient with the betrayed partner by giving them time to heal.

It is difficult to recover from trauma after experiencing unfaithfulness from one's marriage partner. Victims display feelings of betrayal, anger, shame, jealousy, fear, sadness, and confusion. Spouses to marital breachers are likely to suffer from depression and posttraumatic stress disorder in the form of acute anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, and victimization (Abrahamson, 2020). The victims require counseling from the clergy, such as priests, pastors, and Christian friends, to lead the restoration process. They are meant to oversee the healing process among marriage partners with extramarital affairs. They provide all the necessary steps required in healing a troubled believer affected by adultery (Stamps, 2020). In the New Testament, Apostle Paul gives insight into the counseling process to believers. In the Bible (New King James Version, 2 Cor. 2:5-11), Paul teaches Christians to forgive each other, reaffirm their love to their partners, and comfort each other in difficult times. Therefore, couples that uphold these principles are not likely to become victims of infidelity.

Divorce

When the above options have failed, Christianity advocates for divorce after the infidelity issue. Before filing for divorce, the partners need to consider multiple factors (Kleine, 2019). The first factor is the quality of the relationship. The history of the relationship is essential when considering the likelihood of restoring the marriage after the infidelity. If there are multiple signs of betrayal, then there may be a need to walk away. The other factor is the dating history of the unfaithful partner (Millner, 2008). If the partner has been adulterous in the past, then there is a high possibility that they will break the trust again. This tends to be a warning sign that cheating might happen in the future. For this reason, one needs to be especially attentive. Christianity also considers emotional involvement before advising one to file for a divorce. It is strongly advised if the thought of divorce comes in with a sigh of relief, then divorce happened to be the right route to take.

According to the Holy Bible, divorce grounds are sexual immorality, for instance, adultery or when a marriage partner walks away from the marriage without prior communication. A divorce is filed when one partner goes against a marriage covenant's unity and intimacy by committing infidelity (Prewitt, 2020). The faithful partner is left in a difficult position. However, the Bible permits the loyal partner's exit through an official divorce (New King James Version, Matt. 5:32). Moreover, divorce is allowed on the grounds of peace. For example, when after extreme consultations, the faithful member decides to leave, divorce is encouraged. Trying to force them to stay may create greater tension and conflicts (Prewitt, 2020). Jesus taught that divorce provisions were an accommodation to the hardness of people's hearts and a necessary evil (New King James Version, 2021). However, the scripture denies divorce for the immediate purpose of marrying someone else (New King James Version, Mark 10:11-12). Marrying a

divorced person is not permitted in the Bible, rendering the person adulterous. Divorce is considered as the last option and on the grounds of infidelity or marital abandonment.

Address the Issues

Based on the Christian context, infidelity is a serious issue that requires determining factors that necessitate it. Cheating occurs in marriages due to lack of communication, sexual temptation, boredom, jealousy, loneliness, and unhappiness (Walker, 2020). According to the Bible (New King James Version, Prov. 6:32), it disrupts marriages, homes, children, and the precious lives of affected individuals. Cases of infidelity reveal some of the challenges faced in most Christian families. Therefore, it is paramount that they identify what has contributed to adultery. There were rules and regulations in Christian life to guide interactions between men and women to caution them from infidelity.

In a modern Christian setting, once a person has identified factors that can tempt them to commit adultery, they take relevant measures, for example, ending all interactions and communications with the other party. Aside from this, Christians are required to commit to God and their partners, not to see or talk to other parties (Walker, 2020). The measures are taken to ensure that they do not fall into the temptation of sexual immorality.

In sum, infidelity is perceived to be a serious relationship issue and trauma that is more likely to damage the intimacy and relationship of the couple. When couples want to reconcile and stay together, it is important to entail all the necessary works to rebuild intimacy. Regaining intimacy seems to be a challenging issue for the couple due to serious issues involved in ensuring the wellbeing of the relationship. The outcome of a solved case involves regaining and restoring all the safety and trust, improved communication between the two, and addresses all the fears linked to intimacy. Thus, Christianity deals with intimacy in various ways.

CHAPTER IV: COLLABORATION BETWEEN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND BLACK CHURCH CLERGY TO TREAT INFIDELITY

Examining the Context of Collaboration

Edwards et al. (1999) argued that psychologists and clergy can cooperate to promote healing and social responsibility. Such collaboration promotes personal wellness and social cohesion. However, infidelity is a unique area where interdisciplinary collaboration might encounter complications. Gordon et al. (2008) suggested that infidelity is a difficult problem to address in couple therapy due to trauma that redefines how couples process information and behavioral patterns. Baucom et al. (2017) agreed with Gordon et al. (2008) by insisting that the prevalence of extradyadic affairs requires clinicians to have a firm concept and treatment model for infidelity. Infidelity manifests differently according to age and cultural background. The basis of the argument is on the supposition that individuals become unfaithful due to issues within the cultural community. As a result, treating infidelity requires a proper evaluation of the cultural origins of an individual. According to Hertlein et al. (2005), infidelity results from the mind and the environment that occurs due to mental predisposition by making someone unsatisfied with their life. In other circumstances, the environment might predispose people to an irresistible temptation to cheat on their partner.

Weeks et al. (2003) has outlined that treating infidelity is a challenging task in society. Baucom et al. (2017) agreed with Weeks et al. (2003) that infidelity creates trauma to the extent that, in most instances, clinical psychologists need to draw from the literature on current posttraumatic stress disorder in guiding patients in a reappraisal of the meaning that they resent to the trauma. However, Peluso (2007) suggested that infidelity can be treated once the clinical psychologist has a prime understanding of the mental situation and the environment that one

exists in for much of the day. By focusing on the environment, Peluso (2007) raised the possibility of treating infidelity through a collaborative effort that assembles different principles. In this case, Brown (2013) argued that the church has a central role in ensuring the mental peace of its congregants by supporting their souls with words from the Bible. The Black church is distinctive in this regard. Battle (2006) concurred with the argument by Brown (2013) by stating that African Americans are more religious than other racial and cultural groups in America. This signifies that the church can be used as a tool to treat problems that Black people encounter in their lives, such as infidelity.

Clinical psychologists and the Black church clergy can collaborate to treat infidelity by focusing on teaching the virtue of commitment. According to Treadway (2020), clinical psychologists can teach commitment by informing their patients on how to remain committed within the dictates of marriage. Christian teachings affirm the essence of marriage and the commencement of a family as a commandment from God. In this case, a clergy can address infidelity by helping the affected person adhere to the commandments of God of commencing and forming a family while emphasizing that infidelity destroys the family and does not help in forming it. Onedera (2007) similarly argued that psychologists emphasize marital chastity to their patients by understanding their situation. Empathy is a virtue emphasized by both psychologists and the clergy.

Collaboration Through Consultation

Consultation is an area where the clinical psychologist and the clergy of the Black church might collaborate. According to Edwards et al. (1999), consultation occurs when a psychologist or clergyperson utilizes the expertise to address a professional task. Such collaboration can occur under different situations that connect clinical psychologists and a Black church on the issue of

infidelity. However, Kramer et al. (2019) recommended that psychologists maintain apparent and sustainable engagement whenever they collaborate with other professionals. Consultation around fidelity might require consultation because the clergymen in Black churches usually have a significant role in the marital union of their congregants. Kramer et al. (2019) further emphasized that the consultation process between a clinical psychologist and other professionals should maintain a keen sense of professionalism. During consultations between the clinical psychologists and clergy, the information will be shared on issues that reflect the patient's social standing. Battle (2006) agreed with Kramer et al. (2019) and elaborated that the church is a tool for understanding the position of an individual within the Black community. There is a significant function for the church in the Black community in the United States because it is used as a pillar of assembling the Black community based on ancient traditions, such as slavery in the 19th century. A clinical psychologist receives more insight into the social realities of an individual by collaborating with the clergy. The relationship fosters the adoption of an elaborate program that can provide the correct treatment that will help the individual overcome the habit of infidelity. Treadway (2020) concluded the argument by stating that infidelity is a habit that can only be addressed by psychologists through understanding the key tenets of human habit. The church is a key factor that influences human habit among the African American community.

Kramer et al. (2019) acknowledged that clinical psychologists frequently depend on consultation processes with other professionals who know the patients in understanding various dynamics of addressing the treatment process. In this context, the clergy can be considered a viable source of vital information about an individual's spiritual habits in ways that the clinical psychologist can use to initiate the most efficient strategies for the mental condition regarding infidelity. For instance, the clergy might provide information revealing that a patient is a

religious person who never misses church and volunteers on significant issues that help the church. The clinical psychologists can use this information to provide the type of treatment to the patient regarding the religious side of the patient.

Weaver et al. (1997) argued that when psychologists understand the spiritual bearing of their patients, they become more empowered to provide the correct type of treatment that will lead to the holistic healing of the patient. However, Weaver et al. (1997) advised understanding the ethical boundaries that define each side when concerning consultation between clinical psychologists and other professionals is necessary. In this context, the clergy might not divulge to the clinical psychologists due to ethical issues. The consultation process should focus only on information that might provide healing and restoration to the patient that exposes the problem of infidelity. Acknowledging that contemporary studies currently did not provide sufficient information that can be used to influence the consultation process between the clergy in the Black church and the clinical psychologist is inevitable. Consultation is necessary, as outlined by Weaver et al. (1997), but no viable framework can be used to ensure that apparent paradigms define the consultation between the clergy and clinical psychologists. One way of enhancing the relationship between clinical psychologists and the clergy of the Black church might begin by understanding the unique traditions that define the Black church and how the church relates to the members. The next phase of the research could outline various issues that influence how clinical psychologists must engage other professionals based on the traditions that define their practice. Corey et al. (2007) asserted that any collaboration without boundaries that guide the understanding of two professionals might exacerbate the problem for the patient. This sentiment supports the necessity for more research on how a positive consultation process might be initiated between the clergy and the clinical psychologists.

According to Rainey (2003), treating infidelity requires the element of forgiveness. At this stage, the role of the clergy would be vital because church encourages forgiveness. Wade et al. (2014) emphasized that forgiveness is a crucial intervention for solving interpersonal conflicts in therapy. Forgiveness helps to solve interpersonal problems, such as infidelity, fosters hope, and improves social functioning. Forgiveness interventions for couples dealing with infidelity could help if the sessions are individualized rather than group therapy (McCain, 2016). The intervention fosters good communication and listening skills that contribute to sharing feelings and solving infidelity cases (McCain, 2016). Even with proficiency in anger management skills, relaxation techniques, and conflict resolution, consulting the clergy is vital to solving infidelity in couples who attend Black churches. Forgiveness is a part of the treatment that ensures that a couple receiving therapy begins life once more by leaving the past and considering the future. Clergy might understand the most efficient approach of putting across the message to couples that attend Black churches. Rainey (2003) emphasized that forgiveness allows people to heal completely and move onward.

Collaboration Through Referrals

According to Lee (2020), clinical psychologists might collaborate with other professionals within society to help patients through referrals. In this context, the psychologists might refer the patient to clergy at their local church. In referrals, the clinical psychologist formulates a set of issues to be addressed by the clergy. However, Moriarty (2010) has warned that any referral should be done in a way that makes the clergy appreciate the problem and provide the necessary help as envisaged by the clinical psychologist. In essence, the clinical psychologist should discuss the matter with the clergy before the patient is referred to the church for referrals. Communication beforehand is significant in creating a conduit of trust that will

define the referral process between the clinical psychologist and the Black church clergy throughout the process of treating infidelity.

Edwards et al. (1999) established that psychologists are willing to refer clients to the clergyperson in most cases when they had a particular area of expertise. For instance, the clergy might be in a position to help the patient address the question of moral chastity based on God's character and commandments to men. In the process, the clergy plays a specific role that the clinical psychologist might not be completely prepared to execute. For instance, a Catholic patient might need therapy and treatment that are in accordance with the Catholic dictums of fidelity and the sanctity of marriage. In such a situation, a Catholic priest can help the patient understand the expectations of the church and use the Bible as a tool for treatment and healing from infidelity.

Battle (2006) acknowledged that the Black church influences the personal lives of their members to the extent that the church can initiate the necessary communal changes that eventually affect people at personal levels. Day (2012) affirmed that the clergy of the Black church are usually close personal confidants who know their followers on a personal level. Clinical psychologists might use the attribute to initiate a program of referrals that might involve several step programs intended to treat infidelity in the patient. In addition, the adoption of referrals between psychologists and clergy in treating infidelity must occur in a conducive atmosphere that eventually creates the outcome that the clinical psychologists desire. Moriarty (2010) warned that in every situation where the psychologist refers the patient to another professional within the society, it is significant for the psychologist to establish the terms of engagement because he remains the conscientious person who is depended upon to treat the patient. Additionally, Johnson (2009) acknowledged that setting the parameters of engagement

might be informed by a keen understanding between the psychologist and the clergy. According to Rainey (2003), treating infidelity is a sensitive process that might require a multiple-pronged approach that assembles not only the person directly affected but the couple as well. The sensitivity of the subject demands that the psychologist can trust the clergy to protect both the client as an individual and the couple as a family.

Equally, Percy (2011) reported that clergy refer clients to clinical psychologists after a thorough assessment of the available psychologists. The assessment involves searching for the most appropriate psychologists to share the same spirituality and values with the couple at hand (Edwards et al., 1999). The clergy recognizes that mental health, social problems, mind, body, and spirit are interconnected. Hence, bi-directional referral with clinical psychologists is warranted (Percy, 2011). Aside from this, Edwards et al. (1999) stated that clergy went to the extent of carrying out interviews to determine the most efficient psychologists for the referral. Clinical psychologists are adequately equipped with various models and interventions to deal with underlying marital problems during therapy. For this reason, the clergy recognizes the professional abilities of psychologists and values collaboration through referrals (Percy, 2011).

Collaboration Through Workshops

Kelman and Fisher (2017) suggested that workshops can provide an avenue for clinical psychologists to participate in dialogue with other members of society. The same approach can be used when managing the issue of treating infidelity. The use of workshops focuses on the type of treatment that assembles people from the same church who have been open about their struggles with infidelity. Edwards et al. (1999) indicated that clergy and psychologists have reported collaborating to provide a marriage preparation program for their communities or support groups for people suffering from HIV/AIDS. Kelman and Fisher (2017) further affirmed

that workshops actually initiate a process of healing because they help people resolve specific problems to appreciate the fact that they are not alone in their suffering. The workshop allows the clinical psychologist and the church clergy to initiate specific programs that emphasize both Christian principles and psychological theories in addressing the problem that people who have been unfaithful to their partners are encountering.

Organizing workshops requires that the clergy and the clinical psychologists have a profound mutual understanding. Kramer et al. (2019) claimed that interdisciplinary collaborations are frequently successful when those organizing them have a positive history. For instance, a clergyman would work sufficiently with a clinical psychologist with whom he was in high school. It is implied that there is a necessity for a certain measure of trust between the professionals that is foundational to helping the patient heal accordingly. Workshops are effective group therapy sessions that have worked adequately for people who experience difficulties from alcohol addiction. However, according to Fisher (2012), the adoption of workshops might not work efficiently for everyone. Workshops usually depend on a certain degree of anonymity where people meet at random and share their experiences. The ideas outlined by Fisher (2012) revealed the gaps in current scholarship that envisions the collaboration between the church and clinical psychology. The gaps should be filled with studies revealing the most efficient approaches to organizing workshops that will help initiate a healing process for people receiving therapy for infidelity.

Most importantly, workshops provide education to community members on practical conflict resolution skills to reduce incidences of infidelity. Poor resolution of infidelity cases is a risk factor for mistrust and infidelity (Knopp et al., 2017). Extensive training and education would raise awareness on the effects of infidelity and risk factors, solving the social issue of

infidelity and divorce. The education offers preventative measures for infidelity occurrences. Edwards et al. (1999) held that an effective training collaboration between clinical psychologists and clergy equips them with skills to solve social problems and create a healthy society.

According to McCain (2016), most African American individuals seek help regarding emotional problems because of the large expenses associated with professional counseling. Clergy counseling is free and does not require insurance to cover the services. In this regard, clinical psychologists recognize that the church is vital in treating infidelity and other social issues (McCain, 2016). Therefore, workshops should involve regular training for clergy by clinical psychologists. Improved training in care planning and execution of pastoral counseling is vital to ensure that individuals get the best quality care services (Moran et al., 2005). Clergy felt more confident offering mental health care to individuals when equipped with critical counseling skills (Moran et al., 2005). For example, since most religious Black individuals prefer spiritual counseling to professional health, clergy competence in therapeutic models would be vital when offering help (McCain, 2016).

Admittedly, workshop collaborations would require various resources, including rooms, finance, and time. The church is a safe facility where congregants feel safe to talk about their social problems with clergy members and other church members (McCain, 2016). Thus, Percy (2011) demonstrated that clergy invest heavily in physical church centers where counseling can occur. Aside from this, physical facilities can create space for church members to relate and solve infidelity problems.

Challenges to Collaboration

Edwards et al. (1999) admitted that various factors might complicate collaboration between the clinical psychologists and the clergy. The first challenge might be ethical. As with

other interdisciplinary collaborative endeavors, certain professional concerns are potential barriers for those who are interested in collaboration. For instance, the question of client confidentiality is considerably significant to the clinical psychologist because it creates a bond of trust between the psychologist and the client. However, there is no ethical demand on the part of the clergy to keep matters confidential. Edwards et al. (1999) observed that, in the case of the clergy, information provided in confidence might not be treated with care and could even form a part of a Sunday sermon. Therefore, the collaboration between clinical psychologists and the clergy in the Black church might encounter certain obstacles that would eventually jeopardize the treatment process. The issue is complicated by the sensitive nature of infidelity, which could involve people in the same church. From this perspective, Fisher (2012) advised that establishing specific regulations would guide the engagement in any situation where psychologists engage in interdisciplinary collaboration.

Second, value differences would hinder the collaboration process, straining the treatment process. According to Chaddock (2000), the clergy believe that their values are the center of all their practices, even when considering clinical psychologists' collaboration. Alternatively, clinical psychologists hold that their ethical considerations are more important than their values when treating clients for infidelity (Chaddock, 2000). Competent clinical psychologists may be religious or secular. Hence, clinical psychologists prioritize clinical knowledge and intervention over personal values. Further, clinical psychologists are educated on balancing their personal beliefs and offering treatment (Chaddock, 2000). For instance, clinical psychologists should encourage clients to discover themselves, modify behavior, and gain mental wellbeing without conflicting clients' beliefs with their own.

As a result, collaboration may be flawed with mistrust due to the difference in values. Chaddock (2000) reported a difference in the importance of personal values in practice. This factor would create trust issues between the clergy and clinical psychologists. For this reason, the collaborators will consider fewer referrals, consultations, and workshop activities, lowering the quality of care and treatment for infidelity incidences. Moreover, poor communication may hinder efficiency in collaborative programs (Percy, 2011). Since collaborations require clear communication, understanding, and processing the diverse ideas, miscommunication between the Black church clergy and clinical psychologists may disrupt collaborative activities. Thorough and quality care for social problems will emanate from a collaboration between the clergy and clinical psychologists.

Aside from this, the Black church clergy may play a large part in hindering effective collaborations. For example, clergy members may be too time-constrained to be involved in collaboration with clinical psychologists. Percy (2011) revealed that most clergy members found it difficult to juggle religious ministry duties and counseling due to limited time. Moreover, excessive pride and relation between the clergy and congregants may limit referrals to qualified health professionals (Percy, 2011). Black church clergy should be modest and accept support from clinical psychologists to solve infidelity and improve society's social wellbeing.

Both parties in the collaborative effort must work to learn the standards and practices common in the other profession; appropriate precautions, such as the use of informed consent, are significant (Edwards et al., 1999). Furthermore, more studies are needed to investigate the possibilities of interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists and the clergy.

CHAPTER V: CLINICALLY HEALING BY FAITH FOR BLACK CHRISTIAN WOMEN: A PROPOSED MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TREATMENT FOR THE AFTERMATH OF INFIDELITY

Through an extensive review of the literature and a noted significant lack of studies focused on Black Christian women's experiences following infidelity, this study identified the need for an intervention to develop a way to assist Black Christian women to heal better in the aftermath.

This intervention would consist of evidence-based theories such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) with mindfulness techniques, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and interpersonal process approach. Combining religious and psychological principles of Christian faith, such as love, hope, and forgiveness, would promote mental strength and healing. The goal is to provide agency and support on a spiritual and psychological level to Black Christian women. There are two objectives: (a) to equip Black Christian women with skills to effectively cope by processing emotions and determining the next steps with the marriage, and (b) to increase faith practices (reading the Bible, praying, and viewing self and situation as God views it) by shifting perspective to align with His word. See the appendix for how this model is used.

Treatment Modality

The treatment modalities of this intervention would be group and individual therapy sessions intended to complement one another, given their unique advantages. Evidence shows the need and effectiveness of both modalities. According to Schuster et al. (2019), the application of both group and individual therapy at the same time increases the chances of

treatment accessibility and flexibility, alongside giving the client more opportunity to self-manage.

Group therapy is the treatment of more than one client simultaneously with one or two therapists, while individual therapy involved one client at a time. Group therapy will allow Black Christian women to feel supported while granting them the opportunity to hear others' testimonies. Additionally, group therapy could also help women increase their social skills and share their experiences to contribute to their healing.

As expected, individual therapy creates a bond between client and psychologist, given the one-on-one session bound by confidentiality. The psychologist can pay more attention to one client creating space for a therapeutic alliance. Clients can also gain awareness of themselves with the freedom to reveal how they feel while taking advantage of the confidentiality that may not be available for group therapy. Shechtman and Kiezel (2016) indicated that most clients who preferred individual therapy noted the presence of fear to freely speak about certain issues in groups. The two therapy modalities complement each other to give Black Christian women multiple resources and outlets to heal while psychologists assess their progress. A combined treatment of the group and individual therapy allows for the facilitation of freedom to express oneself and learn from one another while building positive emotions and mental strength individually.

Role of Spiritual Leaders

The spiritual leader is expected to provide biblical context to provide clarity, guidance, support, reassurance, and affirmation that God is still present despite the circumstances. This would be achieved through Bible scriptures, parables, and prayer in group therapy. While

spiritual leaders are expected to ensure that clients are sound with faith, the therapist builds trust as a key factor.

Given that Christianity guides the therapy, the role of spiritual and religious steps syncing with psychological therapies is important. According to Naimi (2019), the spiritual steps in this intervention would need to consist of sessions related to therapy from the first to 11th sessions including, introductions of members, building/restoring a spiritual life, and prayer followed by self-reflection to build mental strength. They would also include a testimony of one's experiences and desire to overcome through spiritual control and knowledge on divine blessings and appreciation of the current moments. Substantially, the group members' openness determines how the women respond to therapy based on trust with the clinical psychologist and religious leader. Fawcett et al. (2019) found that attitudes are bound to change and improve based on group therapy despite individual therapy preference. Black women would be able to avoid judgment of the unfaithful partner while building self-love based on biblical principles.

Role of Clinical Psychologists

The psychologist is encouraged to create a non-judgmental, unbiased, and safe environment to allow Black Christian women to freely express any feelings (e.g., betrayal, anger, sadness, disappointment, uncertainty, unattractiveness, loneliness, shock) as well as decrease feelings of shame and/or blame onto oneself. This can be eased through positive affirmations, cognitive reframing, processing emotions, and exploring perspectives of how she would like the "aftermath" to look with or without her husband.

ACT allows women to increase psychological flexibility using mindfulness by making one more aware of the current moments while CBT ensures emotions, behaviors, and thoughts have been reframed despite circumstances. The interpersonal process approach ensures increased

support among other Black Christian women through group discussion, decreased intense emotions, and the ability to give and receive feedback. These techniques provide the power to gain emotional stability and empowerment.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

ACT is an evidence-based approach commonly used to treat depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress (Smith et al., 2020). ACT promotes flexibility in assessing behavior and reduces psychological reactions thought to cause human mental suffering (Byrne et al., 2020). ACT manages individuals' current situation in their mind by accepting and embracing their thoughts and feelings after the actions occurred. Ghafoorian (2016) agreed with Peterson et al. (2019) and concluded that ACT is an essential therapeutic stage for mental strength and cognitive beliefs with the Christian norm of forgiveness. Therefore, this would empower Black Christian women to accept the happenings in their lives, of which fortitude is a great Christian virtue.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

CBT is a form of therapy that has been proven to be impactful over a wide range of psychological issues. CBT allows individuals to share their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors to facilitate a change toward their partners with a therapist (Chalepas, 2020; Stamps, 2020). CBT uses thought logs, the teachings of cognitive distortions and unrealistic expectations among clients to ensure cognitive reframing. CBT's efficacy is rather strong in treating various mental conditions such as anger, aggression, and distress (Hofmann et al., 2014), which are common in Black Christian women facing marital issues. Therefore, this approach tends to reduce emotions of anger and distress to forgive while increasing positive emotions.

Mindfulness Techniques/Here-And-Now Moments

Mindfulness applies CBT alongside mindfulness meditation and ensures the knowledge of personality. Forgiveness and emotional sensitivity of the choices made can be through mindfulness meditation to ensure identification of actions. Brem et al. (2015) reported that mindfulness gives a strong foundation for awareness of marital and couple concerns of infidelity and violence through control of actions. Mindfulness ensures that individuals are aware of their surroundings to make the right actions in the future. Considerably, studies have indicated that incorporating these theories alongside Christianity improves levels of calmness and forgiveness after infidelity by reminding clients of the need to abide by God's teaching and rely on Him. Certainly, this is accompanied by self-awareness and realizations that can cause forgiveness and love, regardless of the infidelity (Naimi, 2019).

Interpersonal Process Approach Group Therapy

The interpersonal process approach primarily focuses on the therapeutic relationship as the vehicle for client change (Teyber & McClure, 2011). Sullivan highlighted the importance of the interpersonal dimension of therapy while focusing on the client's relations with others and the present moment. The interpersonal process expands on empathetic listening and understanding to conceptualize the client's conflicts and identify relational patterns that may contribute to the problem (Teyber & McClure, 2011). The interpersonal process approach offers Christian Black women the chance to process meaning to their experience subjectively. This approach would further examine the Christian Black women's personal life experiences, making sense of their current life situations and emotions.

Conclusion

Clinicians need to use the strengths of diverse groups to bridge the gap between professionals and non-professionals by stepping outside the box of traditional Eurocentric practices. Cultural competence is a must while working with people who do not share similar identities to remain informed. By incorporating clients' cultural customs and strengths into the therapeutic alliance and providing space for clients to be their authentic selves, there will be an increase of comfortability, trust, which will slowly dismantle stigma and stereotypes. Though this literature review primarily focused on Black Christian women healing after infidelity, future research could direct attention to the literature on how Black Christian women cope as the adulterer in marriages. The field could also benefit by collecting data on Black Christian men and other minority racial/ethnic male groups' reactions to infidelity.

References

- Abraham, W. T., Cramer, R. E., Fernandez, A. M., & Mahler, E. (2001). Infidelity, race, and gender: An evolutionary perspective on asymmetries in subjective distress to violations-of-trust. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-001-1016-1>
- Abrahamson, I. L. (2020). *The state of affairs: A narrative inquiry into managing infidelity counseling* [Doctoral dissertation, RMIT University].
- Adamczyk, A. (2013). The effect of personal religiosity on attitudes toward abortion, divorce, and gender equality. Does cultural context make a difference? *Euramerica*, *43*, 213–253.
- Battle, M. (2006). *The Black church in America: African American Christian spirituality*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Baucom, D., Pentel, K., Gordon, K., & Snyder, D. (2017). An integrative approach to treating infidelity in couples. In J. Fitzgerald. *Foundations for couples' therapy: Research for the real world*. Taylor & Francis.
- Bell, L. G., & Harsin, A. (2018). A Prospective Longitudinal Study of Marriage from Midlife to Later Life. *Couple & family psychology*, *7*(1), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000096>
- Beltrán-Morillas, A., Valor-Segura, I., & Expósito, F. (2019). Unforgiveness motivations in romantic relationships experiencing infidelity: Negative affect and anxious attachment to the partner as predictors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00434>
- Blbasa, H. T. A. (2019). Statistical analysis for the most influential reasons for divorce between men and women in Erbil-Iraq.

- Brem, M. J., Wolford-Clevenger, C., Zapor, H., Elmquist, J., Shorey, R. C., & Stuart, G. L. (2015). Dispositional mindfulness as a moderator of the relationship between perceived partner infidelity and women's dating violence perpetration. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 33*(2), 250-267. doi:10.1177/0886260515604415
- Brown, E. (2013). *Patterns Of infidelity and their treatment*. Routledge.
- Burdette, A., & Ellison, C., & Sherkat, D., & Gore, K. (2007). Are there religious variations in marital infidelity? *Journal of Family Issues, 28*, 1553-1581. 10.1177/0192513X07304269.
- Byrne, G., Ghráda, Á. N., O'Mahony, T., & Brennan, E. (2020). A systematic review of the use of acceptance and commitment therapy in supporting parents. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*. doi:10.1111/papt.12282
- Case, B. (2005). Healing the wounds of infidelity through the healing power of apology and forgiveness. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 4*(2-3), 41-54. https://doi.org/10.1300/j398v04n02_05
- Chaddock, T. (2000). Values affecting collaboration among psychologists and evangelical clergy. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 27*(4), 319-328.
- Chalepas, G. (2020). Therapy for partner infidelity, affairs. <https://reconnectrelationship.com/partner-infidelity-affair-cognitive-behavior-therapy-cbt-counseling/>
- Cohen, A. B., & Hill, P. C. (2007). Religion as culture: Religious individualism and collectivism among American Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. *Journal of Personality, 75*(4), 709-742.

- Corey, G., Corey, M., Corey, G., & Callanan, P. (2007). *Issues and ethics in the helping professions*. Brooks/Cole.
- Crain, F. R. V. L. (2017). *The role of faith and religion in the life of African-Americans*. Dorrance Publishing.
- Day, K. (2012). *Unfinished business: Black women, the Black church, and the struggle to thrive in America*. Orbis Books.
- De Jesus, M., Carrete, C., Maine, C., & Nalls, P. (2015). Attitudes, perceptions and behaviours towards HIV testing among African-American and East African immigrant women in Washington, DC: Implications for targeted HIV testing promotion and communication strategies. <https://doi.org/10.1136/sextrans-2014-051876>
- DeMaris, A. (2013). Burning the candle at both ends: Extramarital sex as a precursor of marital disruption. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34(11), 1474-1499.
- Ebben, L. (2014). *The experience of unforgiveness of extramarital infidelity within a Christian context*.
- Ebony, A. (2020). *He cheated, she cheated, we cheated: Women speak about infidelity*. McFarland.
- Edwards, L., Lim, B., McMinn, M., & Dominguez, A. (1999). Examples of collaboration between psychologists and clergy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 30(6), 547-551.
- Esselmont, C., & Bierman, A. (2014). Marital formation and infidelity: An examination of the multiple roles of religious factors. *Sociology of Religion*, 75(3), 463-487.
- Eyo, U. E. (2018). Divorce: Causes and effects on children. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 6(5).

- Fawcett, E., Neary, M., Ginsburg, R., & Cornish, P. (2019). Comparing the effectiveness of individual and group therapy for students with symptoms of anxiety and depression: A randomized pilot study. *Journal of American College Health, 68*(4), 430-437.
doi:10.1080/07448481.2019.1577862
- Fife, S., Weeks, G., & Stellberg-Filbert, J. (2011). Facilitating forgiveness in the treatment of infidelity: An interpersonal model. *Journal of Family Therapy, 35*(4), 343-367.
- Fincham, F., Lambert, N., & Beach, S. (2010). Faith and unfaithfulness: Can praying for your partner reduce infidelity? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*(4), 649-659.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019628>
- Fisher, R. J. (2012). *The social psychology of intergroup and international conflict resolution*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Garner, L., Samples, A., Young, D., Fulcher, S., & Livingston, J. N. (2020). The relationship between perceived sexual infidelity, the use of mate retention tactics and attitudes towards condoms among African American college women. *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships*. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bsr.2020.0013>
- Ghafoorian, P. (2016). Effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy on thought control and metacognitive beliefs among females experienced extramarital affairs trauma. *International Journal of Women's Health and Wellness, 2*(2).
doi:10.23937/2474-1353/1510020
- Girase, R. D., Haralkar, S. J., Mulaje, S. M., & Mangulikar, S. K. (2016). A study of socio-demographic factors leading to divorce—A social problem. *Hindu, 116*, 92-98.

- Gordon, K., Baucom, D., & Snyder, D. (2008). Optimal strategies in couple therapy: Treating couples dealing with the trauma of infidelity. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 38(3), 151-160. doi:10.1007/s10879-008-9085-1
- Griffith, K. (2020). U.S. divorce rates have hit a 50-year LOW and marriage rates are lowest ever. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8938015/US-divorce-rates-hit-50-year-LOW-marriage-rates-lowest-ever.html>
- Gullickson, T. (1995). Review of families and forgiveness: Healing wounds in the intergenerational family. *Contemporary Psychology: A Journal of Reviews*, 40(3), 283-283. <https://doi.org/10.1037/003528>
- Halman, L., & Van Ingen, E. (2015). Secularization and changing moral views: European trends in church attendance and views on homosexuality, divorce, abortion, and euthanasia. *European Sociological Review*, 31, 616-627.
- Harris, C. (2018). *Characteristics of emotional and physical marital infidelity that predict divorce* (Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University).
- Hertlein, K., Piercy, F., & Wetchler, J. (Eds.) (2005). *Handbook of the clinical treatment of infidelity*. The Haworth Press.
- Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2014). The efficacy of cognitive-behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 38(3), 368-368. doi:10.1007/s10608-013-9595-3
- Hooff, J. (2017). An everyday affair: Deciphering the sociological significance of women's attitudes towards infidelity. *The Sociological Review*, 65(4), 2017.
- Hunter, D. G. (Ed.). (2018). *Marriage and sexuality in early Christianity*. Fortress Press.

- Jarama, S. L., Belgrave, F. Z., Bradford, J., Young, M., & Honnold, J. A. (2007). Family, cultural and gender role aspects in the context of HIV risk among African American women of unidentified HIV status: An exploratory qualitative study. *AIDS Care—Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540120600790285>
- Johnson, E. (2009). *Psychology & Christianity: Five views*. Intervarsity Press.
- Joo, C. (2015). Marriage and sexuality in terms of Christian theological education. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *174*, 3940-3947.
- Judd, D. K. (2004). The doctrines of submission and forgiveness. In C. K. Manscill (Ed). *Sperry symposium classics: The doctrine and covenants* (pp. 176-188). Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University.
- Juhnke, G., Coll, K., Evans, M., Sunich, M., Hansen, K., & Valadez, A. (2008). A modified infidelity debriefing process for couples who have recently experienced infidelity disclosure. *The Family Journal*, *16*(4), 308-315. doi:10.1177/1066480708323202
- Kelman, H. C., & Fisher, R. J. (2017). *Herbert C. Kelman: A pioneer in the social psychology of conflict analysis and resolution*. Springer.
- Kleine, M. (2019). Accounts and attributions following marital infidelity. *Western Journal of Communication*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2019.1702714>
- Knopp, K., Scott, S., Ritchie, L., Rhoades, G. K., Markman, H. J., & Stanley, S. M. (2017). Once a cheater, always a cheater? Serial infidelity across subsequent relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *46*(8), 2301-2311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-1018-1>
- Kramer, G., Bernstein, D., & Phares, V. (2019). *Introduction to clinical psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

- Kusner, K., Mahoney, A., Pargament, K., & DeMaris, A. (2014). Sanctification of marriage and spiritual intimacy predicting observed marital interactions across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology, 28*(5), 604-614.
- Labennett, O. (2018). “Beyoncé and her husband”: Representing infidelity and kinship in a Black marriage. *Differences, 29*(2), 154-188.
- Lee, C. (2020). *Integration as integrity: The Christian therapist as peacemaker*. Wipf and Stock.
- Levin, A. (2011). Tutu praises healing power of forgiveness. *Psychiatric News, 46*(12), 6-33.
https://doi.org/10.1176/pn.46.12.psychnews_46_12_6
- Li, S., Kubzansky, L., & VanderWeele, T. (2018). Religious service attendance, divorce, and remarriage among U.S. nurses in mid and late-life. Available at SSRN:
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2891385>.
- Liebroer, A., & Rijken, A. (2019). The association between Christianity and marriage attitudes in Europe. Does religious context matter? *European Sociological Review, 35*(3), 363-379.
- Lin, W. (2020). Correlation analysis between U.S. unemployment rate and divorce rate.
- Mahoney, A. (2010). Religion in families, 1999-2009: A relational spirituality framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 72*, 805-827.
- Mahoney, A. (2013). *The spirituality of us: Relational spirituality in the context of family relationships*. In K. I. Pargament, J. J. Exline, & J. W. Jones (Eds.), *APA handbooks in psychology. APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality (Vol. 1): Context, theory, and research* (p. 365–389). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14045-020>

- Masci, D., Mohamed, B., & Smith, G. A. (2018, April 23). Black Americans are more likely than overall public to be Christian, Protestant. *Pew Research Center*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/23/black-americans-are-more-likely-than-overall-public-to-be-christian-protestant>
- Mbwirire, J. (2017). Causes of marital conflicts in Christian marriages in Domboshawa area, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Humanities, Art and Social Studies*, 1(2).
- McCain, M. (2016). *A grounded theory exploration of clergy's counseling referral practices in Black churches*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln].
- Millett, M. A., Cook, L. E., Skipper, A. D., Chaney, C. D., Marks, L. D., & Dollahite, D. C. (2018). Weathering the storm: The shelter of faith for Black American Christian families. *Marriage & Family Review*, 54(7), 662-676.
- Millner, V. (2008). Internet infidelity: A case of intimacy with detachment. *The Family Journal*, 16(1), 78-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480707308918>
- Moran, M., Flannelly, K. J., Weaver, A. J., Overvold, J. A., Hess, W., & Wilson, J. C. (2005). A study of pastoral care, referral, and consultation practices among clergy in four settings in the New York City area. *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(3), 255-266.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-004-0556-3>
- Moreno, N., & Kahumoku-Fessler, E. (2018). Understanding infidelity: How perceptions of infidelity behaviors vary by sex and one's own infidelity experiences. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 46(2), 107-121. doi:10.1080/01926187.2018.1441760
- Moriarty, G. (2010). *Integrating faith and psychology: Twelve psychologists tell their stories*. InterVarsity Press.

- Mullins, D. (2016). The effects of religion on enduring marriages. *Social Sciences*, 5(2), 24.
- Naimi, L. (2019). Effect of spiritual-religious interventions on increasing the sense of calmness and forgiveness in women who have experienced marital. *Health, Spirituality and Medical Ethics*, 6(4), 16-22. doi:10.29252/jhsme.6.4.16
- New King James Version. (2021). NKJV Online. <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>
- Olszewsky, T. M. (1979). A Christian understanding of divorce. *The Journal of Religious Ethics*.
- Onedera, J. (Ed.) (2007). *The role of religion in marriage and family counseling*. Routledge.
- Parker, M. L., & Campbell, K. (2017). Infidelity and attachment: The moderating role of race/ethnicity. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 39(3), 172-183.
- Peluso, P. R. (2007). *Infidelity: A practitioner's guide to working with couples in crisis*. Routledge.
- Percy, M. S. (2011). *Exploring the attitudes of episcopal clergy regarding collaboration with clinical psychologists*. [Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.
- Peterson, B. D., Eifert, G. H., Feingold, T., & Davidson, S. (2019). Using acceptance and commitment therapy to treat distressed couples: A case study with two couples. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 16(4), 430-442. doi:10.1016/j.cbpra.2008.12.009
- Pew Research Center. (2015). *Religious landscape study*. Author.
- Prewitt, R. (2020). *I'm thinking of leaving my husband*. LakeCityCounsel.com.
- Rainey, K. A. (2003). *Forgiveness therapy for the treatment of infidelity* [doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan-Flint].
- Rayesh, N., & Kalantar, S. M. (2018). The role of praying for the spouse and sanctification of marriage in reducing infidelity. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 21(1), 65-76.

- Rayesh, N., & Kalantar, S. M. (2020). *The role of praying for the spouse and sanctification of marriage in reducing infidelity*. Correction.
- Rokach, A., & Philibert-Lignières, G. (2015). Intimacy, loneliness & infidelity. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 8(1), 71-77. <https://doi.org/10.2174/1874350101508010071>
- Sauerheber, J. D., & Ponton, R. F. (2017). Healing from infidelity: The role of covenantal forgiveness. *Journal of Psychology & Christianity*, 36(1).
- Scheeren, P., Apellaniz, I., & Wagner, A. (2018). Marital infidelity: The experience of men and women. *Trends Psychology*, 26(1).
- Schuster, R., Kalthoff, I., Walther, A., Köhldorfer, L., Partinger, E., Berger, T., & Laireiter, A. (2019). Effects, adherence, and therapists' perceptions of web- and mobile-supported group therapy for depression: Mixed-methods study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 21(5), e11860. doi:10.2196/11860
- Scott, S. B., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., Allen, E. S., & Markman, H. J. (2013). Reasons for divorce and recollections of premarital intervention: Implications for improving relationship education. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 2(2), 131.
- Scuka, R. (2015). A clinician's guide to helping couples heal from the trauma of infidelity. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 14(2), 141-168.
doi:10.1080/15332691.2014.953653
- Shechtman, Z., & Kiezel, A. (2016). Why do people prefer individual therapy over group therapy? *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 66(4), 571-591.
doi:10.1080/00207284.2016.1180042

- Singer, J. (2003). We're praying for your direct and indirects. *Academic Emergency Medicine*, 10(4), 319-319. <https://doi.org/10.1197/aemj.10.4.319>
- Smith, B. P., Coe, E., & Meyer, E. C. (2020). Acceptance and commitment therapy delivered via Telehealth for the treatment of co-occurring depression, PTSD, and nicotine use in a male veteran. *Clinical Case Studies*, 20(1), 75-91.
doi:10.1177/1534650120963183
- Stamps, W. E. (2020). *Treatment of infidelity as a clinical issue in couple therapy: a critical review of the literature*. [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. Pepperdine Libraries.
- Sublette, N., & Sublette, C. (2015). *American slave coast: A history of the slave-breeding industry*. Chicago Review Press.
- Tagler, M. J., & Jeffers, H. M. (2014). Sex differences in attitudes toward partner infidelity: Correction. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 11(4), 821-832.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/147470491301100407>
- Teyber, E., & McClure, F. H. (2011). *Interpersonal process in therapy: An integrative model* (6th ed.). Brooks/Cole.
- Thomas-Franklin, M. (2020). An exploration of the lived experience of African American women who experienced infidelity in their monogamous relationship and their journey to healing: An autoethnography and narrative inquiry [Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook University].
- Treadway, D. (2020). *Treating couples well: A practical guide to collaborative couple therapy*. Routledge.

- Tshifhumulo, R., & Daitai, E. (2016). An investigation of major causes of divorce: A case study of Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, 8(4), 177-184.
- Turner, N. M. (2017). *African American women and marital infidelity: A mixed-methods study of their experiences*. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Tuttle, J., & Davis, S. (2015). Religion, infidelity, and divorce: Reexamining the effect of religious behavior on divorce among long-married couples. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 56, 475-489. 10.1080/10502556.2015.1058660.
- Vansteenwegen, A. (2008). Sex and infidelity. Couples therapy interventions for problems with extramarital affairs: A phasic model. *Sexologies*, 17. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1158-1360\(08\)72631-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1158-1360(08)72631-8)
- Wade, N. G., Hoyt, W. T., Kidwell, J. E. M., & Worthington, E. L. (2014). Efficacy of psychotherapeutic interventions to promote forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 82(1), 154-170. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035268>
- Walker, A. M. (2020). The c-word (cheater): Infidelity as the ultimate threat. In A.M. Walker (Eds.) *Chasing masculinity: Men, validation, and infidelity* (pp. 1-28). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weaver, A., Koenig, H., & Larson, D. (1997). Marriage and family therapists and the clergy: A need for clinical collaboration, training, and research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 23(1), 13-25.
- Weeks, G. R., & Fife, S. T. (2009). Rebuilding intimacy following infidelity. *Psychotherapy in Australia*, 15(3), 32.

- Weeks, G. R., Gambescia, N., & Jenkins, R. E. (2003). *Treating infidelity: Therapeutic dilemmas and effective strategies*. WW Norton & Co.
- Wilkins-LaFlamme, S. (2016). Secularization and the wider gap in values and personal religiosity between the religious and nonreligious. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 55*, 717-736.
- Willard, F., Jr. (2011). *His needs, her needs: Building an affair-proof marriage*. Revell.
- Wilson, S. (2007). Review: Partner notification interventions can reduce sexually transmitted infections. *Evidence-Based Medicine, 12*(5), 147-147.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/ebm.12.5.147>
- Yau, N. (2018). Divorce rates for different groups. *FlowingData*.
<https://flowingdata.com/2016/03/30/divorce-rates-for-different-groups/>
- Zapien, N. (2017). Decision science, risk perception, and infidelity. *Sage Open, 7*(1), 1-9.
- Ziv, I., Lubin, O. B. H., & Asher, S. (2018). I swear I will never betray you: Factors reported by spouses as helping them resist extramarital sex in relation to gender, marriage length, and religiosity. *The Journal of Sex Research, 55*(2), 236-251.

Appendix: Clinically Healing by Faith Proposed Model

Group Therapy

Number of participants: 3-7 women

Time: 1 hour

Frequency: Once a week (in conjunction with Individual Therapy)

Weekly Homework: Bond with at least one sister for a minimum of 15 minutes outside of group time and mediate on at least one Holy Bible scripture per day.

Session 1: I Am My Sister's Keeper

- Clinical Psychologist Role:
 - (Before first session, create a questionnaire to give participants prior to group asking each woman independently what her idea of sisterhood is, concept of connecting with other women, and what does she consider fun). Create a list of trust exercises and bonding activities for group to engage in.
 - Goal: To facilitate a welcoming and safe space for participants by actively making connections between group members by verbalizing similarities. Introduction of role and purpose/hope for group. Discuss formal group expectations and rules. Allow participants to introduce themselves.
- Spiritual leader: Introduction of role. Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible.

Session 2: Let Your Will Be Done: How to Get in Tune with God's Voice

- Spiritual Leader: Take leading role in group this session. Provide biblical teachings and facilitate discussion on how to accurately hear from God. Practice exercises.
- Clinical Psychologist Goal: Observe participants and document responses. Process emotions with participants as needed.

Session 3: Storytime - How I Met My Spouse

- Clinical Psychologist Goals:
 - Process emotions. Continue to make connections between group members. Allow participants to share their stories about how they met their spouse.
- Spiritual leader: Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible.

Session 4: Where Did This Marriage Go Wrong? (Meet at Smash Room)

- Clinical Psychologist Goal: Coordinate meeting at Local Smash room. Process emotions.
- Spiritual leader: Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible.

Session 5: Did God Leave Me: Where is God in All This?

- Spiritual leader: Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible. Discuss the importance and concept of forgiveness.
- Clinical Psychologist: Process emotions as needed. Make connections. Observe participants and document comments and behaviors.

Session 6: Relax & Chat

- Clinical Psychologist: Introduce mediation and mindfulness techniques (Leaves on a stream, Peaceful Guided Imagery).
- Spiritual leader: Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible.

Session 7: Now What: Stay or Leave? (Wrap Up)

- Clinical Psychologist: Reflect on experiences of participants and allow each participant to share what they believe is their next step based on what was heard from God.
 - Stay in marriage questions to ask –
 - What do you believe you need from your partner to continue to heal?
 - What boundaries do you believe you need to create for yourself?
 - How do you plan on maintaining your progress?
 - Leave marriage questions to reflect on-
 - Explore thoughts and emotions of separating from husband.
 - What boundaries do you believe you need to create for yourself?
 - How do you plan on maintaining your progress?
- Spiritual leader: Lead group in prayer at the beginning and end of group session. Offer a biblical perspective/parable that relates to participant's experience to increase knowledge of Holy Bible.

Individual Therapy

Theoretical Orientation – Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Frequency – weekly (in conjunction with group therapy)

Time- 1 hour

- Each session will vary depending on what client deem relevant to discuss in session. Clinical Psychologist may bring up observations, ask clarification questions based on behavior and/or comments made during group setting. Use clinical judgment.
- Topics to explore one-on-one (but not limited to...)
 - Explore childhood/family history – where did your foundation of marriage come from?
 - Trauma history (sexual, verbal, physical, DV) – current or past
 - Social support
 - Romantic relationship history
 - How did you learn how to communicate your needs to others?
 - Have you experienced infidelity in the past – if so, how did you cope?
 - Introduce concept of cognitive reframing/perspective shifting.
- Daily Homework – Journaling and thought logs.