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Guide to the

The Black Church in the African American Experience project files

1975-1992

Sc MG 470

Compiled by Kit Fluker, 2017.

Summary

Creator: Lincoln, C. Eric (Charles Eric), 1924-2000

Title: The Black Church in the African American Experience project files

Date: 1975-1992

Size: 18.43 linear feet (46 boxes)

Source: Donated by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, 1993.

Abstract: C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya's book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, was based on data gathered through interviews with 1,894 clergy from black Christian churches in the United States. This collection primarily consists of completed interview questionnaires, dating from 1979 to 1982. The collection also contains background research materials used in preparing the survey; notes on the survey results; and printouts of cross-tabulated data from the study.

Access: Advance notice required.

Conditions Governing Access:

Surveys are closed to researchers until 2067 to protect the privacy of study participants.

Preferred citation: [Item], *The Black Church in the African American Experience project files*, Sc MG 470, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

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Creator History

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya's study, "The Black Church in the African American Experience," was one of the largest studies ever undertaken of historically black churches in the United States. The study was conducted from 1979 to 1982, and comprised interviews with 1,894 Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal clergy.

Participants in the study were asked about their churches' history, services, membership, finances, programs, and their perception of the role of the church and of pastors in politics and society. Interviewees represented seven denominations: African Methodist Episcopal; African Methodist Episcopal Zion; Christian Methodist Episcopal; National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.; National Baptist Convention of America; Progressive National Baptist Convention; and Church of Christ in God.

The study resulted in a book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, published in 1990. In the book, Lincoln and Mamiya analyzed the results of the study from a sociological perspective, and provided a historical overview of black denominations in the United States.

Scope and Content Note

The Black Church in the African American Experience project files consist primarily of completed questionnaires from interviews conducted with black clergy. The collection also contains research materials used in preparing the survey and writing the book, and analysis of the survey results in the form of handwritten notes and data printouts.

Surveys were conducted from 1979 to 1982. The questionnaires were filled out by field workers conducting the interviews, not by the clergy person. The questionnaires are divided between rural and urban churches, with some differences between the two surveys. Each survey represents a specific church; because some rural pastors served multiple churches, there are pastors who completed multiple surveys. Each church was assigned a unique number. The majority of the surveys used in the study are in this collection.

The main sections of the survey are "Demographic Profile" (of the interviewee); "History and Structure of the Church" (including questions about finances and the demographics of the congregation); "Black Consciousness" (how being part of a black denomination affects the church's programs, its mission, and the pastor's preaching); "Church Music"; and "Religious and Secular Activities and Programs." The questionnaire also contains questions about the relationship of young people to the church, and the role of women in the church.

Research materials offer a fragmentary record of the work that went into developing the study and the book. These materials include three surveys with pastors from Dutchess County, New York, conducted in 1978. These surveys were possibly field tests; they do not appear to have been used in the final study. The same file contains anonymous two-page surveys completed by church members in Dutchess County.

Other research materials in the collection include correspondence with church representatives from around the United States; lists of churches and clergy interviewed; and published material related to the history and demographics of African American denominations and of specific churches -- for example, meeting minutes and cemetery records of individual churches.

Analysis of survey results consist of notes and computer printouts containing comparisons of variables across denominations and between rural and urban churches. One way in which clergy responses were analyzed was on a "Black Consciousness Scale." The scale was devised by Mamiya and Lincoln to describe the degree to which clergy identified with African American social, intellectual, and political movements.

The collection contains one file related to Mamiya and Lincoln's subsequent project, "Islam in the

African American Experience." The folder contains 2 letters engaging the services of consultants and describing the work they are being requested to do.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American churches
African American clergy -- Interviews

Names

Mamiya, Lawrence H.

Container List

Research Materials

- b. 1 f. 1-9 1975-1981
- b. 2 f. 1-3 1979-1983
 - b. 2 f. 4 Dutchess County Surveys 1978
- b. 3 f. 1-7 Publications 1976-1982
- b. 4 f. 1-5 Publications circa 1978

Surveys 1979-1982

Surveys are closed until 2067.

Rural

- b. 5 f. 1-6 1-3, 5-15, 17-34, 36-51
- b. 6 f. 1-6 52-63, 65-70, 72-101
- b. 7 f. 1-6 102-143, 146, 148-153
- b. 8 f. 1-6 154-201
- b. 9 f. 1-6 202-250
- b. 10 f. 1-6 251-264, 266-268, 270-301
- b. 11 f. 1-6 302-349
- b. 12 f. 1-6 350-358, 360-398
- b. 13 f. 1-6 399-430, 432-447
- b. 14 f. 1-6 448-495
- b. 15 f. 1-6 496-543
- b. 16 f. 1-6 544-591
- b. 17 f. 1-4 592-614, 616-620
 - b. 17 f. 5 Incomplete Surveys

Urban

- b. 17 f. 6-7 1001-1016
- b. 18 f. 1-6 1017-1038, 1040-1065
- b. 19 f. 1-6 1066-1089, 1091-1114
- b. 20 f. 1-6 1115-1153, 1155-1163
- b. 21 f. 1-6 1164-1172, 1174-1182, 1184-1213
- b. 22 f. 1-6 1214-1221, 1223-1248, 1250-1254, 1256-1264
- b. 23 f. 1-6 1265-1290, 1292-1293, 1295-1314
- b. 24 f. 1-6 1315-1362
- b. 25 f. 1-6 1363-1410
- b. 26 f. 1-6 1411-1437, 1439-1457, 1459-1460
- b. 27 f. 1-6 1461-1508
- b. 28 f. 1-6 1509-1556
- b. 29 f. 1-6 1557-1588, 1590-1593, 1595-1606
- b. 30 f. 1-6 1607-1629, 1631-1655
- b. 31 f. 1-6 1656-1703

Surveys (cont.)

Urban (cont.)

- b. 32 f. 1-6 1705-1706, 1708-1712, 1714-1724, 1726-1755
- b. 33 f. 1-6 1756-1766, 1768-1804
- b. 34 f. 1-6 1805-1814, 1816-1838, 1840-1854
- b. 35 f. 1-6 1855-1902
- b. 36 f. 1-6 1903-1950
- b. 37 f. 1-6 1951-1985, 1987-1998, 2000
- b. 38 f. 1-6 2001-2012, 2014, 2016-2028, 2030-2040, 2042-2052
- b. 39 f. 1-6 2053-2079, 2081-2101
- b. 40 f. 1-6 2102-2111, 2113-2143, 2145-2151
- b. 41 f. 1-3 2152-2155, 2157-2175
- b. 41 f. 4-5 Rural Surveys Transferred to Urban
- b. 41 f. 6 Unsigned and Unnumbered

Analysis of Survey Results

- b. 42 f. 1-8 Notes 1982-1983
- b. 43 f. 1-12 Total Clergy, Church, Urban, and Rural Data 1982
- b. 44 f. 1-9 Rural and Urban Data 1981
- b. 45 f. 1-3 Clergy and Church Hypotheses Runs 1983
- b. 45 f. 4-8 Denominational Cross Tabulations 1983
- b. 46 f. 1-9 Black Consciousness Scale 1983
- b. 46 f. 10-11 Church Programs Cross Tabulations 1983
- b. 42 f. 9 Islam Project 1992