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EXAMINING FAITH:
THE INCLUSION OF THE SPIRITUALLY TRAUMATIZED LGBTQ BELIEVER OF
COLOR IN AFFIRMING AND INCLUSIVE MINISTRIES

Abstract

The main purpose of this writing is to study and discuss the emotional damage sustained by LGBTQ Faith Believers of Color, and how such experiences affect their spiritual journeys and belief in God. This paper seeks to aid [prospective] inclusive and affirming ministries in their efforts to innovate and restructure their current curriculum so that it may provide the spiritually traumatized Believer of Color services through which they could achieve holistic healing and restore their dislocated or diminished faith. This research furthers the belief that introducing new spiritual teaching methodologies and coaching strategies will prove beneficial for the religious organization, teacher and student.

I. The Problem

In the Bible, there are many stories of those who had been feeling lost and then miraculously restored. Even old songs suggest that being lost but found and brought back to God could bring forth healing, power and joy. I do not challenge that fact; however, I do question what occurs when being restored to a community, even one that is considered a group of one's peers, could potentially cause more anguish to those suffering from preexisting traumas. This further raises the question: What must be taken into account in order to provide pastoral counseling to a community of LGBTQ Believers of Color that best facilitates spiritual growth?

Issue

As a certified coach, religious educator and spiritual teacher, I have heard many stories of spiritual trauma occurring in affirming and inclusive ministries.[1] Being a former minister in the affirming and inclusive church, I understand the hurt experienced by those disillusioned by conventional teachings, and their desire to let go of anything related to God. In this paper, I will investigate the meaning of faith trauma, as well as its effects on the LGBTQ Believer of Color, in order to eventually aid in the development of a new paradigm, or teaching methodology that

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[1] "Affirming" and "inclusive" descriptors imply that the organization asserts in its mission that it is accepting of the LGBTQ Faith Community. However, there is a slight difference in the meanings. Inclusive means that one is welcomed in the setting. Basically, they include all that would like to be a part. Whereas, affirming also means that they also affirm one's entire being, including sexuality. Just the same, there is not one better than the other. They both offer a safe space for those seeking a worship space where they are free to be themselves.

would benefit the "spiritually traumatized" hoping to reintegrate themselves in an affirming and/or inclusive ministry.

Under our current government's administration, sexual orientation has reemerged as a topic of moral turpitude, and the preaching hour has been filled with vehemence as pastors try to bridge the gap between societal changes and traditional teachings that prohibit and condemn homosexuality. James V. Brownson states: "The church is stuck on the question of homosexuality. In many North American denominations, despite vote after vote and debate after debate, questions remain, tempers flare, and peace and clarity seem continually elusive. In the last two decades, no issue has been more polarizing or contentious, particularly for mainline churches." [2]

Unfortunately, historical fundamental teachings in traditional churches, especially those within the African [American] diaspora, have not only prevented the acknowledgement the LGBTQ community outside of condemnation, but they have also defied the ability of members to truly "love thy neighbor". [3] It would seem that in an effort to free themselves from their oppression, those have become victimized have also, in turn, become oppressors themselves. Philosopher Paulo Freire noted that, "But almost always during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or "sub-oppressors." The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped."[4]

The question becomes: How can one overlook the effects of the traumatization that has occurred within LGBTQ community while developing methods of pastoral care? Furthermore, how does one heal a community that has suffered previously, while they continue to identify as an oppressed collective?

One method is to examine at the faith journey of individuals within the African-American LGBTQ community. Faith is often the thread that connects the African American historical journey, church, community and family unit.[5] Understanding the manner in which all these aspects are enmeshed is crucial to implementation of updated religious curricula and how it applies to the African-American LGBTQ community.

Understanding the effects of faith, as well as its connection to personal and spiritual trauma in the LGBTQ community, requires the ability to explore key areas that have historically shaped sexuality, as well as how the subject has been engaged among members. Without proper analysis of the effects of faith trauma, there is a risk of leaving a vital aspect in need of healing overlooked as it relates to the holistic health of the mind, body, spirit and soul.

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[2] James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013), 3.

[3] (Mark 12:31 NRSV)

[4] Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 45.

[5] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 90.

Faith Healing and the Bible

Trauma is understood to be "a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury; an emotional upset; and emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster"[6] Herein, I define *faith trauma* as "a traumatic act that causes one to question the Image of God and/or the image of themselves in God." The most important thing to understand is what is perceived as *traumatic* is respective to the person; so it is respectfully that I offer the idea that faith is important to acquiring healing.

In Acts, John and Peter are greeted by a lame man who was lain outside of a gate named Beautiful. The "traumatized" man, who was disabled from birth, was begging for money. Peter told him that he could offer him something else, in the name of Jesus. He then told the man to stand up and walk. The Bible says that "immediately" the man's legs were strengthened. The people inquired of the man's healing and was told by Peter that "faith in His name…has made this man strong..."[7]

The woman with a hemorrhaging issue was healed by touching the cloak of Jesus. She had been bleeding for twelve years but she believed if she could just touch his garment, she would be cured. Upon her restoration, she was told by Jesus that her "faith had made her well."[8]

Most popularly referred to as an example of restoration for a victim of trauma and faith healing is the story of Job. It took a strong level of faith on Job's behalf to remain loyal to God and His Plan. God trusted Job enough to offer him as a beacon of faith.

In Luke 5: 17-39, there is a yet another story of healing. A few townspeople took a man who could not walk to see Jesus. The space was so crowded that the group decided to cut a hole in the ceiling and lower the man down to Jesus. These men recognized the needs of their brother and overcame an obstacle as a unit in order to get him restored. The Word says that "when Jesus saw their faith," he looked at the lame man and spoke to him absolving him of any condemnation.[9] Griswold points out that a congregation that sees itself more like family, as opposed to a collection of members, tends to be unified by different incentives or motives, i.e. community activism. [10] Through their collective actions, not only was the man healed but others were able witness the miracle themselves, forever imbued with the importance of supporting one another.

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[6] Merrian-Webster, Inc., *Trauma.* n.d. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trauma (accessed October 1, 2017).
[7] (Acts 3:16 NRSV)
[8] (Matthew 9:23 NRSV)
[9] (Luke 5:19 NRSV)
[10] Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World,* 121.

II. The Education of the LGBTQ Faith Believer of Color

In opening a conversation about redesigning the established curriculum in the church, it is necessary to look at how the understanding of homosexuality historically and theologically has affected Christian Education as a whole.[11] Considering the fact that the word, "homosexual" was not coined until 1869, the questions that arise when trying to engage the universal church regarding the subject seem to be never ending. The biggest historical and theological arguments stem from the understanding of the differences in the sexuality models, and definitions as they relate to present-day culture, as well as the interpretation of the Bible in its literal sense.[12] Although these debates have been ongoing for hundreds of years, the first biblical translation to actually use the term, "homosexuality", was the Revised Standard Version published in 1946. Furthermore, in 1952, the American Psychological Association, listed homosexuality in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) as a sociopathic personality disturbance, which remained an accepted definition until 1973.

Historical Perspectives

When addressing historical perspectives of homosexuality in Christian Education, one must begin with the Jewish and Greco-Roman writers and theologians. Around the 4th century, Greek philosopher, Plato in *The Republic* aimed to illustrate how government and education could produce a "just" state.[13] During this time, ancient Greeks believed that human beings had animated bodies which were driven by a three-part soul: 1) the appetitive part which expresses the needs that brought their fulfillment; 2) the spirited part which shifts the unnecessary needs in the interest of survival; and 3) the rational part which supersedes both parts to provide good judgment.

As Plato's teachings began to influence other writers on matters of sexuality and one's relationship with their body, other musings begin to emerge regarding same-gender eroticism. One of the most vocal about the expression of same-gender eroticism was Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, who was also a contemporary of the Apostle Paul.

Based upon studies of the Torah, Philo formulated many speeches and writings that spoke to the cultural declination of masculinity, as well as the loss of power and self-respect exhibited by those that participated in such behavior. Women were considered property as well as weak, needing a man to lead and guide them. Therefore, if a man were to allow for such a behavior, then he, in turn, would be no better than a woman.

Philo wrote in the Special Laws III: "Moreover, another evil, much greater than that which we have already mentioned, has made its way among and been let loose upon cities, namely, the love of boys,… being accustomed to bearing the affliction of being treated like

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[11] LGBT Issues Committee of the Group for the Advancement of Psychology, *LGBT Mental Health*, 2012, http://www.aglp.org/gap/1_history/ (accessed March 5, 2016).
[12] In lieu of using the word, homosexuality, to refer to the behavior of same-gender-loving individuals, this study chose to use the phrase, "homoeroticism" to indicate the action but understanding that the concept of what is known as homosexuality today cannot be confirmed to be such in Antiquity.
[13] Decker F. Walker and Jonas F. Soltis, *Curriculum and Aims*, 5th ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), 14.

women, waste away as to both their souls and bodies, not bearing about them a single spark of a manly character to be kindled into a flame…, are not ashamed to devote their constant study and endeavors [sic] to the task of changing their manly character into an effeminate one."[14]

However, based on his interpretation, the eroticism Philo was identifying was not same-gender relations, but rather, as we understand it today, a preference that can be defined as pedophilia, or as it was referred to in those ancient times, "pederasty" and effeminized men. Just the same, his polemic teachings became the foundation for much of what is taught today.

In spite of the fact that Greek and Roman ideologies greatly impacted Christian Education, the greatest influence has been that of the Hebrew writings.[15] To offer a deeper understanding of the mentality of early Christian Educators, Scholar Richard B. Hays further asserts, "In point of fact, however, every pertinent Christian text from the pre-Constantinian period (Romans, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Testament of Naphtali [if this is indeed a Christian text,] the Apostolic Constitutions, Clement of Alexandria, Minucius Felix, etc.) adopts an unremittingly negative judgment on homosexual practice, and this tradition is emphatically carried forward by all major Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries (Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, et al.)"[16]

Another challenge that the LGBTQ community continues to face when defending themselves against religious backlash, comes in the form of the interpretation of the New Testament in the Bible. Although the Old Testament is considered archaic as it relates to culture, traditional Christians argue that for Paul to make a point to reference "homosexuality" in the New Testament, it must have still been relevant.

What is not taken into account is -- Paul's teachings allowed for Stoicism to emerge on a larger scale through his conversations regarding the difference between "natural" (*kata physin*) and "unnatural" (*para physin*) behavior.[17] This understanding sits at the core of Stoicism, whose ideals regarding education lied in its ability to teach people to live according to the laws of nature. Hay notes, "This categorization of homosexual behavior as "contrary to nature" was adopted with a particular vehemence by Hellenistic Jewish writers, who tended to see a correspondence between the philosophical appeal to "nature" and the clear teachings of the Law of Moses."[18]

Education in the African American Church

In previous years, much of the content that was included in the church's curriculum was void of the African American cultural experience. This was the same prevailing culture that used verses from the Bible to justify slavery, ban interracial marriages, and place women in subservient positions. It also begs the question, how could a culture previously oppressed by the

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[14] Philo, *The Works of Philo*, ed. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 1283.

[15] Elias, *A History of Christian Education: Protest, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives*, 6.

[16] Ibid*,* 4.

[17] Richard B. Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 1 (1986): 192.

[18] Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1: 193.

interpretation of scriptures not sympathize with the plight of another oppressed culture encountering the same?

In spite of the cultural evolution that has resulted in the reversal of civil, human and legal restrictions, many African Americans continue to believe that disapproving of homosexuality is part of one's Christian duty. Black theologian Kelly Brown Douglas argues that "By invoking biblical authority [African Americans] place a sacred canopy, a divine sanction, over their views toward gay and lesbian people."[19]

Educator Mary Moore reminds us that "beings are affected by the entire past experience of their culture, including the beliefs that help shape their character and action."[20] She further reminds us that history must be taken seriously in regards to education. Even Kelly Brown Douglas agrees as to the importance of history, she challenges, "The Black Church community's obstinate stance in regard to issues surrounding gay and lesbian rights is most striking when one considers both the historical black struggle for social equality and the Black Church's prominent role within that struggle. It appears inconsistent, if not hypocritical, for the Black Church to be in the forefront of racial justice concerns, yet resistant, if not repressive, when it comes to the rights of non-heterosexual persons."[21]

In the early 1800s, Richard Allen, the first African American Bishop and founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, organized a church in Philadelphia which included a school for adults that centered on faith, reading and writing. This opened up the door for other African American churches to open schools within their buildings leading what was known as Sunday school. Sunday school was a prominent influence in the education of Black people from the 1820s until the Civil War. However, due to tax-based funding in the public schools, Sunday schools began to shift its focus from literacy back to doctrine and other relevant Christian teachings.

After Blacks were freed from slavery, the focus of religious education in the Black church shifted once again. The curriculum was tailored and developed for the use of preparing the clergy rather than educating the laity. By the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there were colleges available for training Black clergy and educators, but the issue of segregation would require the focus of Christian Education to change yet again, towards that of safe haven as the civil rights movement began to emerge.

An issue that appeared to be in the forefront of the Black community was the criticism of the Black Church and Sunday school education's inability to meet the current needs of the people. Many challenged that the teachings held a very traditional, European influence. Thus, Black Christian Education, which predominately focused on biblical study, was overhauled and geared more towards the Black experience, and social justice.

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[19] Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 90.

[20] Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Education Method* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1991), 176.

[21] Kelly Brown Douglas, "Black Church Homophobia: What to Do About It?" *Yale University: Reflections*, 2006, http://reflections.yale.edu/article/sex-and-church/black-church-homophobia-what-do-about-it (accessed March 20, 2016).

C. S. Lewis once said "The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts." This investment in a person mirrors the labors of working the ground and sowing seeds for harvest but special tools should be used when developing curriculum for people who have experienced faith trauma. The methodology should promote openness and introspection making their journey all the more intrinsically spiritual.

Stages of Faith

James Fowler believed that faith was the "generic element" of human struggle to find purpose, which may or may not rest in religious expression.[22] His furthered the explanation of his viewpoint through his work on spiritual and psychological analysis, "The Stages of Faith." The Stages of Faith consisted of six cycles through which an adult would transverse as they progressed from birth to adulthood. Very few human beings have been capable of completing all six states of development involved in their spiritual journeys.

Although the understanding of each of these stages are necessary for a psychological insight into the process of faith, for the sake of paper, the following developmental stages have been truncated with an emphasis on the two areas (Stages 2 and 3) essential to the LGBTQ Believer of Color religious education model:

- Infancy and Undifferentiated Faith - Approximate Ages: Birth to 2 years
This stage is not truly counted amongst the six, and Fowler classifies this post-natal era as a pre-stage. During this stage, an infant begins to assess its environment, and begins to analyze risk versus safety, which allows relies heavily on who or what the child decides is worthy of its trust.
-Intuitive-Projective Faith - Approximate Ages: 3-7 years
 It is this phase that is designated as Stage One and the most egocentric stage, because the child may be less likely to be open to understanding the perspectives of others. It is during this time that the child's imagination begins to take shape, along with attempts to formulate ideas regarding the definition of faith.

- *Mythic Literal Faith - Approximate Ages: 6-12 years*
As the child enters Stage Two, not only can they begin to question what they have learned so far, but also begin to formulate and create their own opinions regarding "stories, beliefs, and observances that symbolize belonging to his or her community." The child is able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, although God tends to be anthropomorphized. Soon they are able to decipher and ascribe meanings to symbols, as well as be more open and able to recognize the perspectives of others. It is also a phase in which they may develop strong beliefs regarding justice (what is right/ what is wrong) and the concept of reciprocity. Although this stage is typically attributed to school age children, some adults struggle to progress from this stage.

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[22] Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, 90.

- Synthetic Conventional Faith - Approximate Ages: 12 years and up
   Stage Three is when the first buds of religious self-identity start to emerge. The individual also begins to understand the need to conform to authority figures, which until then may have been their parents, guardians, or other related adults. As they have grown older, these perceived authority figures have come to include peers and members of their respective religious communities, whose acceptance of the child is, at this point, to them very valuable. It is often in this phase that many adults remain developmentally, unable to reconcile the contradictions that inherently exist between what authorities teach and what the individual's experiences have taught them to believe.

- Individuate-Reflective Faith - Approximate Ages: Late Teens-Adulthood
   One often enters Stage Four when deciding to leave the childhood home, and explore other cultures, traditions and experiences. It is during this time that the source of authority ceases to be solely ascribed to coming from an "external" origin and shifts to an "internal" one.

- Conjunctive Faith – Age 30 years and Up / Midlife
   Stage Five, the penultimate stage of development, brings with it the lesson of acceptance and appreciation of diversity and mystery. This time is referred to as the "second naiveté" for it is a time of unabashed openness, especially to those of other faith perspectives.

Universalizing Faith – Adult
   The final step, Stage Six, has proven to be the most difficult level of the spiritual journey for most people to achieve, and is also often referred to as the stage of Enlightenment. It is upon reaching this destination in their spiritual development that these individuals come to believe that we are all of one universal body.

   It is my opinion that the progression and focus of the model shifts slightly in respect to the faith journey of a LGBTQ Believer of Color who has suffered deep spiritual traumas at the hands of family, society or their religious community. Even though Fowler notes that many adults often get caught in Stage Three, I believe that spiritually traumatized individuals actually vacillate *between* the periods of Mystic-Literal Faith (Stage Two) development and Synthetic-Conventional (Stage Three) and take time to fully rise from the intersectionality of both stages. A deep seeded trauma, regardless of the stage in which it may have occurred, causes a great level of uncertainty that proves to be a formidable hurdle as one attempts to process their faith dynamics in the hopes of staying on track and progressing to Stage Three. It should also be noted, that any recurrent traumas, such as abandonment, isolation, humiliation or condemnation, could cause the individual to quickly regress to Stage Two.

   Dr. Greg Popcak discusses how easily one can fail to progress and how Stage Two can in manifest adulthood, "Even though this stage is common to early childhood, many people stay at this stage for life. At best, in adulthood, this stage reflects a simple piety with a humble, dutiful attitude toward faith leaders and moral norms. At worst, in

adulthood, this stage reflects an angry kind of us-vs-them fundamentalism that persecutes those who dare to think differently."[23]

Those who suffer for at the hands of these closed minds for thinking "differently" also have their own faith journeys paused, polluted, or annihilated all together. For those that continue to struggle in spiritual anguish, the need to re-examine the concept of the *Imago Dei* may once again arise.[24] Once a spiritually traumatized believer arrives at this state, it is imperative from this point forward they be offered a space of understanding and compassion. Integrating elements of pastoral care and spiritual coaching into the religious education model is essential to finding ways to address trauma.

IV. Holoklerian Coaching Methodology

One day, I came across a Bible verse that led me down a revelatory path: Acts 3:16 which reads, "…Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." [25]

The phrase "perfect soundness" translated in Greek is "holokleria" which is defined as being "of an unimpaired condition of the body, in which all its members are healthy and fit for use."[26] To refer to anything as "holistic", the work must be characterized as "the treatment of the whole person, taking into account mental and social factors, rather than just the symptoms of a disease."[27] Thus, it is important to instill a holistic approach within religious education to facilitate a deeper believing and healing.

After seeking input from others, conducting a community townhall and analyzing coaching session summaries, I discovered four attributes that kept reappearing related to healing in the mind, body, spirit, and soul especially within those spiritually traumatized:

1. *Mind Attribute - Belief*: This subject was not founded on the belief in a Higher Power but rather how one felt about themselves and others.
2. *Body Attribute – Intimacy*: Although the term evokes the concept of sexual intimacy, the intimacy being sought herein is spiritual. Even in the midst of pain and hurt, people still seek a connection with something that feels real to them, without dogma and doctrine.
3. *Spirit Attribute – Forgiveness*: This is one of the biggest aspects of working with someone who is spiritually traumatized. Whether they are seeking forgiveness for themselves or the ability to forgive others, forgiveness is an act that takes a lot of hard work and time, especially if their anger or disappointment is directed at God.
4. *Soul Attribute – Self Love* –Although the term seems synonymous with *Belief*, there is a crucial difference, being that it leads them not only to examine what they think about

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[23] Popcak, Dr. Greg. *What Stage is Your Faith?* May 6, 2014. https://www.patheos.com/blogs/faithonthecouch/2014/05/what-stage-is-your-faith/ (accessed January 10, 2019).

[24] Image of God

[25] (Acts 3:1-10 NRSV)

[26] Thayer and Smith. *Holokleria.* January 1, 1999. http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/holokleria.html (accessed June 28, 2014)

[27] Merriam-Webster. *Holistic.* n.d. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/holistic (accessed January 4, 2019).

themselves but how do they love themselves through the process. I have come to this as "Pink Love", a practice by which the awareness and amity moves within the heart chakra to heal, transform, and evolve the way one sees themselves and the world.

Holoklerian Learning Theory

These attributes serve as foundational elements onto which a strategy for innovating instruction and learning in religious education can be built. Educators often hope that their students will be intrinsically motivated but this is not usually the case. According to Eggan, et al., "it isn't realistic for all or even most, learning activities."[28] Previously, I discussed James Fowler's Stages of Faith and my analysis as they relate to a spiritually traumatized LGBTQ Believers of Color. I assert if an understanding of these spiritual stages is combined with the introspective strategies of Holoklerian Coaching Methodology, a new teaching philosophy can be created – The Holoklerian Learning Theory. This theory could then be applied when developing a curriculum for the spiritually traumatized LGBTQ Believer of Color in churches, religious institutions and other sacred spaces.

One element to keep in mind is that educators must be willing to approach delicate subject matters with an open mind, regardless of personal belief. If they are unable to offer up an unbiased ear that inspires confidence and trust, the possibility for intrinsic motivation will be lost. Malcom Knowles, a pioneer of adult learning, found that adults learn better when they understand why the information they receive is important to know or how it will be of use to them.[29] Knowles' assessment furthers my argument that the teaching model I propose, *The Holoklerian Learning Theory,* could prove to be truly beneficial. In an effort to better showcase my stance, let us examine the type of learning involved in this andragogic approach, which could be described as an example of Transformative Learning. [30]

Coined in 1833, the term "andragogy" was reintroduced by a German scientist in the 1920s, and then brought to the American forefront in the 1960s, where it was used to explain how adults learn.[31] It is also important to understand the two different types of motivation that reveal themselves when comparing andragogy to pedagogy -- intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These drives differ in regard to who rewards the behavior. In the case of presenting information with intrinsic value, the individual will be keen to learn more because they understand that as a result of this information, they gain a tool. This is a tool they can use to better themselves and their situations.[32]

The Holoklerian Learning Theory suggests that your role as religious educator is to serve as a holistic guide as well as a scholarly vessel. If the educator understands that this individual

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[28] Paul Eggen and Don Kauchak. *Strategies and Models for Teachers: Teaching Content and Thinking Skills.* 6th. (Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc., 2012), 49.

[29] Deb Peterson. "5 Principles for the Teacher of Adults." *About.com Continuing education.* n.d. http://adulted.about.com/od/teachers/a/teachingadults_2.htm (accessed 25 June, 2014).

[30] Scott Wallace. *Transformative Learning Theory.* n.d. http://www.transformativelearningtheory.com/index.html (accessed June 28, 2014).

[31] Karen Jarett Thoms. "They're Not Just Big Kids: Motivating Adult Learners." *Proceedings of the Annual Mid-South Instructional Technology Conference.* Murfreesboro,TN: U.S. Department of Education, 2001. 2.

[32] Raymond J. Wlodkowski. "Fostering Motivation in Professional Development Programs." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (Wiley) 98 (Summer 2003). 1.

may have regressed back into Stage Two (Mystic-Literal), where they have lost sight of their own internal authority as well as the trust in what they have already learned, then the response can be tailored in such a way that does not leave them feeling chastised or isolated in their spiritual development or the questioning thereof. Ultimately, the purpose of The Holoklerian Learning Theory, is to create curricula in supportive environments which foster a state of "perfect soundness" within the sense of self, subsequently allowing them to seek and find purpose, identity, life experience, intellectual growth, and new levels of spiritual confidence.

In order for the Holoklerian Learning Theory to be effective, there are three strategic processes that must be utilized. Although the terminology utilized to put forth these strategies may appear to be quite academic, these practices can still be integrated into spiritual curricula such as Sunday school lessons, Bible Studies, lectures, etc. These approaches are described as the following:

1. Create a healthy, successful adult learning environment through multidimensional sharing.[33] It is imperative for an adult learner to feel included. If the program's elements imply that everyone's perspective is respected, then the potential for intrinsic motivations increases among its pupils.

2. Identify at least three core Applicable Components of Relevancy (ACR) in which the instructor can demonstrate for the student how the content speaks to achieving harmony and growth in their personal life.

3. Create a curriculum that speaks to intrinsic motivation and purpose. When the concept of intrinsic purpose is introduced, it enthuses the student to move forward in their journeys via introspection.

Regardless of the setting, the Holoklerian Learning Theory (alongside Holoklerian Coaching Methodology), can serve as a foundation for creating teaching strategies to help lessen societal and religious influences that have negative emotional impacts on their communities.

Although curriculum is defined as a "course to be run," when looking at the spiritually traumatized LGBTQ Believer of Color, the term aligns itself with the description utilized by Iris Cully – "all learning experiences – the curriculum of life."[34] In order to achieve the seamless integration of these concepts to the current platform, it is important to remind the religious educator that the meaning of curriculum is fluid and that church/religious curriculum has always been "broader than schooling alone."[35] This is a powerful observation as it relates to inclusivity and the concept of homosexuality in religious education because it implies that one can develop new approaches to helping the universal church and/or other religious entities educate their local communities.

Before fully introducing curriculum of inclusivity to the intended community, an in-depth conference or educator training module centered on the LGBTQ lived experience is essential. One that allows discussion of theological analysis, biblical interpretation and LGBTQ equality as it relates to present societal norms will help instructor to feel confident in the materials that he or she is developing as well as address any questions that they may have regarding inclusion. The

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[33] Wlodkowski, "Fostering Motivation in Professional Development Programs," 4.

[34] Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 55.

[35] Ibid., 62.

training exercises can be taught by one teacher, or overseen by multiple teachers so that each would focus on a separate area of expertise. Each segment must have a central focus; in addition to its purposes fully outlined in the session.

Conclusion

When making an effort to shift the dynamics in place in the African American religious community faced with the concept of faith trauma inclusivity, the *why* as it relates to cultural history and *how* it can manifest cannot be overlooked. Foremost, one must understand that it is not odd for a group of individuals that have struggled to obtain their own voice, to create a wall of distrust in the face of adversity, especially if the struggle appears to either contradict or challenge a core belief system of their own cultural existence. The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped."[36] This is where we must introduce the "pedagogy of the oppressed," which is the "pedagogy that must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity."[37]

Paulo Freire said, that "the more radical a person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it."[38] However this cannot occur if one's reality is negated based on the assumption of another. Brown states, "The blackness of the black church is more than a matter of color or culture. The blackness of this church depends upon its morally active commitment to advance the life, freedom and dignity of all black bodies. When this church, for whatever reasons, becomes alienated from certain bodies, its very blackness is threatened."[39]

In order to arrive at a pedagogy of communal inclusivity, one must closely examine the realized truth of the LGBTQ community. Incorporating another's lived truth is essential. Author Gloria Jean Watkins, otherwise known as "bell hooks", affirms that the "engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute, but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself."[40]

In conclusion, the historical vehemence towards homoeroticism and further investigation of theological perspectives and embedded hermeneutics approaches allows for the reconstruction of methodologies, aims and ideologies. It is in everyone's best interest that the dismantling of traditional and despotic teachings begin now, for it will allow affirming spaces to openly welcome those who have suffered as a result of these oppressive stances, and allow faith leaders to navigate those deeper, denied truths and create a holistic healing process for the LGBTQ Believer of Color, and finally offer others a religious practice that considers inclusion as a truly inherent principle.

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[36] Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 45.
[37] Ibid., 48.
[38] Ibid., 39.
[39] Kelly Brown Douglas, *Black Bodies and the Black Church: A Blues Slant* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3.
[40] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom*, 11.

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