

RELIGIOSITY, VOLUNTEERISM, AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

Jacqueline S. Mattis
University of Michigan

Robert J. Jagers
Howard University

Carrie A. Harcher, G. Dawn Lawhon, Eleanor J. Murphy,
and Yohance F. Murray
University of Michigan

Social activists have argued that African American men must play a prominent role as volunteers in social programs that affect the African American community. Using a sample of African American men (N = 171), the present study examines the relative utility of social capital, communalism, and religiosity variables as predictors of volunteerism, membership in community-based as well as political and social justice organizations, and the number of hours that men dedicate to volunteer work each year. Church involvement was associated with a greater likelihood to volunteer and a greater likelihood to be a member of a community-based organization. Men who scored higher on communalism, and men who were more involved in church life dedicated more time to volunteer work each year. A complex pattern of relationship emerged between age, education, and the various participation outcomes. Implications of the findings are discussed.
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Correspondence to: Jacqueline S. Mattis, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, 525 East University Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1109. E-mail: [HYPERLINK mailto:jmattis@umich.edu](mailto:HYPERLINKmailto:jmattis@umich.edu) ~

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades social scientists have dedicated a significant amount of scholarly energy to studying the lives of African American men. These efforts have resulted in a corpus of theoretical and empirical work that depicts African American men as an especially embattled, vulnerable, and aggressive group (Bell & Clark, 1998; Gary, 1981; Myers, 1998). The preoccupation with African American male pathology in social science literature has contributed to a grossly unbalanced view of these men. To date, very little empirical attention has been paid to African American men's participation in prosocial activities. Equally little attention has been paid to the potential roles of these men as agents of positive social change. The present study serves to correct this gap in the social science literature. In this exploratory study, we examine the factors that are associated with prosocial participation among African American men. Particular attention is paid to the factors that are associated with men's involvement in volunteer work, in community organizations such as neighborhood watches, as well as in political and social justice organizations.

Thirty-five percent of African Americans (males and females) report that they engage in some form of volunteer work, and those who volunteer report that they dedicate an average of 4.5 hours per week to voluntary activities (Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1998). The human capital provided by these volunteers is an invaluable resource for programs that serve communities and individuals who are in need. However, empirical research has long demonstrated that African American men are less involved than their female counterparts in community life (Cohen & Kapsis, 1978). This gender disparity in volunteerism has prompted grass-roots activists to issue a call for African American men to become more involved in voluntary work and in community service activities. Activists insist that African American men represent a crucial resource for social justice and social change. The call by these activists for greater participation of African American men in volunteer and community work raises a crucial, but heretofore, empirically understudied question: What are the factors that are associated with volunteerism and community involvement among African American men? This research endeavors to explore these questions.

Scholars have theorized a range of factors that may explain why people volunteer (see, for example, Batson, 1994; Sokolowski, 1996). Some scholars have argued that individuals with the greatest "social capital" (e.g., age, education, and income) are most likely to engage in volunteer activities (e.g., Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1998). In short, individuals who are older and those who hold privileged positions in society have resources that they may choose to share with younger or less-fortunate others. This social capital thesis has received empirical support. For example, studies have demonstrated that volunteerism increases with age (Regnerus et al., 1998) and peaks during the later years of the life span when individuals tend to be more materially secure, have more leisure time, and have the wisdom that comes with life experience (Fischer & Schaffer, 1993; Hayghe, 1991). A number of studies also have found that individuals who have a higher level of formal educational attainment, and individuals with higher levels of occupational prestige are more likely than others to engage in volunteer activities (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Hodgkinson, Weitzman, & The Gallup Organization, Inc., 1996; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1998; Regnerus et al., 1998). Finally, individuals with higher family incomes are also significantly more likely to volunteer (Hoge et al., 1998; Regnerus et al., 1998). Although findings regarding the impact of social capital on volun-

teerism and community involvement are quite robust, much of this work has been conducted with predominately White samples. To date, there have been few empirical studies of the relationship between social capital and volunteerism among African Americans.

Although individual-level factors such as social capital are predictive of volunteerism, questions remain about the extent to which cultural-level constructs may be associated with the likelihood that men will volunteer or engage in other prosocial activities. “Communalism” is one cultural-level construct that may have utility for explaining why African American men engage in prosocial behaviors. Boykin, Jagers, Ellison, and Albury (1997; Jagers & Mock, 1995) define “communalism” as a cultural orientation in which “overriding importance is attached to social bonds and social relationships. One acts in accordance with the notion that duty to one’s social group is more important than individual rights and privileges.” Importantly, the “social groups” to which individuals belong can include familial relationships as well as friendships and relationships with more distal others. As such, communalism refers to a cultural orientation in which social and relational obligations, and the welfare of the group—however defined—take precedence over personal desires.

Communalism has received a fair amount of attention in crosscultural research involving Asian, Asian American, and White samples (Schwartz, 1990; Triandis, 1995; Triandis, 1985). This body of research suggests that communalism is associated with the endorsement of a range of prosocial values. For example, Triandis and colleagues (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990) have found that communally oriented individuals tend to be politically liberal, and more focused on the values of cooperation, honesty, equality, and social justice than their more idiocentric counterparts. Beyond its association with prosocial values, communalism is also associated with a range of prosocial behaviors. For example, experimental research has demonstrated that communalism is associated with greater levels of generosity in the distribution of resources (Triandis, 1995; Triandis et al., 1985).

Although communalism has potential value for elucidating patterns of prosocial involvement, the body of research concerned with this construct is plagued by two significant limitations. First, studies of communalism generally have relied on experimental designs that focus on singular acts of giving (Triandis et al., 1985). As such, existing research provides few clues about the role of communalism in more sustained acts of helping (e.g., volunteerism). Second, although communalism has been identified as a core theme in African American cultural life (Boykin, 1986; Jagers, 1992; Nobles, 1991), relatively little empirical attention has been given to studying the ways in which communal values function in the lives of African American adults. In this study we explore the extent to which communalism is associated with the likelihood that men will participate in volunteer work, as well as the likelihood that they will be members of community-based and political organizations. Further, we examine the extent to which communalism is associated with the amount of time that men dedicate to volunteer work. We anticipate that those who strongly endorse communal values will be more likely to engage in volunteer work, will dedicate more time than their counterparts to volunteer work, and will be more likely to be involved in community-based and political organizations.

Although communalism has potential importance as a predictor of prosocial behaviors, there is a substantial body of research that points to religiosity as a particularly important predictor of volunteerism and activism. Religious people are significantly more likely than those who are nonreligious to engage in philanthropic giving and other al-

truistic behaviors (Hodgkinson et al., 1996; Hodgkinson, Weitzman, & Kirsch, 1990). Three dimensions of religiosity have been shown to be associated with volunteerism: early religious socialization, subjective religiosity, and current church involvement. Early religious socialization, as measured by parental religious attendance, has been identified as a particularly important predictor of volunteerism. Parents (and families) who are religiously involved may tend to socialize their children to embrace charitable values and attitudes (Wilson & Janoski, 1995). Moreover, these parents may involve their children in church or civic activities that promote future volunteerism. Second, individuals who see themselves as religious or those who indicate that religion is important to them (i.e., those who are subjectively religious), are more likely to engage in volunteer work (Wilson & Janoski, 1995).

Finally, there is significant evidence that an individual's level of church involvement is a particularly important predictor of volunteerism and social involvement. Individuals who are regular church attenders and those who are involved in church activities are particularly likely to volunteer, and are especially likely to be involved in such activities as voter registration drives (Harris, 1994; Reese & Brown, 1995; Hodgkinson, Weitzman & Kirsch, 1990; Regnerus et al., 1998). Scholars theorize that the pattern of volunteerism evident among church-involved individuals is due, at least in part, to two key factors. First, religious institutions proffer values (e.g., self-sacrifice and compassion) that encourage charitable concern for community members (Wuthnow, 1991). In many churches, religious commitment and religious authenticity are measured, in part, by the extent to which individuals internalize the notion that they have a responsibility both to help the poor or disenfranchised, and to fight against injustice. African American churches place a strong emphasis on the link between religious commitment, charity, and civic participation (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Empirical evidence suggests that these messages of social action or social service are especially effective in catalyzing activism and community participation among believers (Harris, 1994; Reese & Brown, 1995; Maton & Pargament, 1987; Maton & Wells, 1995).

The concrete opportunities for volunteerism that churches provide represent the second pathway via which churches may promote voluntary service (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Hodgkinson et al., 1990). In African American communities, many of the services and resources needed to help individuals and families to survive adversity are provided through church programs (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Carson, 1990; Chaves & Higgins, 1992; Clayton, 1995; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Williams, Griffith, Collins, & Dodson, 1999). Volunteers involved with churches help to provide food, clothing, counseling, and a vast array of emergency supports to community members who are in need (Billingsley et al., 1991; Williams et al., 1999). So strong is the link between church and community participation among African Americans that the church has come to be seen as the institution that has the principal responsibility to assist those who are in need (Carson, 1990).

In this study we explore the extent to which social capital, communalism, and indices of religiosity affect African American men's involvement in volunteer activities and their participation in organizations that are dedicated to improving social conditions. As indicated earlier, this study attempts to address three organizing questions. First, to what extent are social capital, religiosity, and communalism associated with the likelihood that men will volunteer? Second, to what extent are these factors predictive of the amount of time that men dedicate to volunteer work each year? Finally, to what extent are social capital, religiosity, and communalism associated with men's reported membership in community-based organizations (e.g., neighborhood watch) and political or social jus-

tice organizations? Given the findings of previous research, it is anticipated that social capital variables (e.g., age, income, and level of education) will emerge as positive predictors of volunteerism, hours dedicated to volunteer work each year, and membership in community-based as well as political or social justice organizations. Likewise, it is anticipated that communalism and all three religiosity variables (e.g., early religious socialization, subjective religiosity, and current church involvement) will serve as particularly important positive predictors of the four dependent measures.

METHOD

Consistent with the principles of community-based research (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998), knowledgeable, African American community residents (including research assistants associated with this project) actively participated in the recruitment process. These community residents recruited participants in metropolitan centers in Michigan, Georgia, Maryland, New York, and Virginia. Community residents used prepared fliers, electronic mail, public announcements, and word-of-mouth to recruit participants. These residents also distributed surveys to and collected these materials from participants. Surveys were distributed to men in a variety of sites including the campus of an historically Black college, the campus of a predominately White university, predominately African American churches, a community center, and in local businesses frequented by African American men (e.g., barbershops). Initial data collection efforts resulted in a snowball effect—as men completed the survey some volunteered to distribute surveys to other men, while others offered to encourage other men to participate in the study. Surveys were collected within 3 weeks of the original distribution date. During that time, participants were periodically reminded by residents (e.g., by telephone, public announcements, or word-of-mouth) about the need to return the completed survey. Community residents were not paid for their participation. However, each participant received a small monetary compensation (\$5) for completing and returning the survey. This process yielded a final convenience sample of 171 urban-residing African American men.

Participants

Participants ($N = 171$) ranged in age from 17 to 79 years ($M = 30.63$, $SD = 16.12$). Twelve percent have earned a high school diploma or G.E.D., 58% have completed at least some college courses, 13% have earned a college degree, and 16% have earned a professional degree. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents report that they are single (never married). Eighteen percent are married, and 4% are divorced or widowed. The annual household incomes of these men ranged from “less than \$10,000” to “\$80,000 or higher.” However, the median annual income range was \$50,000–\$59,999. United States census data indicate that 39% of African Americans have earned high school diplomas, 19% have had some college courses but no degree; 17.2% have earned a college degree, and 4% have earned advanced degrees (Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1998). Nine percent of participants in this study have a combined household income of less than \$10,000, 7% have combined incomes under \$20,000, 3% earn \$20,000–\$30,000, 7% earn between \$30,000–\$40,000, 11% earn \$40,000–\$50,000, 15% earn \$50,000–\$60,000, 5% earn \$60,000–70,000, 8% earn \$70,000–80,000, 36% earn over \$80,000. Census data indicate that in 1996 the median household income for African American

families was \$26,522. As such, the level of educational attainment achieved by these participants, and their reported incomes mark them as a demographically nonrepresentative sample of African Americans (Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1998).

Independent Measures

Communalism was measured by the Communalism Scale (CS; Boykin et al., 1997). The CS is a 31-item measure that assesses an individual's orientation towards social obligation and interdependence. The items are measured on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = "completely false" to 6 = "completely true"). A sample item from the scale includes "I believe that a person has an obligation to work cooperatively with family and friends." In previous research alpha coefficients ranging from .83 to .87 have been generated for the Communalism Scale (Jagers & Mock, 1995). An alpha coefficient of .88 was generated for the present sample.

Early Religious Socialization (ERS) was measured using four items that assessed the level of personal and parental involvement in organizational religion in each respondent's early life. Items also assessed respondents' perceptions about the level of importance that their families-of-origin attached to religion. Respondents' levels of early personal and parental involvement in organized religion were measured with three questions: "How often did you attend church as a child?"; "When you were growing up how often did your mother attend church?"; "When you were growing up how often did your father attend church?" Each of these items was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "never" to 5 = "very often"). A single item was used to identify the importance of religion in the early life of the respondent and his family: "How important was religion to your family when you were growing up?" This item was scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all important" to 5 = "very important"). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the ERS measure was .71.

In keeping with the work of Levin, Taylor and Chatters (1995), Subjective Religiosity (SR) was measured using three items: "How religious are you?" (1 = "not at all religious" to 5 = "very religious"), "How important is religion in your life today?" (1 = "not at all important" to 5 = "very important") and "How important is it for African Americans to take their children to church?". Subjective Religiosity was measured as an average of individuals' scores on these two items. An alpha reliability coefficient of .87 was achieved for the SR scale.

Church Involvement (CI) was calculated as a sum of participants' responses to four dichotomously scored questions: "Are you a member of a church or religious institution?"; "Have you ever held a leadership role in the church (Sunday School teacher, deacon, etc.)?"; "Do you presently hold a leadership position in the church?"; "Are you a member of a church-based organization or club (choir, etc.)?" Each "yes" response was scored as 1 and each "no" was scored as 0. As such, scores on this index could range from 0 (no involvement) to 4 (high level of involvement).

Dependent Measures

Volunteerism was measured by a single, dichotomously scored question: "Are you involved in any volunteer activities?" (0 = "no", 1 = "yes"). The number of hours dedicated to volunteer work each year was measured with a single open-ended item: "How many hours per year do you volunteer?"

Community Participation was measured with a single, dichotomously scored item: “Are you a member of a community organization (e.g., neighborhood watch)?” (0 = “no”, 1 = “yes”).

Membership in a political organization was measured with a single, dichotomously scored item: Are you a member of a political or social justice organization (e.g., NAACP, Urban League)? (0 = “no”, 1 = “yes”).

RESULTS

Ninety-seven percent of respondents saw themselves as at least somewhat religious. Three percent reported that religion is not at all important in their current lives. Descriptive statistics and correlations for each of the independent and dependent measures are reported in Table 1. The mean subjective religiosity score was 3.95 ($SD = 1.02$) indicating that most men perceive themselves to be fairly religious. Further, participants saw communal values as somewhat true of them —“more true than false”—($M = 4.28$, $SD = .58$). Men reported involvement in a range of community-based and social justice activities. Thirty-eight percent reported that they belong to a community-based organization (e.g., neighborhood watch), and 32% are members of a political organization (e.g., the NAACP). The number of volunteer hours reported by respondents ranged from 0 to 1040 hours per year ($M = 80.67$, $SD = 188.79$). The median number of volunteer hours was 8 hours per year. Thirty-seven percent of participants dedicated no time (0 hours) to volunteer work. Twenty-three percent reported spending between 1 and 8 hours per year on volunteer work; 23% reported spending between 15 and 50 hours on such work; 11% reported 60 to 100 hours of volunteer work; 15% reported between 104 and 540 hours; and 3% reported 800 or more hours of volunteer work each year.

Intercorrelations of the independent variables and number of volunteer hours per year are reported in Table 1. Subjective Religiosity ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), Early Religious Socialization ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), and Church Involvement ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) were significantly and positively related to the natural log of the number of hours dedicated to volunteer work each year. Interestingly, age, education, and income were not significantly related to the amount of time dedicated to volunteer work each year (see Table 1).

A direct, multivariate logistic regression was conducted to determine the utility of social capital, and religiosity variables as predictors of the likelihood that men would engage in volunteer activities (volunteer = 1) (See Table 3). In all logistic regression analyses age was recoded into three levels. Men aged 17 to 21 were coded into one group; men aged 22 to 40 were coded as a second group. Men aged 41 to 79 served as the reference group. Education was recoded as a dichotomous variable (0 = less than college degree, 1 = college degree or higher). Income was coded into four groups: less than \$30,000; \$30,000 to \$49,999; \$50,000 to \$79,999, and \$80,000 and above. This latter income group served as the reference group in the analyses. All variables were entered in a single block. Twenty-eight participants were excluded from the analyses because of missing responses on one or more of the predictor variables. Analyses revealed no systematic patterns in the missing data among those who were excluded. Regression coefficients, Wald statistics, odds ratios, and 95% confidence intervals are reported in Table 2. The overall regression model for volunteerism was significant [$\chi^2(10, N = 140) = 28.82$, $p \leq .001$], indicating that together these variables effectively distinguished between men who volunteered and those who did not. Together the predictors accounted for 25% of the variance in volunteerism. According to the Wald criterion, age ($z = 10.30$,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, and Reliability and Intercorrelations Coefficients Between Independent and Dependent Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>Age</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Early religious involvement</i>	<i>Subjective religiosity</i>	<i>Communalism</i>	<i>Church involvement</i>
Early religious socialization	3.83	.89	.71	.07	.01	.07	—	—	—	—
Subjective religiosity	3.95	1.02	.87	.30***	.04	.12	.36***	—	—	—
Church involvement	1.81	1.38	—	.32***	-.04	.08	.29***	.60***	—	—
Communalism	4.28	.58	.88	-.03	-.16	-.01	.33***	.29***	.30***	—
Ln (volunteer h/year)	2.33	2.16	—	.13	.00	.08	.15	.22*	.28***	.39***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Volunteerism

Variables	B	Wald test (z-ratio)	Odds ratio/CI
Age ^a		10.30**	
17–20 years old	.64	.90	1.90 / (.50–7.14)
21–40 years old	–1.10	3.31 [†]	.33 / (.10–1.08)
Education ^b	.67	4.98*	1.95 / (1.08–3.52)
Income ^a		4.83	
< \$30,000	–.93	2.57	.40 / (.13–1.23)
\$30,000–\$49,999	.22	.15	1.25 / (.41–3.75)
\$50,000–\$79,999	.32	.39	1.38 / (.51–3.73)
Communalism	–.11	.09	.90 / (.44–1.82)
Early religious socialization	.18	.53	1.20 / (.74–1.94)
Subjective religiosity	–.30	1.39	.74 / (.45–1.22)
Church involvement	.56	8.51**	1.76 / (1.20–2.57)
Model χ^2/df	28.9/10***		
Pseudo R^2	.25		

^a41- to 79-year-olds serve as the reference group for these analyses.

^bMen with college degrees or professional degrees serve as the reference group for these analyses.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. [†] $p = .07$.

$p < .01$) and education ($z = 4.98$, $p < .05$) were significant predictors of volunteerism. These findings are generally consistent with the findings of previous research. However, the findings suggest that relative to the 41- to 79-year-old reference group, men who were 22 to 40 years old were marginally less likely to volunteer. Further, relative to men who do not have a degree, men who have earned a college or professional degree were more likely to be engaged in volunteer work. When social capital are controlled, church involvement emerged as a significant independent predictor of volunteerism. Consistent with the findings of previous research, men who are more involved in church life, are more likely to be involved in volunteer work. Each unit increase in level of church involvement was associated with a 75% increase in the likelihood of being involved in volunteer work.

Table 3 reports the regression results for the model predicting the number of hours that men dedicate to volunteer work each year. To conform to the rule of normality, the dependent variable was logarithmically transformed. The transformation was successful in yielding a normally distributed variable. The regression model was significant $F(10, 170) = 5.53$, $p < .001$, and the variables collectively account for 26% (21% adjusted) of the variance in the (natural log of the) number of hours that men dedicated to volunteer activities. Findings suggest that men who were 22 to 40 years old dedicated significantly less time to volunteer work each year than their counterparts. Communalism and church involvement emerged as independent positive predictors of the (natural log of the) number of hours that men dedicated to volunteer work each year. The remaining parameter estimates were not significantly associated with the amount of time that men dedicated to volunteer work.

Multivariate logistic regression analyses were used to determine the extent to which social capital, communalism, and the indices of religiosity are associated with membership in community based and political or social justice organizations. Table 4 and Table

Table 3. Regression Models Predicting Volunteer Hours/Year

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Age (17–21 years old)	-.30	.51	.07
Age (22–40 years old)	-1.39**	.48	-.28
Income (< \$30,000)	-.42	.46	-.07
Income (\$30–49,999)	-.07	.45	-.01
Income (\$50–79,999)	-.02	.40	-.00
Early religious socialization	.03	.19	.01
Subjective religiosity	-.28	.20	-.13
Communalism	.81**	.28	.22
Church involvement	.58***	.14	.37
<i>R</i> ²	.26***		
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.21***		

Note. Men with combined incomes of \$80,000 or greater serve as the reference group for these analyses.
 ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$.

5 report the findings of these two analyses, respectively. The model predicting membership in community-based organizations was significant [$\chi^2(10, N = 129) = 24.07, p \leq .01$]. The predictor variables collectively accounted for 23% of the variance in the likelihood of involvement in community-based organizations. The Wald statistic indicates that age is not a predictor of involvement in community organizations ($z = 4.60, p =$

Table 4. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Membership in Community-Based Organizations

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald test</i> (<i>z-ratio</i>)	<i>Odds ratio/CI</i>
Age ^a		4.60	
17–20 years old	-1.06	2.07	.35 / (.08–1.47)
21–40 years old	-1.48	4.60*	.23 / (.06–.88)
Education ^b	-.11	.11	.89 / (.47–1.71)
Income ^c		.64	
< \$30,000	.04	.00	1.04 / (.32–3.35)
\$30,000–\$49,999	.36	.36	1.43 / (.44–4.59)
\$50,000–\$79,999	.34	.41	1.41 / (.50–3.98)
Communalism	-.13	.12	.88 / (.42–1.83)
Early religious socialization	.17	.40	1.18 / (.71–1.98)
Subjective religiosity	-.15	.31	.86 / (.50–1.48)
Church involvement	.51	6.93**	1.67 / (1.14–2.45)
Model χ^2/df	24.1/10**		
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	.23		

^a41- to 79-year-olds serve as the reference group for these analyses.

^bMen with college degrees or professional degrees serve as the reference group for these analyses.

^cMen with combined incomes of \$80,000 or greater serve as the reference group for these analyses.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 5. Logistic Regression Model Predicting Membership in Political/Social-Justice Organizations

Variables	B	Wald test (z-ratio)	Odds ratio/CI
Age ^a		6.68*	
17–20 years old	–.81	1.19	.44/(.12–2.06)
21–40 years old	–2.07	6.55**	.13/(.03–.65)
Education ^b	–.09	.08	.91/(.52–1.84)
Income ^a		3.46	
< \$30,000	–.81	1.42	.44/(.11–1.53)
\$30,000–\$49,999	–.32	.27	.73/(.22–2.42)
\$50,000–\$79,999	–1.00	2.99	.37/(.12–1.16)
Communalism	.34	.63	1.40/(.61–3.24)
Early religious socialization	.32	1.25	1.38 (.78–2.45)
Subjective religiosity	.51	2.15	1.67/(.82–3.14)
Church involvement	.19	2.93	1.20/(.85–1.80)
Model χ^2/df	35.8/10***		
Pseudo R^2	.33		

^a41- to 79-year-olds serve as the reference group for these analyses.

^bMen with college degrees or professional degrees serve as the reference group for these analyses.

^cMen with combined incomes of \$80,000 or greater serve as the reference group for these analyses.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .001$.

.10). However, the findings of the analyses revealed that 22- to 40-year-old men were significantly less likely than their 41- to 79-year-old counterparts to be involved in these organizations. Church involvement was a significant predictor of the likelihood of being involved in a community-based organization. Each unit increase in level of church involvement was associated with a 67% increase in the likelihood of involvement in community-based organizations. Age, education, combined household income, early religious socialization, and subjective religiosity were not significant predictors of the odds of being a member of community-based organizations.

The model predicting membership in political or social justice organizations was significant [$\chi^2(10, N = 128) = 35.78, p \leq .001$]. Collectively, the variables in the model accounted for 33% of the variance in the likelihood of involvement in political or social justice organizations. Thirty-one respondents were excluded from the analyses because of missing responses on one or more of the predictor variables. However, analyses revealed no systematic differences between men included in the analyses and those who were excluded. Age was the sole predictor of involvement in political and social justice organizations ($z = 6.68, p < .05$), and findings indicate that relative to 41- to 79-year-old men, 21- to 40-year-olds were significantly less likely to be involved in political or social justice activities. The remaining parameter estimates were not significant.

DISCUSSION

This research has important limitations. First, the study's findings are based on data gathered from a small, nonrepresentative sample of African American men. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, and focuses on constructs that are likely to evoke so-

cially desirable responses. Taken together, these limitations suggest the need for interpretive caution. Additional research involving larger, representative samples of African American men will be crucial in fully explicating patterns of volunteerism and community involvement among African American men.

Despite its limitations, however, this study does make important contributions to what we hope will be a growing body of knowledge on the prosocial attitudes and behaviors of African American men. To fully assess the findings of this study it is necessary to return to the organizing questions of the research: To what extent are social capital, communalism, and religiosity associated with the likelihood of involvement in volunteer work, community-based organizations, and political or social justice organizations? To what extent do these same variables predict the amount of time that men dedicate to volunteer work each year?

This study reveals a complex pattern of findings regarding the factors that are associated with involvement in volunteer work and community and political life. The findings of studies involving predominately White samples would lead us to believe that, in general, individuals who have the greatest amount of social capital are the most likely to volunteer and the most likely to become involved in community activities. However, multivariate analyses indicate that for this sample of African American men there is no simple, uniform relationship between social capital, volunteerism, and membership in community-based or political and social justice organizations. Contrary to the findings of research involving predominately White samples, in this study, material privilege (as measured by combined household income) was not related to any of the social participation outcomes. In short, for this sample of African American men, volunteerism, community participation, and involvement in political and social justice activities did not systematically increase as income increased. Education was a significant predictor of the likelihood that men were involved in volunteer work. Consistent with the findings of previous research (see Clary & Snyder, 1991; Hodgkinson et al., 1996; Hoge et al., 1998; Regnerus et al., 1998), greater level of education was associated with a greater likelihood that men were volunteers. In this sample, men with college and professional degrees were significantly more likely than those with less than a college degree to be involved in volunteer work. Education was not systematically related to the likelihood of involvement in community or political and social justice organizations. It is important to appreciate, however, that the sample as a whole has relatively high-household incomes, and high levels of educational attainment. Future studies that include samples with a greater degree of variability in income and education will help to further clarify these findings.

The findings of the study indicate that age is significantly related to men's involvement in volunteer work, and with the likelihood that they will belong to political or social justice organizations. However, age is not directly related to involvement in community organizations. Multivariate findings demonstrate that 22- to 40-year-old men were less likely than their older counterparts to be involved in volunteer work, community organizations, and political or social justice organizations. Men in the 22- to 40-year-old group also dedicated significantly less time to volunteer work each year. However, the youngest group of men (17- to 20-year-olds) and the oldest group of men (41- to 79-year-olds) did not differ significantly in their patterns of involvement. These findings complicate the findings of previous research which suggest that there is a direct relationship between age and social participation. Contrary to the findings of previous research (see Hayghe, 1991), these findings indicate that older men do not dedicate more time to

those volunteer activities than do their younger counterparts. These findings suggest that the relationship between age and social participation may be nonlinear.

The men who dedicated the greatest amount of time (measured in hours per year) to volunteer activities were the ones who placed great emphasis on interdependence and social obligations (i.e., those with higher communalism scores), and men who were more involved in church life. These findings point to the importance of exploring the functional value of communalism in the lives of African Americans generally, and African American men specifically.

As expected, religiosity emerged as an important contributor to our understanding of patterns of African American male prosocial involvement. Early religious experience (early family and personal church involvement) and subjective religiosity had no direct effect on the likelihood that men were volunteers. Nor did these variables have any direct effect on either the amount of time they dedicated to volunteer activities, or their membership in community or political and social justice organizations.

However, as expected, church involvement proved to have particularly important predictive utility in this study. Church involvement emerged as an important predictor of the likelihood that men were engaged in volunteer work or members of community organizations. Greater involvement in church life also was related to a greater amount of time dedicated to volunteer work each year. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous work (see Hodgkinson et al., 1990; Hoge et al., 1998;). However, the fact that church involvement was not predictive of the likelihood of involvement in political or social justice activities was somewhat surprising, and deserves attention. Archival as well as empirical sources suggest that the church is an important site for political activism among African Americans. The findings of this study seem to suggest that although the church is an important venue for involvement in political life, for the men in this study church participation is not a necessary condition for involvement in political and social justice activities. Men may have relatively easy or direct access to secular venues for political and social justice organizations (e.g., the Urban League). As such, church involvement may be particularly important in getting men involved in volunteer work and more local prosocial activities, but less crucial for involving men in political and social justice activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Social scientists have become accustomed to envisioning African American men as the targets of empowerment, prevention and intervention efforts. Consequently, insufficient empirical attention has been paid to the role of African American men as agents of social change. The dearth of empirical information about the prosocial involvement of African American men is problematic given the urgent call for African American men, particularly middle-income men, to play a more active role in community life. This study serves as a valuable first step towards the development of a body of empirical literature on the factors that promote prosocial attitudes and involvement among African American men.

The study is important, too, because it highlights the need for critical attention to a number of concerns. First, the findings suggest the need for attention to the extent to which men's sociodemographic profiles (e.g., age, education, income) may be associated with their involvement in community life. While existing work suggests that there is a positive relationship between social capital and charitable and political involvement, the find-

ings of this study suggest that future research must examine the extent to which this pattern holds true for African American men. Second, the study points to the importance of including relevant cultural-level constructs (e.g., communalism) in our examinations of African American men's patterns of social participation. Finally, this work elucidates the functional significance of religiosity in the lives of African American men. Empirical research on African American religiosity has consistently asserted that African American men are less religious than their female counterparts (Levin, Taylor, & Chatters, 1995; Mattis & Jagers, in press; Taylor, Mattis, & Chatters, 1999). However, this work lends empirical weight to the argument that, despite gender disparities in religiosity, religion does play an important role in shaping the social values and behaviors of African American men.

Although the findings of this study are preliminary, they do raise important practical considerations. Church participation consistently emerged as an important predictor of men's involvement in volunteer activities and their membership in community-based organizations. However, Carson (1990) notes that if current patterns of African American middle-class flight from urban communities continue, then African American churches, particularly those located in urban centers, will be less able to provide the capital needed to sustain charitable causes. It stands to reason that the "human-capital" that is made available through volunteerism will be one of the most potent ways of balancing losses in the monetary contributions available to these churches. However, empirical research consistently demonstrates that women are overrepresented, and men underrepresented, in the congregations of African American churches (Levin et al., 1995; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Taylor & Chatters, 1991). If African American churches hope to have a pool of available male volunteers, then these institutions must pay particular attention to attracting and retaining African American men across all age groups. However, community activists who are interested in recruiting highly educated and more-affluent African American male volunteers may also benefit from establishing coalitions with secular organizations including African American fraternal organizations (i.e., Black Greeks) and African American professional associations. These organizations often have commitments to social service and social justice, and may therefore serve as ready venues through which to recruit African American male volunteers. Working in tandem, churches, secular organizations, and community activists may provide the African American community with crucial sources of support in its ongoing effort to address a range of social dilemmas.

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