A Model of United Methodist Clergy Health

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Focus Group Data Collection

- January-May 2008
- 3 DS focus groups
- 4 general pastor focus groups
- Specific pastor focus groups
  - Women
  - Pastors of large churches
  - Under age 35
  - Local pastors
- Total n=88
Focus Group Data Collection

- Questions on:
  - Conceptualization of health
  - What supports health
  - What gets in the way of health
  - Programming desires

Focus Group Analysis

- Initial codes from literature and early data examination
- Two people coded each transcript
- Grounded theory process in data collection and analysis
**SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of change</th>
<th>Approach &amp; target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Individual characteristics, such as attitudes and beliefs, that influence behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Interpersonal and group influences, such as social networks and social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>Shared health-related experiences and resources in the congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>Rules, regulations, policies and ethos that may impact health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Community</td>
<td>Shared identities, experiences, and resources for health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theoretical Model of United Methodist Clergy Health**

- **Self-care & Coping**:
  - Physical, mental, and spiritual health practices

- **Stress**

- **Conditions**
  - Physical Health
  - Spiritual Well-Being
  - Mental Health
  - Quality of Life

- **Mediators**
  - Physical Health
  - Spiritual Well-Being
  - Mental Health
  - Quality of Life

- **Outcomes**
## Conditions Table

Perceived as Greatest Impact on Health

1. Ability to set boundaries
2. Perception that the pastor is available 24 hours/day
3. Church health and functioning
4. Itinerancy transitions
5. Financial strain

Note level of each of these on handout
1. Boundary-Setting

“I think some of it’s the moral imperative between the secular world and the church world. In the church, if I block off my schedule that I’m going to exercise or ... even down to diet, when you’re eating in people’s homes ... When you block this off, it’s almost like you’re being selfish and that’s bad. ‘We want our pastor to be available.’ Whereas in the secular world, there’s more of an understanding... that you’re looking after your own health.”
2. Perceived Availability of Pastors

Congregation/SPRC Perception of Pastor’s 24-hour Availability

“My Chair of Church Council took me to task last Church Council because I had a vacation planned the first week in March, and there’s several people sick, and he didn’t think I ought to go.”
3. Church Health & Functioning

Church Health & Functioning Challenges

- A number of congregants oppose even small changes suggested by the pastor
- The church has sets of members who polarize issues along group lines
- One or more congregants use intimidation or abusive tactics to oppose the pastor
Opposing Small Changes

“The people have this, ‘I’m right. Everybody else is wrong,’ attitude that works the hardest on the pastors. Because everything that they don’t like they turn into an issue, because they’re right and everybody else is wrong. … And it just destroys the ‘me’. You can’t get beyond it; you can’t reason with it. It would kill any pastor to be in that situation.”

Polarized Members

“What you have is that, ‘My great-great-grandmother got in a family feud with Mary’s great-great-grandmother many, many years ago, even before I was born, but it was instilled in me by my mother not to associate with this family. And so when I see these people, and these people want to do something, then it’s a tradition on this side of the church that my family’s not going to support it because of something that happened years ago’. ”
Intimidation & Abuse

“They spread rumors in the community … stuff out in the community that are meant to hurt a person. I’ve been heckled when I preach, when I’ve been praying. I’ve had people get up and stomp out and slam doors. Just like children’s temper tantrums is what it gets down to, because they can’t get their way and overrun everybody else…People calling you at all times of the day or night saying really nasty things to you, saying nasty things to your children, so that [they] don’t want to ever go back to church again. Just tearing your family apart.”

Number of Unhealthy Churches

“…If we’re trying to bring healing to pastors, we’ve also got to find some way of healing the churches. Because if that church remains unhealthy, you can put the healthiest pastor we’ve got in that situation and… they’re going to become unhealthy in that process.”

-DS
4. Itinerancy

- Who appoints to churches
- How often
- Theologically-based
Itinerancy Transitions

- Disruption of medical home
- Disruption of exercise routines
- Financial strain
- Having to prove oneself again
- Toll on one’s spouse and children and the worry and adjustment/family needs that accompany it
- No system for grieving
- Disruption of social networks

5. Financial Strain and Compensation Structure
Financial Strain

“I know people whose meals are never quite like my five course meal because they just can’t afford it yet.”

“I had a membership to the Y and then my financial situation became really strained and I had to cut out some things and that was the thing to go.”

Compensation Structure

- Multiple church appointments to make one salary
- Vying for top-paying appointments
- Resentment over higher salary for perceived similar work
Compensation Structure

“The salary disparity among pastors… it’s just ridiculous that somebody can get a free membership to a country club and $120,000 salary and then the person who is probably putting in more hours in a rural church gets $30,000 a year. That’s sinful. And it’s wrong, and there’s no wonder there’s dysfunction and everything else in the Conference when you have a disparity like that. We either call ourselves Christian or we call ourselves a capitalist society.”

Theoretical Model of United Methodist Clergy Health
Thank you!

Thoughts and Questions

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