

RECORDKEEPING PRACTICES IN SELECTED ATLANTA AREA BLACK
CHURCHES

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ABSTRACT

MEREDITH RACHELLE EVANS: Recordkeeping Practices in Selected Atlanta Area Black Churches

(Under the direction of Claudia Gollop, Ph.D.)

In *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, historian Lawrence W. Levine emphasizes the role of religion in the cultural aspects of black identity formation. Through an examination of six selected black churches in the Atlanta area, this study explores the attitudes of church leaders and their congregants toward maintaining records to preserve institutional memory, as well as for legal and administrative reasons. The study examines the impact of recordkeeping practices on the churches' collective memory, and discusses black consciousness and black theology. Also discussed is the role that archives have on the preservation of institutional memory by expounding upon the notion of accountability and custody, their importance to the continued existence of these cultural religious institutions, and how they can greatly benefit the community as well as contribute to the historical literature in America.

The study employs a triangulation of methodologies, including content analysis, interviews and a survey.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my first academic advisor Dr. Alma Williams, who believed that one day

I would complete my doctorate, teach by her side and secede as chair of the History

department of my alma mater.

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To my sister circle of scholars who reminded that I wasn't alone in this process...

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

“Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord.” (Psalm 102:18)

From ancient times, records have played a significant role in human societies. Records provide evidence of and information about the transactions of individuals and organizations, documents used to hold individuals accountable for their actions, and ultimately serve as the foundation upon which societal memory is built. Among the records society produces, those created by individual groups are often significantly different from those of the dominant governing bodies.

Currently, public records enable government administration, facilitate delivery of services to citizens, document the rights and responsibilities of both government and citizens, provide legal documentation, serve as evidence of the government's work, and provide material for future research.¹

For people of African descent in America, however, a different story can be told. The records of this people are rooted in oral tradition and are often missing from the traditional means of preservation such as history books, museums, and archives. For centuries following

¹Jennifer Marshall speech, Bruce W. Dearstyne, *Managing Government Records & Information* (Prairie Village, KS: ARMA International, 1999): 23.

their arrival from Africa, blacks served as property and were not considered human, much less as equal in stature, intelligence, or politics to the dominant oppressors. The black church became a voice for a once voiceless people, a safe haven that helped shape black culture.

The history of black churches “offer scholars opportunities to interpret and appreciate (their) importance to the African American community. A wealth of information is also revealed about African American history in general and the contributions of the churches to human well-being in America”² An example, is the study of abolitionists, particularly black abolitionists, The Black Abolitionist Papers project contains microfilmed church correspondence and contributions from newspapers and minutes from religious and reform organizations connected with their careers. The religious activities of these persons documented in this collection, provides significant insight on church-related participation in the abolitionist movement.³ The same holds true for resources pertaining to the Civil Rights Movement and the development of prominent black leaders. In addition documentation of Black church development will show its assistance in the growth and development of societal agencies such as schools, libraries and insurance companies.

Documentation of churches and congregations provide a resource for writing the history of a community and of a people. In America the written word is generally regarded as

²Forrest C. Harris, Sr., director of the Kelley Miller Smith Institute on Black Church Studies, “Preservation of Black Church History Project” URL: <http://www.abcnash.edu/project.html> viewed March 12, 2003.

³Albert J. Raboteau and David W. Wills, with Randall K. Burkett, Will B. Gravely, and James Melvin Washington, “Retelling Carter Woodson’s Story: Archival Sources for Afro-American Church History,” African-American Religion: A Documentary History Project Research Resources Bibliographies viewed March 12, 2003 URL: <http://www.amherst.edu/%7Eaardoc/Journal.html>

evidence of an event or person. Currently most knowledge of churches in black communities is obtained from few academic studies, preacher biographies, media recognition and from embellished folklore with possible truths that have passed down from generation to generation. Although these are valuable resources, a more accurate and lasting version of the impact and contribution of the church should be documented and preserved more efficiently.

There is a large amount of secondary literature on “slave religion” and the religion of Africa, primarily written by nineteenth century historians. These historians perused the archives of Europe and the United States, facilities dominated by their own culture and bias. A lot of the scholars in this area were white males, members of the group that colonized and destroyed the faith and life Africans and people of color once knew. Religious scholars and historians used accounts of their predecessors to describe the worship style and religious differences of blacks. These publications are stark expressions of the author’s political beliefs, ones that perpetuated hate ignorance and misunderstanding. “The conflict between faith and suffering was exacerbated by the fact that most of the brutality inflicted upon black people was done by white persons who also called themselves Christians. Whites who humiliated blacks during the week went to church on Sunday and prayed to the God of Moses and of Jesus.”⁴ Scholars justifying and rationalizing slavery, segregation and racism, denouncing blacks as equals, tried to write objectively about an institution that they did not fully understand. The impact of racially motivated understanding obscured their perception and their writing. This lack of inclusive knowledge and understanding of black culture and the black experience resulted in limited accurate information and biased documentation.

⁴James H. Cone, “The Gospel and the Liberation of the Poor,” *Christian Century*, February 1, 1981 pp. 162-166.

Nineteenth and twentieth century religious scholars, theologians, and historians have often paralleled the struggle of the people of African descent in America to that of the Israelites in the Bible. Much of the Old Testament of the Bible (particularly the books: Exodus, Deuteronomy and Numbers) recounts the plight of the Israelites as they suffered under the bondage of Pharaoh, wandered in the wilderness, and approached Canaan, the land promised to them by God. Canaan referred to not only the concept and condition of freedom but is referred to as a geographical place, such as Canada and the Northern states in America.

The appropriation of biblical imagery characterized the plight of blacks for generations. Identification with Israel gave blacks a communal identity as unique people, favored by God. Those enslaved believed that with faith, God would free them as he had Israel. The Emancipation Proclamation validated this for slaves along with the migration of southern blacks to the urban North in the early twentieth century. Additional commonalities should be noted: 1) Africa as a historical reality; 2) both groups experienced a period of enslavement; 3) their struggle continued after physical liberation; and 4) a religious experience and symbol of God remained.⁵ The persistence of African culture among blacks in America is present today. The styles of worship, dress and teaching have roots in African culture. Even the transforming of names to identify this race is an example, as many call themselves African American. African American is inclusive of those born in America whose ancestors were enslaved involuntarily. Black is inclusive of all people of color, those who immigrated voluntarily as well as those who did not.

⁵Long, Charles H., "Perspectives for a Study of African American Religion," *Down By the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

My data shows that centuries later, the black church still stands as an institution that is a means of salvation as it brings contented peace and restores hope, love, and joy to brutally tortured souls, minds, and hearts. This institution educates and advocates for better employment, better housing, better health, and better means of survival, helping its members in a nation in which their ancestors never chose to live. Here are the stories of six churches in the Atlanta metropolitan area that have created a legacy and a history which, while not preserved by a professional (trained or certified archivist), is nonetheless preserved.

Churches, as nonprofit organizations, face many challenges in maintaining records effectively, due to the lack of funding, inadequate staff, inappropriate and limited storage, unestablished knowledge of recordkeeping practices, and limited institutional commitment. The demands on churches to comply with legal mandates for recordkeeping have sometimes resulted in churches failing to appreciate the crucial value of records that provide historical and theological evidence of church functions and activities. Many church records, including those of black churches, have ended up in state and federally funded archival repositories or at colleges and universities. This study investigates the attitudes of black church leadership and members toward preserving and maintaining records for purposes of institutional memory, as well as for legal and administrative reasons.

The chief proposition underlying this research is that the custody of records directly affects how the memory of the institution is used and preserved.

Two research questions will be addressed in relation to the collection and dissemination of this history:

Question 1: What recordkeeping practices exist in selected black churches?

Question 2: How does the experience of these churches enhance our understanding of the relationship between archives and institutional/collective memory?

This study will employ a comparative case-study methodology in order to explore the research issues. These case studies will be both exploratory and descriptive. Case studies provide a suitable methodology for research areas that explore contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the researcher has little control over the phenomena under investigation.

The primary objective of this study is to facilitate a deeper understanding of how these institutions within the black community maintain their memory and to generate better practices for future generations. The current research begins with an understanding that there are no standards or adequate procedures to sufficiently or effectively document individual black church history and memory. It also is based on the belief that there is inadequate knowledge about the importance of such documentation, as well as limited resources available to document, preserve, and maintain such materials. Prior to this investigation, a pilot study of a black church in North Carolina was conducted. White Rock Baptist Church is an important institution in the city of Durham, North Carolina and provides an example of not only having some records to better document the development and contribution of the church, but also demonstrates the importance of custody and recordkeeping procedures.

Six black churches in the Atlanta metropolitan area were randomly chosen for this research. This study is not limited to one denomination, because the definition of the black church has evolved beyond that of the one used by Lincoln and Mamiya.⁶ They included only

⁶C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya Lincoln, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1990): 1-2.

a few denominations, based on the concept of those organized and operated solely by African Americans. For this research it is important to note that, regardless of denomination, class, and ethnicity, a church that has a predominantly black membership and continues to confront the issues challenging the black community in particular qualifies as a black church.

The black church has played a dual role in American society by preserving the traditions and cultures passed down by generations and, in the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, by serving as a social agency that compensated for what the United States government and society failed to provide. Church records have provided evidence by which people have determined their birth dates, monitored the growth of their communities, and established their professions, their political voices, their education and, for some, their very identity. The black church has been a place where public officials could be held accountable for their actions, a place that provides information upon which society can build its collective memory. These private institutions serve a specific group of individuals and their interests. In order to demonstrate their responsible management of the church records that the congregation has entrusted to their care, a heightened accountability to preserve the church body's trust by providing adequate documentation is required. Finally, black churches have traditionally assumed a leadership role in their communities. Black churches help to shape how blacks are perceived in the United States as they also exert a considerable influence upon the political and social theories challenging the race.

This research is based in the theory of social and cultural consciousness as expressed by Cone, Collins, and bell hooks.⁷ In *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, Levine

⁷ James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984); Collins, Patricia Hill, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge,*

emphasized the role of black religion in the cultural aspects of black identity formation. The cultivation of culture provides a unique psychological matrix through which the black experience is formed, valued, and interpreted.⁸ This dissertation will discuss collective memory as explained by Cook⁹ and the work of Upward of the Records Continuum Research Group, which will be further expounded upon in the literature review.¹⁰

The six institutions selected for inclusion in this study have made significant contributions to the history of Atlanta and the achievements of blacks in America. These churches are therefore especially relevant to the current research. However, it is important to note that Atlanta is a unique city. Atlanta's race relations and efforts to address civil liberties differ from any other Southern/Southeastern city. The black community in this metropolitan area has remained socially and economically mobile and politically active in their community.

Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment (New York: Routledge, 2000); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992).

⁸ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977): p. 159.

⁹ Terry Cook, *Beyond the Screen: The Records Continuum and Archival Cultural Heritage* Australian Society of Archivists, August 18 2000 [cited September 2001]. Available from www.archivists.org.au/sem/conf2000/terrycook.pdf

¹⁰ Frank Upward, "Structuring the Records Continuum - Part One." *Archives and Manuscripts*, 24 (2) 1996; The Records Continuum Research Group (RCRG) looks at methods of analysis which enable records to be controlled at different points in time throughout their lifespan. In particular, how records are represented, used, retrieved and disseminated. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/about/index.html>. One project, entitled "Internationalisation of subject content of the recordkeeping specialisation in the Master of Information Management with reference to the global context of the students' learning environment." investigates the culture of recordkeeping, its relationship to legal, societal and cultural constructs. One of their goals is to provide education for record keepers that tailors to their cultural needs, while being educationally sound. <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/research/tif/index.html#title>

White Rock Baptist Church of Durham, North Carolina, the site of the pilot study, is comprised mainly of professionals or middle to upper class blacks and is similar to Atlanta churches in regard to its business and educational endeavors. White Rock's conservative approach to civil rights also resembles that of some Atlanta area churches.

A variety of data collection strategies and data sources were be utilized during this study. In the initial stage of research, all available documentation at each site was considered. The goal of this examination was to produce a detailed description of policies and practices for documenting the activities, history, and memory at the institutions. During this content analysis, both macrolevel and microlevel documentation was completed. First, the macro level documentation was examined to investigate the appraisal decision-making process. Macro analysis included the following types of documentation, which reflected the policies and procedures of the church: business records, financial statements, membership rosters, denominational requirements, and historical accounts. Second, micro level documentation was examined in order to explore specific disposition decisions. Micro level analysis incorporated collection policies or directives, and/or correspondence relevant to the church. Documents of a more personal level, such as notes to and from the Pastor, fell into this category.

Following the content analysis, interviews were conducted with the staff responsible for drafting and implementing archival policy at each institution. These interviews served the dual purpose of requesting clarification of policies and procedures and generating an understanding of what constitutes recordkeeping practices for a church. In addition, a survey of church leadership and congregations was conducted to evaluate the importance of recordkeeping practices in the church. The intent of this data collection was to understand

how current practices for documenting the history and activities of the black church can be improved or established to allow for a greater level of archival accountability.

Finally, the researcher considered best practices for an archival program in churches. It incorporated data gathered during the content analysis, interviews, and survey data. This research expressed the importance of archival principles and the application of them to black churches to ensure the history and memory of such an important institution in America.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Gospel: Black Consciousness, Black Theology and the Black Church

It is important to understand the context of the terminology used throughout this dissertation and the concepts that have led to the longevity and identification of the black church. One of the most relevant concepts that distinguish the black church from other religious institutions is the global concept of Black Consciousness. Black Consciousness transcends geographical space. Biko, a South African activist defined blacks as “those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations.”¹¹ He further expounds:

This definition illustrates to us a number of things: 1) Being black is not a matter of pigmentation - being black is a reflection of a mental attitude and 2) Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being.

In essence, Black Consciousness is the realization by blacks of the need to come together concerning the cause of their oppression (the blackness of their skin) and to operate as a

¹¹This is the paper produced for a SASO Leadership Training Course in December 1971 by Bantu Stephen Biko.

group in order to rid themselves of the obstacles and challenges that bind them. This same definition can easily apply to blacks in the United States.

Black refers to a race of people of African descent who reside in America, a visible trait that remains the cause of their oppression. In *Black Looks*, hooks states “we experience our collective crisis as African American people within the realm of the image.”¹² Black Consciousness embraces this blackness, a beautiful stigma that can both unite and divide a people. The black church is an example of such unity. In the twenty-first century, the characteristics and confines of the term ‘black’ are much larger than an institution that represents the culture and community of those enslaved and colonized by Europeans. Blackness refers to those bound by discrimination and racism based upon the color of their skin.

The call for blacks to cease being black is oddly unilateral, seldom accompanied by a call for whites to cease being white. The subordinate group is to surrender an identity that helps shield its members from the power of the dominant group, while the dominant group does not need to surrender an identity that confers racial privilege upon its members.¹³

The psychological and social construction of being black in twenty-first century America remains rooted in coping mechanisms and survival techniques. One such technique is the

¹² bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*: 6.

¹³William Darity Jr., Give Affirmative Action Time to Act (Affirmative Action and Diversity Project: A Web Page for Research - Carl Gutierrez-Jones, Department of English, University of California of Santa Barbara, December 1, 2000 [cited 2003]); available from <http://aad.english.ucsb.edu/docs/darity.html>.

concept of “wearing the mask.” This idea of double consciousness has existed since American slavery and been written about by prominent nineteenth-century African-Americans, such as Fredrick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Ida B. Wells. The mask,

... this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.¹⁴

Another important aspect of black consciousness is of religious consciousness. Through the study and analysis of music, dance, song, religion, and folk beliefs of African Americans, Levine determined that slaves created a separate, independent life, which fostered a strong sense of community.¹⁵ He successfully argued that the value system of a group of people could be understood through an analysis of their culture. Through inspiring music, songs, and the creation of epic heroes and mockery, blacks found ways to cover their true feelings, hide plans of resistance and rebellion and establish a sense of hope. Levine’s shift from the sacred to the secular in the work represents the complexities of spirituals and the other types of folklore he used for data. Unlike the hymns and religious songs sung by whites, black spirituals stressed the past and hope for tomorrow.¹⁶ Spirituals maintained an image of the

¹⁴W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1961).

¹²Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹⁶Ibid 67.

"chosen people," images of a personal and immediate God, and vivid images of Old Testament figures. Inspired by the biblical story of the Hebrew children led by Moses, spirituals offered a belief in change, showing that during the nineteenth century, blacks may have adopted the religion of their masters, but held different perspectives on race and slavery. Levine wrote, "the entire sacred world of black slaves, created necessary space between the slaves and their owners and were the means of preventing legal slavery from becoming spiritual slavery."¹⁷ Like other scholars, Levine discussed the religious consciousness of a surviving people.

Others such as Lincoln and Mamiya affirm Levine's¹⁸ contention that there is an African framework that informs ways of knowing and managing reality for blacks, a framework that influences devotional options, expressive behaviors and identity. Barrett refers to this as 'soul

¹⁷Ibid 80.

¹⁵He concludes that blacks, although influenced by white culture, still maintained their own independent community, countering earlier arguments that the enslaved were stripped of their culture along with their freedom when brought to this country. He further explains that one of the ways in which African traditions survived was through interaction with the cultural traditions of American Indians and whites and creative adaptation to their new setting. "Folk beliefs provided hope, assurance, and a sense of group identification, but they had another dimension as well: they actually offered the slaves sources of power and knowledge alternative to those existing within the world of the master class. Ibid 63.

force', Long mentions 'the archaic religious consciousness'¹⁹, Lincoln and Mamiya adopt Sobel's 'black sacred cosmos.'²⁰

Barrett states:

Soul Force is that power of the Black man that turns sorrow into joy, crying into laughter, defeat into victory. It is patience while suffering, determination while frustrated and hope while in despair. It derives its impetus from ancestral heritage of Africa, its refinement from the bondage of slavery, and its continuing vitality from the conflict of the present.²¹

This religious consciousness or black spirituality is rooted in the concept of freedom and is rooted in hope, ultimately unifying and shaping a community of people. Lincoln and Mamiya's black sacred cosmos is an African-American religious worldview. It is a combination of African heritage, African-American experience and the application of Christian theology. In addition Sobel's analysis of Black Baptist's cosmos noted that the difference between white Baptist and African American Baptist was the level of consciousness. She concluded that "African-Americans blended African and Baptist elements

¹⁶Charles H. Long, Perspectives for a Study of African American Religion, *Down By the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, edited by Larry G. Murphy, (N.Y.: New York University Press, 2000): 16-17.

²⁰C. Eric Lincoln & Lawrence H. Mamiya, "The Black Religious Dimension 'The Black Sacred Cosmos'" *Down By the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, edited by Larry G. Murphy, (N.Y.: New York University Press, 2000): 32.

²¹Leonard Barrett, *Soul Force: African Heritage in Afro-American Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1974): 2.

fusing their traditions, life experience with the concept of spirituality.”²² This fusion leads to consciousness: the “cultivation of culture provides a unique psychological matrix through which the black experience is formed, valued and interpreted.”²³

Lincoln and Mamiya argued that when “black people were gathered in significant enough numbers, the distinct quality of a shared Afro-Christian religious world view and faith was felt... a qualitatively different cultural form of expressing Christianity (was) found in most black churches, regardless of denomination.”²⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya continue to argue that the core values of black culture are rooted in black consciousness and spirituality. Black cultural practices and some major social institutions had religious origins that “were given birth and nurtured in the womb of the Black Church.”²⁵ Many scholars agree that there has been an integral relationship between the black church and the black community and that the religious and secular lines are often blurred within this institution.²⁶

Paris argues that black churches are ‘race institutions’, that the principles of racism and racial self-respect caused its emergence. He continues to elaborate by noting that black

²²Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin’ On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith*, 107.

²³Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977)

²⁴C. Eric Lincoln & Lawrence H. Mamiya, “The Black Religious Dimension: The Black Sacred Cosmos.” *Down By the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion*, edited by Larry G. Murphy, (N.Y.: New York University Press, 2000): 35.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985): 8.

churches regardless of socio-economic stratification, are not shaped solely by their social reality. The black Christian tradition is the concept of a “non-racist appropriation of the Christian faith.”²⁷ The black Christian tradition is a biblical concept that all members of the body of Christ or Christian faith are brothers and sisters. It’s the opposite of Western faith and has attempted to reveal the false religiosity and morally wrong concept of racism. This doctrine is challenged by the more nationalistic view of Black Liberation Theology. The practice of African-American spiritual beliefs has historically been critical in helping black Americans meet and exceed the excruciating demands of their human dilemma. Utilizing this spirituality, combined with black consciousness, led to Black Liberation Theology, a response to the various processes of dehumanization, oppression and racism. Black Liberation Theology argues that freedom, justice, civil rights, and racial equality are necessary conditions for human experience and furthermore that God is black. The emphasis on race differed from the black Christian tradition.

It is recognized that “black life in America has its own norms, forms, beliefs, structures, and practices that make African-American life and culture a unique form of human existence.”²⁸ In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone wrote, “the politics of racial domination have created a black reality that is distinctly different from that of whites, and from that location has emerged a distinct black culture.”²⁹ He asked, "Is it possible to strip

²⁷*Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, 10.

²⁸Carlyle Fielding Stewart, "Five Functional Dynamics of African-American Spirituality," in *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture and Freedom in the African-American Experience* (New Jersey: African World Press, Inc., 1999): 27.

²⁹bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 12; James H. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990): 8.

the gospel as it has been interpreted of its 'whiteness,' so that its real message will become a live option for radical advocates of black consciousness?"³⁰ He attempted to convince his readers that "racism, victimization and powerlessness come with (or from) the visibility of blackness."³¹ The formation of black consciousness, culture and spirituality, compels African-Americans to construct unique means of community and survival in America. The black church serves as a place of worship and as a refuge where it is no longer necessary to wear the mask; a place that "affirms black being and existence in the midst of debilitating psychological conditions."³²

Black theology has not been widely accepted or taught. Scholars have been critical of it, not simply because of what some interpret as a militant stance, but because the gap between the pulpit, the congregation, and the academy remains wide. Mosala writes, "It [black theology] has remained the monopoly of educated black Christians and has often been unable to interest the white theologians against whose theology it was supposedly first developed. Further, it has been unable to develop organic links with the popular struggles of especially

³⁰James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969): 33.

³¹*Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 13.

³²Robert J. Taylor, Michael C. Thornton and Linda M. Chatters, "Black Americans' Perceptions of the Sociohistorical Role of the Church," *Journal of Negro History* 18, no. 2 (1987) and Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

the black working-class people, the most exploited segment of the black community.³³

According to Harris, the challenge of bridging this gap is not impossible.³⁴

In the 1970s and 1980s several works expounded upon black identity and blacks in the Bible. This knowledge, if received by congregations, would strengthen Black Theology and churches. Black Christians would no longer identify with persons in the Old Testament because of a similar experience, but because they believed that these individuals were themselves black. Black religious scholars began to fervently argue that blacks had a positive presence in the Bible.³⁵ Publications written in the area of black biblical interpretation included works by Charles Copher.³⁶

As an outcome of the Civil Rights Movement, the search for a cultural identity in the Bible increased along with the consciousness of the African-American community.

Scholarship on black biblical studies gained more credibility and began to reach those in the

³³ Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989): 1.

³⁴ Forrest C. Harris, Sr., ed., "What Does it Mean to be Black and Christian?" (Nashville: Townsend Press, 1995): x. Jacqueline Trussell, "Making Religion Relevant: "What Does it Mean to be Black and Christian?" [viewed January 2004] <http://www.blackandchristian.com/articles/academy/trussell-02-01.shtml>

³⁵ It would be remiss to not mention one of the earliest biblical studies regarding blacks in the bible, written by Rev. R. A. Morrissey. *Colored People and Bible History*, published in 1925, detailed the genealogy of Ham in Genesis 10 and 1 Chronicles 1. It took several decades before another publication raised questions concerning black Christian identity. In 1968, Albert Cleage wrote *The Black Messiah* attempting to seek freedom from the images of the white Jesus.

³⁶Jacqueline Trussell, "Making Religion Relevant: What Does It Mean To Be Black And Christian?"; Copher, Charles B., *Black Biblical Studies: an Anthology of Charles B. Copher: Biblical and Theological Issues on the Black presence in the Bible* (Chicago, Ill.: Black Light Fellowship, 1993).

pews. Black Christian clergy added kente cloth to their ministerial robes and hung portraits of Jesus as a black man in their sanctuaries.³⁷ The black church began to embrace an African-centered ideology and worship experience. To be effective in the pulpit, these ministers needed the research produced by black biblical scholars to help translate the Bible into a language that spoke to the people's African roots.

In *Africans Who Shaped Our Faith*, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. offers twelve sermons delivered from the pulpit of his church, that dispel the myth of the "white man's religion."³⁸ The messages exemplify the use of black biblical interpretation in delivering the word of God to the people in the pew. He discusses the lives of black biblical characters from the Old Testament to the New Testament and shows the comparison between them and everyday Christians. Simultaneously, black theology and black biblical interpretation assisted African-American religious institutions, clergy, and congregants in gaining answers to the questions of finding an African-American Christian identity.

The importance of collecting the history of these religious institutions has an impact on the theology that is taught and on the history of America. As the twenty-first century spawns new interpretation and thought, one cannot help but recognize the importance of the foundation that was laid to bring African Americans this far. The "Preservation of Black Church History Project" is one project working towards "the preservation of Black church history in various denominations as part of the social action of churches to be integrated into

³⁷Personal Communication Reverend Timothy McDonald; Trussell "Making Religion Relevant: What Does It Mean To Be Black And Christian?"

³⁸Jeremiah W. Wright, Jr., *Africans Who Shaped Our Faith*, (Chicago: Urban Ministries, 1995): 140-41.

the language, the activities, the ecclesial identity of congregations as a primary task of ministry.”³⁹

While it is not necessary that this dissertation redefine the black church in the twenty-first century, it is crucial to acknowledge the fluidity of blackness, black culture, and the black experience. Instead, its agenda is to empower people of color spiritually, socially, economically, politically and educationally. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the increase in clergy, churches, and congregations engaged in the understanding and incorporating of black theology is evident. However, not without its challenges the concept of the Christian faith disregarding color and sustaining on universal love remains. Therefore the black church does not segregate but elevate as a cultural institution that services the hearts and minds of the community, which it serves. Hopkins “observed when black Christian masses, who hear the word of God translated into a language relevant to their lives and experience as African-American Christians, apply a proactive response to the needs of the communities where they live, work, and serve.”⁴⁰ At the symposium aired on C-SPAN, "The State of the Black Church: Relevant, Repressive, or Reborn?" Michael Eric Dyson stated "the church's extraordinary leadership can articulate the moral center of a black religious tradition that continues to speak out on whatever issue burdens black America."⁴¹

³⁹ "Preservation of Black Church History Project," The Kelly Miller Smith Research Project, *Documenting the History of African American Churches in Tennessee*, <http://www.abcnash.edu/project.html> [cited August 2003].

⁴⁰ Dwight N. Hopkins, "A Conversation with Dwight N. Hopkins," interview in *The University of Chicago Chronicle* (April 3, 1997): 5. (available in Trussell's article as well).

⁴¹"The State of the Black Church: Relevant, Repressive, or Reborn?" held at Detroit's Cobo Convention Center, aired on C-SPAN, 2/8/2003 *Role of the Church in Black America* Videotape #175009.

From W.E. B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson to the scholars of today, the black church is necessary to understand the black experience.⁴² Scholars have consistently underscored that the black church is one of the few stable and coherent institutions to emerge from slavery. The black church has been autonomous since its inception, an unchallenged center of community life that is primarily built, financed, and controlled by African- Americans.⁴³

The debate over what a black church is remains as controversial as when it was first established. Does the black church evidence a distinct style of worship, planned activities, and separate denominations? Or is it an institution that thinks of its race first as it keeps the issues that affect its community in the forefront of its members' minds, providing a safe haven where one of African descent can be him or herself?

The definition of the black church has evolved over the years. It is important to note that two or more centuries ago, the black church was only defined by its differing style. Generalizations have been made categorizing the church according to its vibrant music, soul-stirring sermons, and enthusiastic worship. Rather than distinguishing the black church by its predominantly black membership and its activist role in empowering the black community and shaping the black experience. In the twenty-first century, the black church remains one of the few institutions in America that is built, financed, and controlled completely by people of color.

⁴²C. Eric Lincoln, *Race, Religion, and the Continuing American Dilemma* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999).

⁴³Lawrence N. Jones, "The Relevance of the Black Church: An Historic Overview" (paper presented at the First National Assembly of Black Churches: Lifting as We Climb, New Orleans, LA, April 4-6 1984): 8. Lincoln & Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1990): 1-2.

This dissertation treats the black church as “a kind of sociological and theological shorthand reference to the pluralism of black Christian churches in the United States.”⁴⁴ This operational definition is not limited to “those independent, historic, and totally black-controlled denominations, which were founded after the Free African Society of 1787 and which constituted the core of black Christians.”⁴⁵ Instead,

...the black church is not a single, monolithic institution. It does not share a defined hierarchy, corporate structure, or doctrine. It is an aggregate of black denominations, free-standing congregations, and predominantly black congregations within majority group denominations. It is large churches, small churches, urban and rural churches, struggling churches with minuscule memberships, mission congregations, and storefront and house churches. It is megachurches with thousands of members, multipoint churches in the far country and back woods. It is churches under Episcopal jurisdiction, under synodical and Presbyterian authority and it is self-governing congregations who insist upon radical self-determination. Denominationally, it is Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal and an uncounted number of faith denominations. In sum, the black church is the structural and functional dimension of the black experience with Christianity in the United States.⁴⁶

The black church is a unique cultural institution whose records need to be preserved.

⁴⁴Lincoln & Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*: 1-2.

⁴⁵Ibid 2.

⁴⁶Jones, "The Relevance of the Black Church: An Historic Overview," 8.

Collective Memory: Recordkeeping & History

In addition to the theory of social and cultural consciousness (referring specifically to blackness) as expressed by black scholars such Cone and Collins the role that archives have in the collective memory should be explored. These concepts stress the importance of documenting culture and tradition, in particular the notion of accountability and custody⁴⁷. Black church documentation is in part the result of individual efforts by its participants to provide evidence of this institution. It is also the product of those who were and are involved in systematizing its documentation for present and future use.

Although the practice and creation of records⁴⁸ to preserve identity and memory dates back to ancient times, nineteenth and twentieth century archivists created two distinct methods for different types of material, purpose and organizations. Records managers and manuscript curators are mainly responsible for these distinct processes. Records managers center their work on the administrative functions of an organization. The process includes rigid schedules where documents are retrieved, stored and destroyed on a routine basis. The use of the documents is evidentiary or functional, primarily for administrative purposes and compliance with government or regulatory statutes.

Manuscript curators focus on the historical and uniqueness of documents. The schedules established for retrieval and storage tend to be more flexible and the destruction of an article is rare. These discreet differences in practice do not decrease the importance of the role of

⁴⁷Custody implies physical and legal control. The custodial institution is responsible for the maintenance, storage, preservation, and accessibility of records.

⁴⁸Record(s) is a term used interchangeably with documents and archival material.

archives. Archives collectively reflect the memory of diverse cultures even those dominated by oral tradition. They “have an awareness of societal, institutional, and individual construction of memory and an understanding of how the implications of how memory is transmitted over time”.⁴⁹ Archives exist for the purpose of preserving the authentic record of their time (regardless of format) for generations to come, connecting the past with the present.⁵⁰ Memory is challenging because it “is notoriously selective in individuals, in societies and in archives. With memory comes forgetting. With memory comes the inevitable privileging of certain records and records creators and the marginalizing or silencing of others.”⁵¹

In *Modern Archives; Principles and Techniques*, Schellenberg described the challenges that all archivists face. He suggested that archival practices “would be shaped by the dominant characteristics of those materials: their organic character; diverse form and content; and sheer volume.”⁵² Archives are often categorized by the agency that creates the records

⁴⁹Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, "Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: The Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment" (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information resources, February 2000).

⁵⁰David A. Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom, "Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternative Service Delivery Options," in *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, ed. Randall C. Jimerson (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2000).

⁵¹Terry Cook, Beyond the Screen: The Records Continuum and Archival Cultural Heritage (Australian Society of Archivists, August 18 2000 [cited September 2001]); available from www.archivists.org.au/sem/conf2000/terrycook.pdf.

⁵²T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

housed. This includes public and private facilities, not for profit and corporate facilities, federal, state and local repositories.

If collections are traditionally established on the basis of who created or maintained the documents and for a specific purpose, then developing small archives can combat bias and also serve as a means of educating the public, memorializing the people and securing the memory of the institution and its involvement with society. The different depiction of archivists in the literature also confirms their changing roles. Archivists are no longer seen “as passive keepers of documentary detritus, Luc de Sante's ‘caretakers in the boneyards of information,’ or Jenkinson's neutral, impartial custodians of inherited records, but as Terry Cook's ‘active shapers of archival heritage ... intervening agents conscious of their own historicity in the archive-creating process,’ or Hedstrom's builders of ‘interfaces with time.’”⁵³

In the nineteenth century pioneer scholars in archival literature established rules and techniques that often still govern the profession today. Jenkinson formalized custody of records in Britain, with the understanding that records were evidence to hold the government accountable to the public and therefore must be safeguarded. It was Jenkinson who made the

⁵³ Margaret Hedstrom, “Interfaces with Time”, Keynote Address to the Australian Society of Archivists 1998 Conference, Place, *Interface and Cyberspace: Archives at the Edge*, Fremantle, August 1998 available from Sue McKemmish, "The Smoking Gun: Recordkeeping and Accountability" (paper presented at the Records and Archives Now – Who Cares? - 22nd Annual Conference of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, Dunedin, 1/1/03 3-5 September 1998): 4.

distinction between documents and archives based on custody. He rationalized that documents become archives when they are set aside for preservation in an official capacity.⁵⁴

Schellenberg provided a more detailed explanation of archival custody in America. He defined custody as guardianship of records that included physical possession and legal responsibility.⁵⁵ However, both Jenkinson and Schellenberg were referring to records management. Burke focused his archival techniques in manuscript collections. He argued that the purpose of an archive is for historical use, a main societal benefit regardless of what type of archivist.⁵⁶ Burke's emphasis is less on the custody of the documents and more on how they are organized or arranged. However, this technique is directly related to the custodian of the documents. It is the custodian that essentially determines the value of each document. As technology becomes more complex the concept of custody requires further explanation. For example, electronic records require that the custody of records be shared between the office of origination and the repository where it is stored.⁵⁷

The literature contends custody serves an archival purpose only if it accommodates the people and events that the records themselves are related to or to the collective memory that

⁵⁴Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London: P. Lund, Humphries & co., ltd, 1937).

⁵⁵Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*.

⁵⁶Frank Burke, "The Future of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44 (1981).

⁵⁷Randall C. Jimerson, ed., *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2000).

they serve or create. Underneath the concept of recordkeeping are the concepts of evidence, accountability and the creation of memory.⁵⁸ Cook stated that

...whether archives are primarily administrative, juridical entities or heritage, cultural ones and deeper yet whether archives are passive objective documentary evidence of past actions or active subjective constructions of social memory.... Archives are a source of memories about the past, about history, heritage, culture, about personal roots and family connections, about who we are as human beings and about glimpses into our common humanity and shared identities through recorded information in all media.⁵⁹

Cook and Hedstrom concluded that, “archivists become agents of corporate and societal memory, participants in processes that shape the record and provide interpretative interfaces to the past.”⁶⁰ If this construct is true, religious archives not only administer the historical records of a religious denomination or congregation, but evidential and symbolic value for the institution and community.⁶¹ With all the research, diversification and development in the

⁵⁸Terry Cook, "Archives, Evidence and Memory: Thoughts on a Divided Tradition," *Archival Issues* 22 (1993). Cook, "Beyond the Screen: The Records Continuum and Archival Cultural Heritage"

⁵⁹Terry Cook, "What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (1997).

⁶⁰Sue McKemmish, "The Smoking Gun: Recordkeeping and Accountability" (paper presented at the Records and Archives Now – Who Cares? - 22nd Annual Conference of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, Dunedin, 1/1/03 3-5 September 1998): 4

⁶¹Maygene F. Daniels, "Introduction to Archival Terminology," in *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice* (Washington, D.C.: National

archival profession, religious archivists continue to have difficulty relating to this paradigm.⁶² Religious archives are comprised of dynamic collections. A combination of historic documents that tell the story of the institution and related groups, administrative documents, that record the functionality of the organization, and theological materials that reflect the religious principles and faith that govern the body. It is through these collections that the congregation and the community that it serves explores the past, understands the present, and finds new direction for the future. The current state of archives in religious institutions is limited in structure and implementation. Although different types of informal and formal recordkeeping programs exist and archivists are not responsible for reconstructing history, historians' reliance on primary sources (written documentation) remains incomplete, particularly when referring to blacks.⁶³

When discussing memory and cultural institutions, interpreting the meaning of memory can become elusive. These institutions house items that reflect the memory of a person, group, and/or community. It is a collective, social, and/or cultural memory that is restored or exhibited. These types of memory often stimulate individual, personal, and family memory. Already, multiple definitions of memory have been implied. However, one thing is certain:

Archives and Records Service, 1984). James O'Toole, "The Symbolic Significance of Archives," *American Archivist* 56 (1993).

⁶²James M. O'Toole, "What's the Difference About Religious Archives?," *The Midwestern Archivist* 9, no. 2 (1984) and Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000).

⁶³Robert Schuster, ""Everyone Did What Was Right in His Own Eyes": Nondenominational Fundamentalist/Evangelical/Pentecostal Archives in the United States," *American Archivist* 52 (1989): 367.

memory is “the power of the mind,”⁶⁴ a perception and believed truth. The controversy surrounding the concept of memory is that these mental images, stored in the individual mind or brain, are strongly influenced by other outside forces, thereby making it difficult to determine whether memory is recalled or created⁶⁵.

Memory is studied in several disciplines from the natural and cognitive sciences to the social sciences. In the cognitive sciences, memory is a term regarding “a set of cognitive capacities by which a person retains information and reconstructs past experiences usually for present purposes.”⁶⁶ However, this definition does not clearly show the relationship that memory has with society. Memory preserves and helps individuals and groups define themselves, their families, associations, and events over time. In the social sciences, memory refers to individuals’ personal experience, how they refine and retain it, and how they inherit memory from preceding generations and pass it on to the next.⁶⁷

The intent of this dissertation is not to focus on the scientific or psychological explanation of memory, but rather on how it is utilized, embraced, and reflected in society. This dissertation focuses more on the concepts of collective memory and it’s relation to history, archives and repositories that link the past with the present.

⁶⁴John Sutton, *Philosophy and Memory Traces* (Cambridge UP, 1998). “History of Theories of Memory” <http://www.phil.mq.edu.au/staff/jsutton/Memoryhistoryoftheories.html>

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Thomas Butler, ed., *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989): 97-113.

Traditionally, human memory has been seen as an archive from which specific items can be retrieved in the process of remembering. It has, however, long been recognized that, in fact, “human memory does not behave like the hard disk of your computer; it is not always accurate and reliable. Human memory can fail completely or it can be influenced by a variety of different factors, and the past can thus be altered”⁶⁸. Lowenthal expounds further by suggesting that invoking memory perhaps manipulates history to serve the needs of the dominant group or individual. With knowledge or propaganda comes or retains power. Nora agrees stating that “memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.”

The personal recollections of past events and experiences are often reflections that are accompanied by a familiar feeling, adding another dimension to the concept of memory.⁶⁹ Memories are blended. They are not formed independently at one time, but rather can be reconstructed and/ or reproduced. Collective memory is the concept that memories are recollections shared by many, memory that is constructed by a group of individuals and their common experiences. Collective memory` can be reflected and influenced by traditions and perceptions fostered by physical and large mediums such as the media or cultural ideology and institutions. The concept of collective memory is also interpreted as being a set of ideas

⁶⁸ Lowenthal, David. *Possessed by the Past: the Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Free Press, 1996): 193–210.

⁶⁹John Sutton [cited February 2003]
<http://www.phil.mq.edu.au/staff/jsutton/ECSmemory.htm>

or personal memories that are not entirely personal⁷⁰, whereas cultural memory has the added value of a particular race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or creed, and is therefore social on even a larger scale.

One of the most cited works regarding collective memory is Halbwachs *The Social Framework of Memory*, written in 1925. A student of Emile Durkheim, Halbwachs argues that memory is constructed by the operations and structure of society and societal events. He contends that it is not possible for individuals to consistently and accurately remember experiences outside of their group context. “It is in society that people normally acquire memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize memories.”⁷¹

However, this seems contradictory or at least problematic because Halbwachs discusses individual memories so much that collective memory cannot exist without individual memory, which is how some scholars have created the distinction between social and collective memory⁷². Throughout Halbwach’s scholarship, he mentions autobiographical memory, historical memory, and collective memory, exploring their affect on the perception and writing of history and the development of commemorative events and cultural institutions such as museums, archives and monuments. He examines how these factors are developed by or focused on individuals, again creating a gray area that calls for the wider

⁷⁰Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser. *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

⁷¹ Ibid 38.

⁷² Jeffrey K. Olick, *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

interpretation of memory that social memory tries to imply. It is social memory that leads to or becomes a repository for all past experiences and events.⁷³

One important group of factors, as Halbwachs argued, derives from the social arena which people always inhabit when they remember. Halbwachs stressed how strongly social processes influence not only people's personal memories of their own lifetimes but also a community's shared memories of the past. Such collective memories are crucial for the identity of groups such as families, believers of a religion, or social classes.

However, more recent scholars Young and Nora suggest that societies cannot remember in any other way than through their constituents' memories. Young in particular suggests that it be called 'collected memory' rather than 'collective memory'⁷⁴. Likewise, scholars in the humanities have argued that memory of the past is not only influenced by but also constituted by social contexts of the present.⁷⁵ Interestingly, Halbwachs accepts the academic study of history from such social influences and thus maintains a strong division between history and memory. According to Halbwachs, it would, in principle, be possible to distill accurate memories of the past by removing the social layers of individual accounts, thus bringing to light the originally archived item⁷⁶.

⁷³ John F. Kihlstrom, "Memory Research: The Convergence of Theory and Practice." [cited August 2004] <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~kihlstrm/pam94.htm>.

⁷⁴ James Edward Young. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993): XI.

⁷⁵ David Middleton and Derek Edwards (eds.), *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage, 1990): 46-59; James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992).

⁷⁶ Thompson 1988: 110–117, 150

Halbwachs noted the conflict between the concepts of history and memory and others began to further explore it. Past psychologists, such as Bartlett doubted whether groups created stories about themselves just as individuals do and for the same reasons: to conserve and reproduce their history and to define their nature.⁷⁷ Halbwachs believed that, although recollections of the past are based on distortions, memory serves a viable function. He asserts that “as soon as a person and each historical fact has permeated this memory, it is transposed into teaching, a notion or a symbol and takes on a meaning.”⁷⁸

Historians have used Halbwachs’ theory and applied it to various studies on community, stating that religious or political influence of the time greatly affects memory, therefore if historical memory is bias so too is collective memory.⁷⁹ Lifton, in his moving study of the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima, noted that the people he interviewed tended to have very similar accounts of the event, regardless of their distance from the epicenter at the time of the explosion.⁸⁰ Warsawki’s dissertation, "The Role of Archives in Remembering the Holocaust (Collective Memory)" and Thelen’s *Memory and American History* also showed the interweaving of personal, collective and societal influences on memory.⁸¹ Warsawki’s

⁷⁷ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

⁷⁸ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*: 188.

⁷⁹ Paul Antze and Michael Lambek. *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1996): vii.

⁸⁰ Robert J. Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Random House, 1967).

⁸¹ Warshawski, Marlene R. "The Role of Archives in Remembering the Holocaust (Collective Memory)." Dissertation: Columbia University, 1996; David Thelen, “Memory and American History.” *Journal of American History*, 1989, 75: 1119.

showed the impact of collective memory and how it presented itself in memorials and museums.

Le Goff discusses the relationship between history and memory as well. One of the main uses of memory is to provide a linkage between the past and the present and ultimately the future. This linkage is accomplished in many ways. Durkheim's work on the sociology of knowledge (1897) concentrates on "collective representations" or socially generated set of ideas that are not simply aggregates of individual ideas but belong to a reality (*sui generis*). One of the main conclusions of his study of the origins of religions (1915) is that religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities. The rites performed excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states of the social groups. Durkheim attributes the bonding that results from these rituals and traditions to the ceremonies that are central to the group. Continuity is assured by art and figures. However, while these objects and ceremonial rituals solidify collective life, what happens when and if these types of objects and practices are absent?

Halbwachs claims that the void in Durkheim's theories is actually filled by collective memory. His main queries are based on the discussion of remembering and on the origin of memory as a way to produce and recall facts. Halbwachs distinguishes between personal memory and historical memory. These two concepts differ in their sequence and base unit, the individual and the group.⁸² Individual memory relies on others' remembrance to evoke its content. It requires an individual go back to reference points that are determined by society.

⁸² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*: 50, 69.

Halbwachs also discusses social time and introduces the idea of adopting one memory type or another. He claims that society has all the necessary information for reconstructing certain parts of the past even though this information may be incomplete and indefinite or even gone from memory. To remember is to act purposefully. Halbwachs contends that the process of remembering is to focus attention on something and that the intervention of collective memory overrides that of an individual's memory. The power of the groups' thoughts in the form of tradition or ceremony is the dominant memory. Halbwachs concludes with the distinction of historical memory and notes that written records become the historical records of the collective memory.

In addition, Hosbawn considers the past as prior to the events that are directly recorded in an individual memory. He defines the past as a tool to cope with the change and progress, in later work he discusses a link between the past and the present by focusing mainly on the meaning of invented tradition.

Three types of invented traditions are discussed: those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion, those establishing or legitimizing institutions, and those whose main purpose is socialization. The discussion primarily revolves around the importance of studying tradition and custom, and how tradition serves and functions to provide group cohesion and as a basis for historical memory. The result is a rich resource for the historian seeking to rediscover the past.

Those who consider themselves keepers of history are individuals who preserve vital information that leads to historical narratives and perception. Historical studies of memory have traditionally had two major points, that personal/individual memory and collective/cultural memory are constructed, not reproduced, and that this construction is not

made alone but in discourse with others in the contexts of community and other social dynamics.⁸³

In the late eighties the *Journal of American History* devoted a special issue to the problems of memory and history. The issue offered critical analysis of the reliance on oral materials. It included McGlone's research of how the remembrance of John Brown by his children changed to create a different family identity from that preceding the Harper's Ferry raid.⁸⁴ In addition, Bodnar's research concerning the differences between workers' and managers' perception of life at the Studebaker plant in South Bend, Indiana. David Thelen also analyzed the memories of those involved in the discovery of the Watergate tapes and how each participant's story changed as the climate of the time changed.

Scientific studies are important because they explain how the brain functions and how memory fits into the equations. Bartlett and Sutton are among the scholars who have looked at memory from a medical and psychological perspective. These studies have clearly explained the impacts of age, illness, and emotion on memory. Although it is not often explored, scientists have concluded that individual memory is formed in the mind but influenced by others and environment. No one memory is truly yours. "The sensory nerves cause the brain to react; that is why there are so many degrees or definitions of memory. One can recall an event, but it is so influenced by emotion and others that it becomes a perspective that differs from other people who were there. What you remember may be something someone told you or it was such a special or horrible night that the thoughts you

⁸³ David Thelen. "Memory and American History." *Journal of American History* (75): March 1989: 1119.

⁸⁴ Ibid 1129.

develop are not 'pure' or 'accurate'."⁸⁵ These scientific or cognitive explanations lead us to the bias of social institution and the issue of how history is told. Everything is a story; the more people who agree, the more truthful it seems. Memory becomes more than perception; memory becomes belief itself.

Therefore, cultural institutions become memory triggers rather than holders of memory. This creates the essential question of whether the past and present can be separated when discussing memory or when actually remembering. Can a particular event or process remembered correspond to the actual past? Some scholars, historians in particular have tried to tackle this issue. Like archivists and curators, they have concerned themselves with matters that are specific to the context, conditions, and personal and social implications under which memory is constructed and told.⁸⁶ This insight has become the basis for recent work in Oral History and reflects the concern surrounding how, when, and by whom the memory reflection of memory originates.⁸⁷

Historically societies have relied on written records and increasingly on electronic records to discuss and retrieve their history. However, churches abide by an oral tradition; a perception of reality based on feeling and belief in a higher being. For blacks, the church served as accountability through the records within its custody, which affect the collective memory of the nation's memory.

⁸⁵ John Symons, "Recollecting and Representing: Historical Perspectives on the Scientific Explanation of Memory."

⁸⁶ Thelen, 1989: 1125; Fentress and Wickham. *Social Memory*: XI.

⁸⁷ Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994): 10-12, 19-20.

In *A Study Guide for Discovering and Preserving African American Church History Documents*, individuals are encouraged to preserve “existing sources of oral, pictorial and recorded history...including history of individual African-American churches.”⁸⁸ The Study Guide also noted “few churches have maintained good files and records” and further states that many churches have produced historical sketches for commemorative programs, “but much of the history of the church remains buried in dust-covered boxes in attics and broom closets.”⁸⁹ Furthermore, “in some instances members have retained their own private collections of memorabilia and in many instances historical facts may only be obtained by talking with the most senior members of the church.”⁹⁰ The introduction of the guide concludes that the “spiritual and the socio-economic” endeavors of the church need to be collected and preserved for better discovery and interpretation of American history.⁹¹

The archival deficiencies found in churches, and the black church in particular, are not necessarily unique. For years, cultural institutions in America have lacked collections supporting the black experience; with the exception of federal repositories such as the Library of Congress and the National Archives (NARA) that housed such materials since the

⁸⁸ "A Study Guide for Discovering and Preserving African American Church History Documents," ed. Kelly Miller Smith Institute Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1991): 2.

⁸⁹Ibid. and Roswell F. Jackson and Rosalyn M. Patterson, "A Brief History of Selected Black Churches in Atlanta, Georgia," *Journal of Negro History* 74, no. 1/4 (1989): 33, 45.

⁹⁰Ibid 46.

⁹¹Ibid 35.

late 1800s.⁹² Although there existed “early African-American bibliographies, mostly booksellers’ lists and catalogues or private libraries and collections,” the coverage was minimal, thus leading to the Bibliography Project of the Negro in Africa and America Project.⁹³ Along with increased support of the Tuskegee Institute’s Department of Records and Research, this project resulted in the compilation of a “comprehensive retrospective listing of sources by and about people of African descent” written by Monroe Nathan Work.⁹⁴

Despite the efforts of private foundations such as the Carnegie Corporation and Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, American libraries and archives “generally showed no interest in collecting primary source materials that dealt specifically with black culture.”⁹⁵ In

⁹²Debra Newman Ham, "Manuscript Curators and Specialists," in *Public History: Essays from the Field*, ed. James B. and Peter S. LaPaglia Gardner (Florida: Krieger Publishing Co., 1999). p. 172, 174-75 Professor Ham, former specialist of African American history at the Library Congress and archivist at the National Archives writes of her experiences and the interest in blacks that these institutions exhibited. Annette Hoage Phinazee, "Definition of Areas Needing Development Criteria for Selecting Materials," in *Materials by and About American Negroes: Papers Presented at an Institute/ Sponsored by the Atlanta University School of Library Service*, with the Cooperation of the Trevor Arnett Library, ed. Annette Hoage Phinazee (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1967). Jeffrey C. and Faith Davis Ruffin Stewart, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1828-1984," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenweig (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986).

⁹³Sibyl E. Moses, "The Influence of Philanthropic Agencies on the Development of Monroe Nathan Work's: Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America," *Libraries and Culture* 31/2: 338.

⁹⁴Ibid 326.

⁹⁵Jacqueline Goggin, "Carter G. Woodson and the Collection of Source Materials for Afro-American History," *American Archivist* 48 (1985): 261.

the South, manuscripts “were either lost, hoarded, in attics or rotted away in corncribs or other outbuildings,” many “disappeared because few persons in the region recognized their value as historical evidence.”⁹⁶ Historians such as Ulrich B. Phillips, Carter G. Woodson and John Franklin Jameson became archival advocates, collecting materials to preserve such material. Although, “collecting plantation records, diaries, and letters of white planters,” was a strong beginning, “this documentation did not adequately reflect the black experience.”⁹⁷ Woodson and others began to collect historical documents and sociological data on blacks such as “unused primary sources...birth and death certificates, wills, inventories of estates, speeches, folklore, and oral histories.”⁹⁸ In annual reports Woodson (similar to DuBois) “used their existing institutions, especially churches, schools, and professional organizations, to facilitate collection” and research about blacks.⁹⁹

Later blacks such as Dorothy Porter Wesley and Arthur Alfonso Schomburg began to donate their personal collections to public and private repositories to better preserve the history of the black race.¹⁰⁰ However, segregation policies continued to hinder the collection

⁹⁶John David Smith, "The Historian as Archival Advocate: Ulrich Bonnell Phillips and the Records of Georgia and the South," *American Archivist* 52 (Summer 1989): 321.

⁹⁷Goggin, "Carter G. Woodson and the Collection of Source Materials for Afro-American History,"; John David Smith, "'Keep'em in a Fire-Proof Vault' - Pioneer Southern Historians Discover Plantation Records," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 78 (Summer 1979).

⁹⁸Goggin, 262, 264; Carter G. Woodson, "Ten Years of Collecting and Publishing the Records of the Negro," *Journal of Negro History* 10, (reprint) (October 1925).

⁹⁹Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," 6, 51.

¹⁰⁰Donald F. Joyce, "Resources for Scholars: Four Major Collections of Afro-Americana," *The Library Quarterly* 58 (April 1988). Lila Teresa Church, "What Motivates African

of these materials, particularly in the South. A bulk of information about blacks could be found in black newspaper publications and in the private libraries of historically black colleges, such as the Tuskegee Institute, Bethune Cookman College, and the Atlanta University instead of in public institutions.¹⁰¹

Studies such as “The Research Potential of Religious Archives: The Mennonite Experience” and “Things of the Spirit: Documenting Religion in New England” note the importance of church archives. Haury surveyed seven areas of secular history in which religious archives can offer resources in historical subjects such as genealogy and the history of women, economics, business, politics, education, ethnicity and culture.¹⁰² Using the Mennonite Library and Archives (Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas), Haury critically analyzed collections in each of those areas. He concluded that religious archives could be used for more than just religious themes but also for historical research in several other areas. Haury insisted on religious archivists’ need to better publicize their collections and organize them in a way that would better inform the researcher or user.

In “Things of the Spirit”, O’Toole also recommended how archivists, “both individually and collectively, can identify and preserve documentation,” that will better assist historians

Americans to Donate Personal Papers to Libraries and How Their Giving Decisions Affect the Quantity and Quality of Collections Procured for Archives" (M.S.L.S., University of North Carolina, April 1998). p. 2-3, 8 both papers discuss the motivation and intentions behind donations.

¹⁰¹Moses, "The Influence of Philanthropic Agencies on the Development of Monroe Nathan Work's: Bibliography of the Negro in Africa and America," 327.

¹⁰²David A. Haury, "The Research Potential of Religious Archives: The Mennonite Experience," *Midwestern Archivist* 11 (1986): 135.

and general users.¹⁰³ O'Toole reviewed the history of New England, focusing on activities since World War II. While both he and Haury concluded that archival sources documenting religious life are diverse, O'Toole determined that "all organized religious groups habitually maintain detailed records about their members, as well as about their own activities as institutions".¹⁰⁴ Moreover, these records "provide evidence not only of the overtly religious, liturgical, and devotional aspects of the groups' activities, but also their involvement in all facets of life, including education, social welfare work, art, and architecture, and politics."¹⁰⁵ If O'Toole and Haury's studies are applied to the black church, a significant contribution to the literature would be made in regards to the black churches role in America.

Although there are resources that list collections with an African American focus it is uncertain how many are related to or about the black church. In "African-American Documentary Resources on the World Wide Web: A Survey and Analysis", Westbrook "described, analyzed and critiqued twenty historical African American digital collections"¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³James O'Toole, "Things of the Spirit: Documenting Religion in New England," *American Archivist* 50 (Fall 1987): 500.

¹⁰⁴Ibid 501. O'Toole has served as archivist of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. There is extensive literature on the recordkeeping practices of the Catholic Church. However, due to the centrality and differences in tradition of this denomination it did not seem fair to apply such literature to the black church.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Digitization is the process of converting analog images, text, visual and audio information (with the aid of software and hardware) into digital information accessible through the Internet. Digital collections and digital projects are interchangeable terms to identify groups of digital images thematically related. SAA Glossary.

created by archival institutions, public libraries, and United States government agencies.”¹⁰⁷

Westbrooks determined that with the advancement of technology, historical documents about blacks exist, but are difficult to access. Although, these digital collections reveal materials that had been “hidden resources,” she noted that the quality of the surveyed collections was average.¹⁰⁸ It could not be determined whether or not black church documentation existed in the digital collections analyzed. These specifics were not included in Westbrook’s study.

However, sites such as *Documenting the American South* and *American Memory* are digital projects that have included religious documents that specifically represent the black church and the socio-political climate of the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹

Recently, studies pertaining to religious archives have focused on the Jewish faith and the construction of memory as it pertains to the Holocaust. With the construction of The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, other similar institutions and an increase in Jewish Historical Societies, archivists and historians debate the impact of such cultural institutions and documentation on the identity of American Jews. In *We Are What We Collect, We*

¹⁰⁷Elaine L. Westbrooks, "African-American Documentary Resources on the World Wide Web: A Survey and Analysis," *Archival Issues* 24, no. 2 (1999): 145.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid 160; Murle E. Kenerson, "African-American Heritage Collections Go Digital: Once Hidden Cultural Treasures Find the Route to Accessibility and Popularity through High Technology in Academic Libraries," *Educational Resources Information Center*, (August 1997).

¹⁰⁹“The Church in the Southern Black Community”, Documenting the American South digital project, Academic Affairs Library, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1994) <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/index.html> (cited January 2003) and “The Church in the Southern Black Community, 1780-1925”, American Memory digital project, Library Congress <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/csbccsbccintr.html> (cited January 2003)

Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity, Elisabeth Kaplan surveys the history and mission of the American Jewish Historical Society. She warns archivists of their biases and assumptions about identities. She further noted (like other archivists) that the archival record is created and used by individuals and organizations, often to support their values and missions, thereby creating a process that is rarely politically or culturally neutral.¹¹⁰

However, Warshawski concluded that regardless of this debate, if the objective is to bring better understanding about a particular event to the public, then the creation of Holocaust Centers is necessary and helpful. She surveyed 112 centers in fifteen countries and presented the results of five selected institutions that promoted awareness of the Holocaust.

Warshawski concluded that:

The centers contribute significantly to the public's understanding of the Holocaust. Incorporating the Holocaust into a nation's social and collective memory is an important function of these centers. Through commemorative events and memorial activities, these organizations help incorporate Holocaust remembrance into national agendas... In light of the growing volume of Holocaust deniers challenging the historical authenticity of this event, these centers provide the evidence required to address these issues and correct errors of omission and malice in documenting and preserving its memory.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," *The American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 147.

¹¹¹ Marlene R. Warshawski, "The Role of Archives in Remembering the Holocaust (Collective Memory)": 3.

The post civil rights era in the United States has left black churches in a strange state. While the struggle of black men and women for freedom in the new world began even before the captives reached these shores, it remains a struggle. Albeit the fight is different, with blacks no longer fighting for the iron shackles to be removed but for the institutionalized systems to be transformed to treat those of African decent as equals, without question, without being two steps ahead, simply equal.

“The political implications of Black religion in America have been varied, in that Black religion has at times reinforced survival of the Black community, stability in the wider social system, upward mobility of minority persons into that system, as well as social change, political protest and resistance, and even revolutionary actives.”¹¹² At one point black religion and black churches were negatively looked upon and deemed revolutionary, reactionary and militant. However in the twenty-first century few are even willing to acknowledge the term black church. Black seminarians are skeptical of the progression and activism of the church, while others contend that the church is a universal institution that embraces all and should not be limited by race.

Wilmore stated that “black radicalism has been basically a home grown, race conscious challenge of the roots of prejudice and discrimination in American life ... it was an attack on institutionalized racism without calling into question the underlying structures of society.”¹¹³ However not all churches embraced radicalism, particularly in the city of Atlanta.

¹¹² Sabrina Diane Williams. *African-American Religious Experience and Political Participation in an Urban Setting*. Dissertation. Michigan: Wayne State University, 1999.

¹¹³ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983): 229.

In the past black churches were small with limited financial resources and inadequately trained clergy. The proliferation of the new church bodies in the late twentieth century, weakened the total economic and political viability of the older churches as well as shattered their institutional integrity. Socialization, unification, and social action were assumed by new black secular organizations, which competed on this basis with the role of the churches.¹¹⁴

An illuminating example of past practices in collecting the history of a black church can be found in the recordkeeping practices in the black church pilot study using White Rock Baptist Church of North Carolina.

Recordkeeping and Religious Institutions

Religious archives include dynamic collections that can combine administrative documents that record the functionality of the organization, intrinsic materials that reflect the religious principles and faith that govern the body, and historical documents that tell the story of the institution and related groups. If such collections as these existed in the black church, it would be a more cohesive and stable way for the congregation and community to explore the past, understand the present, and find new direction for the future.

A significant aspect of archiving is holding the organization accountable to the people it serves, regardless of whether it is privately or publicly funded. By examining the recordkeeping practices of White Rock Baptist Church, it can be concluded that encouraging and enforcing better recordkeeping practices will better maintain the historical significance

¹¹⁴ St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black metropolis: a Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970): 427-428; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of Afro-American People*: 221-223.

and socio-economic and political impact, of black churches in the United States. Preserving the collective memory of this institution also preserves the collective memory of the community, the race, and the nation.

White Rock may not reflect all of the churches in the black community, but its origins and purpose mirror many. Its resources and commitment to better the human race make it a leading force in Durham, in North Carolina, in the South, and in America. The rich history of White Rock Baptist Church begins in 1866, just as the dust of war settled, in the home of a black woman named Sallie Husband. Over the years, what began as a small prayer meeting in her living room, grew into one of the most influential churches in Durham. Members of White Rock and some of their descendants were the founders of several black-owned businesses, including North Carolina Mutual Insurance, Farmers and Mechanics Bank, and even North Carolina Central University. Currently the congregation is comprised of local government officials, educators, leading professionals, and other members of the African-American community.

However, as unique and important as White Rock is, collecting its history has been complicated, leading to an examination of the issue of the custody of records and the attitude towards maintaining records. Like many black churches and churches in general, there is a strong oral tradition, a few files containing programs and bulletins in an office, and some kind of method for maintaining financial contributions and business transactions. Although there is evidence that White Rock believed in keeping records, there was and is no structured program, historian, or support for recordkeeping at the church.

There are examples of leaders and members writing and sharing the history for the benefit of church programs, beginning with the eleventh pastor, Reverend McDowell. He included

White Rock while writing the history of the African-American Baptist community and its influence in the Durham community. The history can be found only in White Rock's Directory, written in 1926. The thirteenth pastor, Dr. Miles Fisher, wrote an additional historical narrative with pictures of White Rock in 1943. However, Fisher's history mainly focused on the decade of 1933-1943.

Later, in preparation for the church's centennial, the history of White Rock was summarized in chronological order, mentioning each minister who served as pastor of the church, and significant events, such as involvement with other civic and religious organizations and the implementation of education and community-orientated programs.

Currently, there is a unique, historically important quilt hanging in the halls of White Rock Baptist Church. The decorative quilt is full of digitized images that include the founder of Durham's first black public library, Dr. Aaron Moore, who was also the first black physician in the area, and civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It shows other ministers, auxiliaries, church members, and prominent figures who have visited or participated in a variety of events at White Rock. A large, local housing development, named after former pastor Dr. Shepard is also pictured. This artifact is an effective, but small, means of preserving and sharing the church's rich history.

The church also has a small file, with copies of four newspaper articles dating from the 1930s to the 1970s. One discusses the relocation and building of a new church and another article includes biographical sketches of former pastors. There is a two-page chronicle of the history of White Rock, as well as a few programs of past anniversary services, one including the family tree of Margarett Faucette, who was a founding member of the church.

Approximately five years ago, the membership rolls and financial contributions were computerized. Anything prior to that installment has been lost. Although this historic, prominent church in North Carolina continues to grow, White Rock still has no official or paid historian, archivist, or records or artifacts (other than the few mentioned) in its facility.

Although some of the history can be found, there is no organized method, nor a place of storage in the church, for preserving its legacy. For 140 years, the history of this institution remains in the minds and words of its congregation.

Two elders of White Rock, Margaret Goodwin and R. Kelly Bryant have maintained private collections that contain pictures, bulletins, and their personal memories of this church and of Durham. Goodwin is the granddaughter of Charles Spaulding, a founder of North Carolina Mutual, and Kelly is the great-grandson of Margarett Faucett. They continue the oral tradition, telling stories of the glory days of Durham when it was known as the “black Wall Street” and pay tribute to their church, its members, and ancestors who invested their lives to bring the American dream to fruition.

When interviewing Mrs. Goodwin and Mr. Bryant, a question concerning the church’s lack of tangible items to represent their heritage and to inform others arose. Both seemed bothered and concerned, but merely attributed it to the lack of value placed on the history by the leadership.

“It’s all about egos,” said Mr. Bryant, “no new minister wants what the old one left. They want everything to be new.”¹¹⁵ Although, figuratively, both are walking archives, this is not the most efficient or stable way to maintain such valuable information. However, by chance,

¹¹⁵Interview with R. Kelly Bryant. April 26, 2002.

and only by chance in this case, there is a sizeable print collection of White Rock Baptist Church documents housed at a nearby University.

In the mid 1990s, in the midst of a transition between leadership, these very records were found in the church dumpster by an unknown parishioner. Those interviewed about the collection believe that the records were offered back to the church, refused by the leadership, and then offered to North Carolina Central University for safekeeping.

With no formal archival program or adequate storage at North Carolina Central University, an institution of higher learning less than a mile away, the records were moved to the Hayti Heritage Center, a cultural community center even closer, in hopes that funding would be made available to create a repository to support local history. The funding fell through, and the records remained in boxes, unkempt and unprocessed. Due to water damage, the records were then moved to the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where they currently reside. Although there is no official custody agreement, White Rock has been notified that the records exist and that they have been organized, preserved, and made accessible to the public.¹¹⁶

The finding aid for the White Rock Baptist Church collection clearly states its contents and its compliance to United States copyright law. It also notes that there are no restrictions and that the collection is held jointly with North Carolina Central University. The forty-box collection contains materials dated from the 1880s until the 1980s. However, the bulk of the collection is from the 1930s through the 1960s. It includes business and financial records,

¹¹⁶Interview with Timothy Pyatt, Archivist and (at the time) Director of the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, May 2002.

bulletins, obituaries, publications, photographs, newspaper clippings, community service announcements, correspondence, and items pertaining to the officers, operation, and maintenance of the Church. The finding aid only gives the user a taste of the historic significance of this collection. For example, some of the documentation is written on the back of old insurance forms listing the mortality rates of Americans, and there is correspondence from government agencies asking to partner for social welfare purposes. This shows that the paper that important information is written on has value and historical significance as well.

This pilot study led to questions regarding whether or not one could successfully and accurately write and maintain the history of an organization and its impact on the community and in the nation without a structured program. And whether or not a black church could continue to empower its people without knowledge of where they started and what they helped to develop. It would not be possible to consider sources for black history or local, regional, and national history for that matter, without mentioning the church and more specifically the black church. A large and varied number of records, such as baptismal and marriage records, business transactions with the local community, and financial documentation of the members, were created in connection with the administration of local communities and can now be used for local history research and genealogy.

From the days of slavery, the church was more than the social and spiritual haven for black Americans. It was also the basic administrative source, with records that can sew together a more accurate account of history.

It can be difficult to perceive how these institutions survived without a supportive program that adequately and accessibly preserves its heritage and history. There is more at

stake than complying with tax laws and government statutes. There is the collective memory of this institution and local community that should not go neglected. This collective memory is much larger than just an historical narrative of the creation and experiences of a congregation. It is a tangible collaboration of oral, pictorial, and recorded history that reflects the theology, culture, and heritage of a living community. A recordkeeping program in such an institution should reflect the many facets of the organization. Although the church's mission may be conversion, the black church undertakes many other responsibilities that distinguish it from other institutions.

Similarly, many churches are like White Rock and have maintained some files, records, and other written accounts of the past. However, much has still been lost. What would have happened if the records of White Rock Baptist Church had not been salvaged? What will happen when Mrs. Goodwin and Mr. Bryant expire? If the church is to be held accountable to the people it serves, then at least four components must be considered even if they overlap: the administrative, the theological, the communal, and the cultural.

The administrative component should include business and financial transactions and membership information. Examples include copies of the minutes of business meetings, baby dedications, or documentation of congregational and individual giving.

The theological component should include documentation of the vision and beliefs of the leadership and congregation and its affiliations to larger religious bodies, such as conventions and associations. Examples include copies of the communion affirmation, covenant or a religious pledge.

The communal component should reflect the interaction with the larger community beyond the walls of the church itself. An example would be a record of meetings for Alcoholics Anonymous, a Girl Scout troop or another type of community /town hall meeting.

Finally, the cultural component would include the history of the church, the architecture or members of the congregation. This would include past bulletins and programs, architectural drawings, building plans, biographies of key members or church leaders and church directories.

White Rock exemplifies a southern, black church that is responsible for the empowerment and uplift people in the city of Durham, where Americans in particular blacks have prospered. The existing archival material related to White Rock displays relationships with economic empowerment, social movements, personnel conflicts within the organization, and the ways in which the church has transformed itself over time. All of this can be seen as valuable information. The diligent collection and compilation of the church history can be attributed, in part, to the high levels of education that its leadership had, but it is mainly due to those caring members who chose to remember.

As is the case with many black churches, parishioners of White Rock supported colleges and universities, to outreach programs for socio-economic empowerment, and supported missionary activities at home and abroad. Throughout centuries, the black church faced challenges where social and political turmoil shaped the institution into what it is now. Today it still stands as a major resource in developing and documenting an active community, a black community, and an American community. White Rock is a reflection of this.

Prior Research

Even at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first materials pertaining to blacks, particularly black churches, remain scarce. Jackson and Patterson had difficulty documenting some churches in Atlanta, Georgia and relied heavily on commemorative programs. In their article it is clearly noted that the lack of organized written materials, such as “minutes and documented histories” in the church is detrimental and poses a great obstacle when researching it.¹¹⁷ Lincoln and Mamiya found fragments of church histories from bulletins, programs and other commemorative literature and concluded, “a survey or catalog of these local historical materials and other undiscovered church archives be preserved,” because of the critical need for their preservation.¹¹⁸

In “What’s the Difference About Religious Archives?” O’Toole determined that religious archives are different because they are based on denominational identities and in the case of the Jewish faith or black church, ethnic, racial and religious identities.¹¹⁹ If this is the case how does one develop historical recordkeeping practices in black churches?

Patkus describes three examples of management and maintenance styles in religious archives. They are: 1) records are maintained by the institution that created them, 2) records are transferred to a regional headquarters or larger religious affiliation, and 3) records are

¹¹⁷Jackson, "A Brief History of Selected Black Churches in Atlanta, Georgia": 50.

¹¹⁸Lincoln & Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. This was a follow up study to the Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson’s sociological study of African American religion in the 1930’s. Larry G. Murphy, ed., *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁹O’Toole, "What's the Difference About Religious Archives?": 99.

transferred to a non-religious repository such as a local historical society, public library or a college or university.¹²⁰ For churches with limited resources or knowledge of the significance of an archival program, these models of custody change not only the degree of accountability of a congregation, but also the meaning of the records. If the records are not housed under the roof and control of the congregation, then they must conform to that of an outside body, be it the larger religious body or outside repository such as the public library or college.¹²¹ If one were to consider the theoretical construct of the three-fold function of the records (historical, functional, theological), it may assist in choosing one of the Patkus models. Along with choosing a model, it is necessary to have a plan - a documentation strategy.¹²²

There are four components of documentation strategy: 1) choosing and defining the topic, 2) selecting advisors and establishing the site for the strategy, 3) structuring the inquiry and examining the form and substance of the available documentation, and 4) selecting and placing the documentation.¹²³ “A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York and Ordinary People” and “Extraordinary Lives: An Assessment of Primary Sources in 20th-Century New York City Social History” are examples of documentation strategy.

¹²⁰Ronald D. Patkus, "Religious Archives and the Study of History and Religion: An Essay Review of Recent Titles," *American Archivist* 60 (1997): 113.

¹²¹Schuster, ""Everyone Did What Was Right in His Own Eyes": Nondenominational Fundamentalist/Evangelical/Pentecostal Archives in the United States," *Archives in the United States.* *American Archivist* 52 (1989).

¹²² Documentation strategy is the dynamic theoretical construct of recordkeeping practices that should lead to a practical guide for the development of an archive or archival collection. (SAA Glossary)

¹²³Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist*, no. 49 (Spring 1986): 111.

In the “Case Study: Western New York” Richard Cox provides four levels of criteria for “topical documentation quality: insignificant, minimal, moderate, and significant.”¹²⁴ The “purpose of the criteria was to identify the areas of activity that were particularly important to the region’s development and nature,” and not stress the importance of one activity over another.¹²⁵ However, the working group involved felt that this did not occur. Moreover, the documentation analysis and planning required significant time allocation, discussion and resources, thus emphasizing the complexity of developing archival collections.

In “Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives,” the Wagner Labor Archives established task forces to assess documentation in a variety of historical subjects in New York. The project task forces assessed existing documentation in the areas of demographics, politics, economics, business, women's history and family life, popular culture and leisure, and religion.¹²⁶ They met with historians and records creators to assess documentation adequacy. Similar to Cox, the task force noted the difficulty in refining and implementing the documentation strategy, but both case studies resulted in a desire and plan for ensuring better documentation in each area. A documentation strategy is a plan formulated to ensure the documentation of an on-going issue, activity, event, or geographic area. This suggests that archivists look at the larger picture and their role in it.

¹²⁴Richard Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52 (Spring 1989): 198.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Andrea Hinding, "Inventing a Concept of Documentation," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993). A conference bringing together creators of records, archivists, historians and interested individuals was held in December 1993. The conference resulted in a series of reports and plans for ensuring better documentation in each area.

To establish an archival program in a religious institution is a complex and dynamic endeavor. As discussed previously there is a theoretical construct and documentation strategy that combines a records management perspective and manuscript tradition. The documentation strategy of a religious archive or collection(s) may be affected by the custody of the records and how well the policy and mission of appraisal and selection have been established.

In many ways the value of records is created by the act of recordkeeping by a specific group rather than by content or the object itself, so understanding that the essence of archives is embedded in the concept of memory is essential. Beginning with identifying where a record comes from and what it represents in its purest form and by trying to establish as truthful an account of the situation as possible. The “knowledge of historical trends and of the content of particular collections become essential components in making informed, professional decisions about appraisal, arrangement, description, physical preservation and reference, but reading and retaining archival theory or archival procedures will not assist the archivist in determining historical significance of a group of records.”¹²⁷

¹²⁷John Roberts, "Archival Theory: Much Ado About Shelving," *American Archivist* 50 (1987).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Assumptions

This research assumed that there were no standards or adequate procedures to sufficiently or effectively document black church history and memory. It also assumed that there was inadequate knowledge about the importance of such documentation, as well as limited resources available to document, preserve, and maintain such materials. These assumptions were tested through this research.

Scope of the Study

Six black churches in the Atlanta metropolitan area were chosen for this research. There are brief descriptions of each church in the results section and highlights of their significant contributions to the history of Atlanta and the achievements of blacks in America.

Methods

This is a qualitative study of six black churches using a triangulation of methods: 1) content analysis; 2) interviews and 3) a survey. An analysis of all permissible and available documentation that reflected the policies and procedures of the church, such as program bulletins, business records, financial statements, membership rosters, denominational requirements, and historical accounts were examined. Interviews were conducted with staff

persons who were responsible for the materials viewed. A survey of church leadership and congregants was conducted to evaluate the importance of recordkeeping practices in the church.

Basis of the Research

This research is based in the theory of social and cultural consciousness as expressed by black scholars like theologian James Cone, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, and author bell hooks.

This research explores the impact of recordkeeping practices on collective memory and archival concepts such as accountability and custody.

Data Collection

A variety of data collection strategies and data sources were utilized during this study. In the initial stage of research, all available documentation at each site was analyzed. The goal of the examination was to produce a detailed description of policies and practices for documenting the activities, history, and memory at the institutions.

First, an examination of macro level documentation was conducted to investigate the appraisal decision-making process. The macro analysis included the following types of documentation that reflect the policies and procedures of the churches: program bulletins, business records, financial statements, membership rosters, denominational requirements, and historical accounts.

Second, micro level documentation was examined in order to explore specific disposition decisions. The micro level analysis incorporated collection policies or directives, and/or

correspondence relevant to the church. Documents of a more personal level, such as notes to and from the Pastor, belong to this category.

Interviews were conducted with the staff responsible for drafting and implementing archival policy at each institution, often times they were either the church secretary or Pastor. The purpose of the interviews was to request clarification of policies and procedures and to generate an understanding of what constitutes recordkeeping practices for a church.

Research Approach & Methodology

Research questions: What recordkeeping practices exist in selected black churches? How does the experience of these churches enhance our understanding of the relationship between archives and institutional/collective memory?

This research focused on the materials needed to study and preserve the memory of the black church, the black experience and, more largely, the American experience. This dissertation sought to determine how these black churches perceive their function of broadening the public's understanding of its significance and of the black experience. The dissertation aimed to interpret the processes involved in transforming and transmitting historical and social memory over time. It also studied the practices, the creation and maintenance of the history of the selected churches, and identified the combined characteristics of collective memory, and provided information on the circumstances under which these institutions were or were not able to establish effective documentation strategies and recordkeeping practices.

The how and why questions are what led to this study, if the black church is such a prevalent force in American history, is there documentation to prove it? Where is this

documentation? Are churches themselves the main contributors? In many respects, this study attempts to analyze established recordkeeping practices or the lack of them.

The following questions motivated this research and were thus fundamental to the inquiry.

Are there existing collections? Do these churches keep records and, if so, do they contribute significantly to the public's understanding of the Black experience? How were these collections established and for what reasons? Is there a relationship between the custody of documents with the institutional memory?

Creating the research question for this study was difficult mainly because of the lack of literature on formal recordkeeping practices. The following assumptions were made 1) the Black church is a unique religious institution, 2) the role of the Black church is significant when discussing black culture and American history, 3) there is insufficient documentation and primary sources that provide evidence of the existence and work of the Black church. The need for an exploratory study was important to provide a stronger foundation for future research. The under laying idea that motivated the study is that the contribution of primary sources and documentation of Black churches should begin within the institution. The study tested the archival theory of custody.

It was important to include a variety of denominations, because the definition of the black church has evolved beyond that of scholars such as Lincoln and Mamiya, who included only a few denominations, based on the concept of those organized and operated solely by African Americans. By attending meetings with the Concerned Black Clergy of Atlanta, as well as having the opportunity to speak to the group formally on the agenda I was able to solicit the help from a diverse body.

The churches selected for the study were contacted using the Concerned Black Clergy (CBC), an “interfaith, interdenominational, inclusive, non-partisan” organization that unifies black churches in the Atlanta area for support and social action as a resource.¹²⁸ CBC administration is comprised of representatives from fourteen Atlanta area churches. The organization has over one hundred churches represented in its membership. At the time of this research there were no representatives of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in attendance or within the membership of CBC. In addition, because the AME Church already has formal archival practices in place, the researcher chose not to identify a participant from this denomination.

The selected churches that participated reflect whether the existing documentation mirrors the institutional and collective memory of the church. The churches selected represented different demographics, including location, income, age and congregation size. The subjects studied determined the types of systems and methods used to provide documentation that reflected the activities and role of the church in community events as well as daily church activities. Specific filing systems and storage locations were identified, their strengths and weaknesses analyzed, and their effectiveness evaluated. The evolution of such systems was traced to see how they have changed and why. What worked? What did not? Finally this study identified differences between theory and practice and compared and contrasted formal archival practices with informal.

A series of exploratory case studies were examined. A specific program may reveal variations in its definition and its components. In the situation of archives, custody becomes

¹²⁶Pamphlet of the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. founded in 1982.

an essential issue.¹²⁹ The studies addressed how recordkeeping practices affected the established memory of the institution and its relationship to the past experiences of a people. The goal of this research was to develop a foundation of understanding of archival practices for further research. Yin suggests that the question of “what” can be addressed by many methods; however, to determine the “what” seems to be suited by content analysis and survey, which is why there will be a triangulation of methodology. Broadly, two variables exist: the individual (church member) and the collective body (church). Within these variables a significant number of indicators that lend themselves to data collection. Such as, the researcher may consider the education, income, or community involvement of the church member and age, size, or community involvement of the congregation.

The methods employed included content analysis, interviews and a survey. Content analysis is more than the meaning of messages it involves the analysis of data as symbolic entities the value of the document itself and its implications. The materials reviewed for this research was examined and categorized into two groupings administrative and historical and not the three-fold Patkus model (historical, functional, and theological) as stated in Chapter Two. The materials that the researcher was able to review fell into functional and historical. After all the data was collected it seemed reasonable and easily explainable to change the term functional to administrative.

The initial analysis of content was to get an understanding of what is being maintained and why. To indulge in extensive analysis where the content is dissected would have led to a greater understanding of the how materials are constructed, and with difficulty the intent

¹²⁹ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994): 31.

behind each document, which is not the goal of this research. The content analysis here is broad and meant to have no judgment or interpretation that will isolate any individual or agenda. This interpretation will be left to the user of the document, “historians had always looked for more systematic ways to analyze large bodies of available historical documents and came to appreciate content analysis as a suitable technique.”¹³⁰ As a professional archivist the goal was to establish how these documents or materials (evidence) are organized and made accessible to the user which, in this case were church members (mainly church administrators). Categorizing these documents from content analysis will “provide knowledge, new insights, a representation of ‘facts,’ and a practical guide to action.”¹³¹ In this research the data (documents) were made available without context. As the analyst I constructed very little context by describing and categorizing the data. More information can be obtained from these documents such as their origin and how it interacts with its environment, but this initial analysis is to establish whether records are being maintained.

Krippendorff notes various social scientists’ that provide a framework for content analysis, for example he cites, Berelson¹³² who identified 17 applications of content analysis:

1. to describe trends in communication content
2. to trace the development of scholarship
3. to disclose international differences in communication content
4. to compare media or “levels” of communication

¹³⁰ Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980: 18.

¹³¹ *Ibid* 21.

¹³² *Ibid* 34.

5. to audit communication content against objectives
6. to construct and apply communication standards
7. to aid in technical research operations (to code open-ended questions in survey interviews)
8. to expose propaganda techniques
9. to measure the 'readability' of communication materials
10. to discover stylistic features
11. to identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicators
12. to determine the psychological state of persons or group
13. to detect the existence of propaganda (primarily for legal purposes)
14. to secure political and military intelligence
15. to reflect attitudes, interests, and values ('cultural patterns') of groups
16. to reveal the focus of attention
17. to describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications

This research is concerned with how records are being maintained and how they are defined. Few inferences were made regarding trends in communication content, the desire to construct and apply communication, reflect attitudes, interests, and values ('cultural patterns') of groups to reveal the focus of attention, by inferring "what is," "what is important" and "what is related to what" identifying the "documents that are direct indicators."¹³³ These documents serve functions within social organizations and societal

¹³³ Ibid 39.

institutions. “Indeed, families, bureaucracies, and societies are unthinkable without regular and standard forms of ongoing processes of communication.”¹³⁴

Krippendorff, cites Lasswell¹³⁵ also who makes a distinction between regarding the societal functions of an institutional approach to communication within the construct of content analysis and what type of inferences can be made:

1. The surveillance of the environment
2. The correlations of the parts of society in responding to the environment
3. The transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next (culture)

Note that written communication is one form of communication in the church. The audio and visual mediums play a large role, but were not examined at this time, just noted.

Krippendorff “suggests that writing has the effect of freezing tradition, proving to be more permanent and reliable ... than word of mouth communication.”¹³⁶

The procedures were to view materials in written form (such as files) and or electronic (computerized files on a hard drive, disk or CD-ROM format); summarize the data; discover patterns and relationship with data and relate data obtained from content analysis to data obtained from other methods or from other situations so as to either validate the methods involved or to provide missing information. The intent was to determine recordkeeping practices by examining the existing material, the lack of purpose for collecting or maintaining or organizing the church materials available to review made this endeavor quite

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Ibid, 40

¹³⁶ Ibid 47.

challenging and limited the analysis to noting what existing, what information came from the documents and the context in which the documents existed.

Problems encountered during the conduct of research included limited accessibility of the materials to review. The participants were either unable to provide the documentation physically or forgot to bring it or made pleasantries indicating discomfort with showing the researcher the documents even after agreeing to do so.

One of the better ways to collect information about an unexplored concept in an isolated environment is the survey method. Surveying individuals affected or involved in the activity being explored, which in this case is the practice of recordkeeping (the collecting and disseminating of the participants church history and activities) is “one of the most fully developed and extensively used social science methods.”¹³⁷ This type of data collection allows the researcher to get information “directly from individual persons who are selected so as to provide a basis for making inferences about some larger population.” With little success of being able to actually survey the actual materials it was imperative to conduct interviews for further clarification of what the recordkeeping procedures were. In this study, the information was obtained by direct questioning through face-to-face interviews and the distribution of a questionnaire to a large body of people. The people interviewed are called interviewees and the survey respondents are called respondents or participants.

According to Manheim and Rich,¹³⁸ five types of information can be interpreted from the responses from the interviewees and participants. These types are facts, perceptions,

¹³⁷ Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich, *Empirical Political Research Methods in Political Science*, New York: Longman, 1986: 105-106, 281.

¹³⁸ *Ibid* 106

opinions, attitudes, and behavioral reports. Facts include demographics that include but are not limited to personal history and background characteristics such as age, sex, or level of education. Perceptions are what interviewees or participants perceive about the environment in which they live. Opinions are people's preferences or beliefs as it pertains to ideas and/or events. Attitudes are responses or evaluations regarding an idea or event. Behavioral reports are how people act.

Having used the interview and survey methods, it is significant to elaborate on the construction of the interview questions and questionnaire, how they were administered and any problems encountered. In survey research, concepts are created in the form of questions and observations and the explanation consists of recording respondents' answers to these questions. Recognizing that this research can be susceptible to errors, especially when evaluating attitudes and behavior of people, the reliability and validity should be tested.¹³⁹ There are different types of errors that can be exposed in survey research: lack of clarity in the question, external influence, interpretation on behalf of researcher and bias.

In an attempt to avoid these errors the interview and survey questions were reviewed by other researchers, various church goers and members of the Concerned Black Clergy. This review clarified terms such as recordkeeping and offered position titles which are later reflected in the data. These terms and any other similar clarifications were made before administering the survey and at the beginning of each interview. The interview questions were given in advance to those interested, the interviewees were given time before the interview officially began to review the questions and time to dialog with the researcher. This

¹³⁹ Earl Babbie, *Survey Research Methods*, 2nded. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1990: 330.

preliminary correspondence made the interviewee more at ease and allowed the researcher to provide any additional information.

The content analysis and interviews sought to determine past and present recordkeeping practices. This required interviewing multiple people where multiple people perform tasks and included defining terminology such as recordkeeping. In these instances, multiple interviews were conducted with multiple individuals who performed such tasks in a given church. For example, a church secretary may maintain the administrative records (including programs, schedules, minutes of meetings), a finance committee to manage funds, and an anniversary committee may maintain the history of the church. If the lead minister was unavailable it was assumed that permission was obtained by the interviewee to analyze the documents and participate in the interview. The other interviews involved people that performed other recordkeeping tasks. Terms were defined similarly to when the survey was administered, that recordkeeping practices were the actual collection, maintenance and dissemination of materials that expressed value to the church and explained church history, functions and activities.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and supplemented with notes taken by the researcher. The interviews were guided, and lasted no longer than sixty minutes. The process called for the researcher to provide a set of questions with room to deviate from the order of questions, if deemed necessary by the researcher. Most questions were designed to elicit answers other than yes or no. The interviews helped in understanding the why, how and what concerning records related to the black church. See Appendix I.

The survey method consisted of a questionnaire that was distributed to the congregation who agreed to participate. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the impact of

records on the institutional and collective memory. With permission from the Pastor and a brief introduction the survey was distributed during both Sunday worship services and collected immediately following. A portion of the membership, those in attendance completed the survey. The questionnaire addressed the part of the research question concerning the impact of records and recordkeeping practices on the institutional and collective memory. See Appendix II.

The survey was administered at one church during both worship services. Reverend Timothy McDonald III volunteered his congregation for the administering of the survey and quickly scheduled a date. The survey was conducted at First Iconium Baptist Church at their 7:45 am and 10:45 am services. Rev. McDonald announced and described the survey from the pulpit and the ushers on duty distributed and collected them. In his description, which was not written or necessarily approved by the researcher he defined terms and the purpose and benefits of completing the survey. “It’s a matter of our history. We should know how we are getting it, what it means to get it and keep it.”¹⁴⁰

Once the data was collected it was filed in a secure location. Each answer was placed in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The survey data was coded and analyzed using SPSS, Version 11 for Windows, Data Analysis with Comprehensive Statistics and the interview data was coded and placed in a table so that the results could be clearly analyzed and interpreted. With this data three questions were addressed: 1) do recordkeeping practices exist in some black churches, 2) does the importance of these archival practices exist, and 3) what can be done to increase these practices and the knowledge of the materials. Often times,

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Reverend Timothy McDonald, III pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church. November 2003.

dominant cultural and political agendas can influence the keeping of records and even define the attitudes and identity of the nation; however, small archives or institutional archives may provide a more complete picture. Archival material has to exist to contradict or support current representations of the past and current social memory. “Gaps in the archives, (can) affirm certain historical realities,” and therefore one solution may be to increase the number of archives or at least collections.¹⁴¹ The black church, like other local religious institutions can be a rich source of community history and can “serve as reflectors of social and cultural movements and concerns.”¹⁴² It is through this research that this attention to their records will encourage a significant part of American culture to survive.

¹²⁸Francis X. Blouin, "Archivists, Mediation, and Constructs of Social Memory," *Archival Issues* 24, no. 2 (1999): 110.

¹²⁹W. Bernard Lukenbill, Historical Resources in the Local Church: A Field Report on Largely Gay and Lesbian Congregation," *The American Archivist* 61, Fall 1998: 399.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results have been divided into three sections: content analysis, interview data and survey data. The content analysis section includes summary descriptions of each church. In addition there is interview data reported within each section for supplemental purposes. The following data have been collected and compiled in the form of tables to increase the readability and understandability of the information. A copy of the actual form used can be found in the appendix. It is a synopsis of the observation and inquiry of materials at each church and interview data.

Content Analysis

Cascade United Methodist Church (CUMC) was founded in 1926 and currently has approximately 4,500 members. Approximately twenty individuals met in the home of Mrs. G. F. Jones, on Beecher Street in southwest Atlanta with the intent to organize a Methodist Church in the Cascade community. According to the church's written history, these people accomplished their purpose and the first service of Cascade Methodist Episcopal Church South was held on October 3, 1926, in a store building on Beecher Street near Cascade Avenue. Years later a new structure was created when the church merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) and the Methodist Protestant Church and became Cascade Methodist Church.

There are two websites for the church that discuss its activities, leadership and history. See Appendix III. There is a volunteer church historian position in addition to a combination of paid and unpaid office staff persons who are responsible for church records. Financial and membership documents are stored using computer technology by the office staff and the church historian with the assistance of the pastor to maintain the church history. The activities and history are made accessible through two websites and annual program bulletins. Most of the church's records are stored in the home of a volunteer, who works closely with the pastor, including financial documents, such as the first mortgage and other materials such as church bulletins.¹⁴³ The materials are boxed with no particular organization and appear to not be damaged.

The following information was gathered through the examination of church materials found at multiple locations. The church historian spoke candidly about writing and collecting the history "What I have tried to do is hit the highlights, what's going on over the year" she notes that the pastor reviews her work and that she corresponds with him for accuracy. "I reach out to others in the particular ministry or project for my detail" and is confident that no one would write the history or collect memorabilia if she didn't. "I have been church historian since Rev Joseph Lowery's administration, probably somewhere around 1986 around celebrating 60th anniversary. There is no one planning to take over, so I guess I am sort of selfish about it.¹⁴⁴" Fields states that she "just collects stuff, some bulletins, weekly newsletters, but now with technology some things kept on disks, CD's and audio and video

¹⁴³ Interview Jill Fields, Church Historian of Cascade United Methodist Church. November 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

tapes, pictures, people give me stuff” and that she “never thought about giving it away to a university type source.”¹⁴⁵

Although the United Methodist Church has an archival program and some of CUMC’s documents there was no clear correspondence between the two bodies. The church office has no written policy or purpose for maintaining church bulletins and programs and membership documents and any other church related items. All which were spoken about but never presented to the researcher.

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy, thereby allowing for multiple storage locations, poor organization and accessibility. The documents reviewed were minimal but were in good condition in multiple locations.

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Atlanta (FCC) came into existence in 1867. It is the second oldest Black Congregational Church in the United States. The American Missionary Association (AMA) established the Storrs School in Atlanta, which was a center of social services, educational classes, and worship for the newly freed. Inspired by the worship services offered at the Storrs School, the ex-slaves petitioned for a church of their own and in 1867 a committee affiliated with the school voted to organize a Congregational Church.

Initially the congregation was integrated and worshipped in the Storrs School chapel. However, as racial tensions grew, whites began to leave and soon established a second Congregational Church (now Central Congregational Church). Over the next few decades, First Congregational Church became a predominantly black congregation, and in 1894, FCC

¹⁴⁵ Ibid

called its first African American pastor, Dr. Henry Hugh Proctor, a graduate of Fisk University and Yale Divinity School, to lead them.

There are multiple websites that refer to FCC because of its historic architecture, involvement with the Atlanta University Center schools, Atlanta Life Insurance and its value to the history of Atlanta. However, there is one website for the church itself that informs the public of church activities, its leadership and history. There is a volunteer church historian position in addition to a combination of paid and unpaid office staff persons who are responsible for church records. Financial and membership documents are stored using computer technology by the office staff and the church historian who maintain the church history. The activities and history are made accessible through the various websites, annual program bulletins and archival collections located in Atlanta area repositories. There is also documentation of the church in the home of the volunteer, including blueprints of the building and correspondence.¹⁴⁶

Problems encountered when conducting this research were the lack of visibly seeing the materials. The church historian, Mrs. Elkins brought some materials but was not comfortable with me coming to her home to view the rest. The church itself had no organization to existing records, which were stored in multiple locations in the building. Elkins stated that at “one time there was no place for blacks to store things safely and the church didn’t like the idea of storing things with white folks,” in addition the Atlanta University Center didn’t have proper settings, temperature, preparation, but when Auburn’s Research Center for African

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Mrs. Elkins, church historian of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. May 2003.

Americans opened and they were actually processing, the church sent things there.”¹⁴⁷ Elkins felt that “things needed to be done she was taking photography, saw historic pictures around, found pictures of the church all around, specifically in the bell tower.” She got excited and began to ask around, and then people started bringing things to me. Some things I took to the Auburn library and some things I didn’t.”¹⁴⁸ She made no distinction nor explained why or what she kept.

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy, thereby allowing for multiple storage locations, poor organization and accessibility. Although it is good that some material exists at a professional repository it brings attention to the issue of custody and the notion of professional appraisal and who places value on church documents and materials.

Friendship Baptist Church (FBC) was organized in 1866 becoming “Atlanta's first black Baptist independent congregation”. The black members of First Baptist withdrew their membership and organized their own church under the leadership of Reverend Frank Quarles¹⁴⁹. The congregation had purchased land for their church but had not been able to raise funds to buy property. Reverend Frederick Ayer, a missionary with the American Missionary Association, assisted and allowed FBC to worship in a boxcar that was sent to Atlanta from Chattanooga, Tennessee to house the first classroom of what subsequently became known as Atlanta University. A contractual agreement was made with school

¹⁴⁷ Ibid

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Bacote, Clarence A., *The story of Atlanta University Center: a century of service 1865-1965*, Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1969 (4).

organizers and Friendship leaders to share this boxcar for church services and educational purposes.¹⁵⁰ The membership grew rapidly so the congregation moved to a larger building on the corner of Hayes and Markham Streets, and later to its present site at Northside Drive.

There are multiple websites that refer to FBC because of its involvement with the Atlanta University Center and its value to the history of Atlanta. However, there is one website for the church itself that informs the public of church activities, its leaders and history. There is a volunteer church historian and librarian position in addition to a combination of paid and unpaid office staff persons who are responsible for church records. Financial and membership documents are stored using computer technology by the office staff, the church historian and church librarian who maintain the church history. The activities and history are made accessible in annual program bulletins and archival collections located in Atlanta area repositories.

Church trustee and volunteer historian, Mrs. McKalpin had many documents from multiple places but no full citations or explanation of where she retrieved them. Most of the documents are kept in her home some seemed like photocopies. She spoke candidly about the history, “for the most part I got into this because the early history said Friendship was founded in 1862 – but Sherman didn’t come through until 1864. Dr. Maynard Jackson, pastor at the time had a piece of communication from the historian of First Baptist and she said ‘I doubt the date of the founding was correct.’” McKalpin admitted most of her research was done at the State of Georgia archives and the Robert Woodruff Library in the Atlanta University Center and because so much material related to the church was there she provided

¹⁵⁰Ayer Papers, Robert Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Archives and Special Collections department.

both repositories with the document from First Baptist, which was founded in 1848. She continued regarding the history stating that First Baptist “began to accept slaves, and the slaves worshipped in the balcony, well about 1958, the slaves decided they wanted a church of their own, started out and didn’t succeed, but the minutes of First Baptist say they returned, we must assume they didn’t succeed and went back. Said they were keeping a lot of noise in the balcony and put them out and kept the church for the white folk, so the slaves began to have service after the whites, they had both white and black preachers to preach to the slaves.”¹⁵¹ She also noted that the written history had a lot of mistakes, and that the current pastor was not pleased with her finding regarding the founding year discrepancy and therefore maintains both copies of the history.

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy, thereby allowing for multiple storage locations, poor organization and accessibility. Although it is good that some material exists at a professional repository it brings attention to the issue of custody and the notion of professional appraisal and who places value on church documents and materials. In addition questions of accuracy are highlighted as well as attitudes towards creating a healthy environment for recordkeeping.

St. John Missionary Baptist Church was organized in 1883. During this time there was only one church in the Adamsville community, Bethlehem Methodist Church. As the word of the Emancipation Proclamation spread, newly freed blacks began to migrate to other areas such as Atlanta in search of a better life. Mr. Elbert Smith and his family moved to Adamsville from Fayette County. After finding no church like that of his home church,

¹⁵¹ Mrs. McKalphin, Trustee/ writer of latest church history, Friendship Baptist Church,
May 20, 2003 4:00 pm

Bethel Baptist Church, located near Senoia, Georgia, he and three other men, “Green Young, John Garrett, and McAfee” established St. John Baptist Church.¹⁵²

They met from house to house for services, until they were able to purchase land for an edifice. “The land was purchased from a Mr. Howell, where Mr. Smith’s house already existed.”¹⁵³ They built a brush arbor, which served as a meeting place, until they built a small house. The first church edifice was completed in 1888, under the pastorate of Rev. Belcher, who served as pastor for 20 years. Brothers Smith, Young, and Garrett served as the first three Deacons of St. John Missionary Baptist Church.

There is no church historian or formal office staff. The current pastor assumes the responsibility because he deems recordkeeping important. Financial and membership documents are currently stored using computer technology by a volunteer member of the congregation. The activities and history are made accessible in annual program bulletins. The pastor holds the only existing written history.

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy, thereby no records to view outside the current list of members and financial contributions. Some program bulletins and flyers were available for viewing as well.

Boatrock Community Baptist Church was organized in 1983 in a housing development community on the south side of Atlanta. The church now resides temporarily in College Park, a city just outside of Atlanta. It was stated by the pastor’s wife that the first ten years of

¹⁵²Written church history of St. John Baptist Church, no author supplied. However, the graves of these men remain in the cemetery located next to the church. No first name for McAfee is listed.

¹⁵³ Ibid

its history is written.¹⁵⁴ However, a copy was never provided. The church began in the Boat Rock community in a housing development near the Fulton Industrial area, Boat Rock Road and Campbellton Road six miles away from the nearest grocery store. The housing development has since been demolished. The church resided in the recreation center of the public housing facility. “Nothing else existed, no liquor stores, church, barbershop, hair salon and A. Philip Randolph was the school.”¹⁵⁵

Reverend Albert Love, pastor and founder of Boat Rock Community minister began pastoring six years after he was ordained and fully established the church while conducting voter registration drives. Mrs. Love took a class on tailoring and a classmate told her about the Boat Rock Community where they intended to teach the children in the recreation center how to sew. After months of involvement with this community, people began to ask Reverend and Mrs. Love to teach a bible study since there was no church near by and transportation was limited.

There is no church historian nor is there formal office staff. The current pastor and his wife assume the responsibility because he deems recordkeeping important. Financial and membership documents are currently stored using computer technology by a volunteer member of the congregation. The activities, leadership and history are made accessible in

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Juanita Love, wife of Pastor, Reverend Albert Love of Boat Rock Community Baptist Church. September 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

annual program bulletins and on a website. All records relating to the church are housed at the home of the pastor and his wife.¹⁵⁶

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy. The materials viewed were in the home of the Pastor and his wife in no organized fashion or proper storage. There was some use of file cabinets and regular boxes that will not provide proper preservation for the documents.

First Iconium Baptist Church was established in 1984 after parting ways with Iconium Baptist Church. The members who left began worshipping in the Mail Handlers Union Building, Local 310, and in 1990 moved to their third and current location in southeast Atlanta. During the first six years, the church grew from less than fifty individuals to a membership of over 350 and now has approximately 1500 individuals on the roster.¹⁵⁷

There is no church historian or librarian, but there is formal office staff. Financial and membership documents are currently stored using computer technology by two members of the congregation that receive a stipend. The activities, leadership and history are made accessible in new members' materials and annual program bulletins filed by the church secretary. The staff is hopeful that the website will have a more valued role in providing information regarding church activities.¹⁵⁸ There are church records in the church office, the pastor's study and in the homes of some of the oldest parishioners.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Reverend Timothy McDonald, III pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church. November 2003.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Patricia Chaney, Church Secretary of First Iconium Baptist Church. October 2003.

From an archival perspective the church lacked an organized written purpose and collecting policy. Some program bulletins and flyers were available for viewing but were in no order and preserved well or accessible.

The results of the content analysis reflected the lack of value and education in regards to recordkeeping practices. Although, materials existed and are used for minimal functions such as church events or programs, no documentation strategy, policy or procedures existed that protect, preserve, organize and make accessible the documents. Each community situation is different, but regardless of the type of archives or recordkeeping practices the documents available should reflect a minimum standard; at the very least enough organized material or interest to lobby the support necessary for your archives to exist as a useable treasured body, rather than just a storage room or file cabinet or dingy room of stuff.

The documents available did not reflect a value for the churches work or community involvement and therefore were broadly categorized into financial and membership records (administrative data) and the church history (historical data). The administrative data was reflected in the following documents that were often times computerized: membership roster; record of tithes and offerings; budget (record of expenditures and salaries); personal letters. The historical data was reflected in the following documents: Sermons -print, audio, video; personal letters; program bulletins; photographs and newspaper or magazine clippings; architectural blueprints

The following tables show how the documents are stored. Electronic refers to a computer file (hard drive, disk or CD-ROM format) housed in the church office, maintained by the secretary or office staff. Print refers to a hard copy or textual document found in a file cabinet housed in the church office, maintained by the secretary or office staff. For the historical data

note that all the Pastors maintain personal files that contain, sermons, personal letters, some program bulletins, newspaper and magazine clippings and photographs. None of the churches kept a print version of a sermon only and audio and video recording of the worship service.

- CUMC – Cascade United Methodist Church
- FCUCC – First Congregational United Church of Christ
- BRCBC – Boat Rock Community Baptist Church
- FIBC – First Iconium Baptist Church
- SJMBC – St. John Missionary Baptist Church
- FBC – Friendship Baptist Church

Table 4.1
Administrative documents

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
Membership	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic
Tithes and offerings	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic	Electronic
Budget	Electronic	Electronic		Electronic		Electronic
Business correspondence	Print	Print		Print		

Table 4.2
Historical documents

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
Sermons - audio, video	Closet – labeled,	Closet – labeled,		Closet – labeled,		Closet – labeled,
Program bulletins	File cabinet by date	File cabinet by date	Boxes, no order	File cabinet no order		File cabinet by date
Photographs	Boxes	Boxes	Pastor	Pastor		
News/Mag clippings	File cabinet no order		File cabinet no order	Pastor		File cabinet no order
Architectural blueprints	Rolled in closet.	Rolled in closet.				

Interview Data

In addition to the content survey and empirical data, interviews were conducted with persons from six different churches to establish what practices exist, what materials were collected and how. The following data have been collected and compiled in the form of tables to increase the readability and understandability of the information. A copy of the actual form used can be found in the appendix. It is a synopsis of the observation and inquiry of materials at each church and interview data. In addition recordkeeping is defined by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) as “the systematic creation, use, maintenance, and disposition of records to meet administrative, programmatic, legal, and financial needs and responsibilities.”¹⁵⁹ For the interviewees and survey participants recordkeeping practices was defined as the collection and dissemination of church history.

¹⁵⁹ SAA Glossary, <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp>

CUMC – Cascade United Methodist Church
 FCUCC – First Congregational United Church of Christ
 BRCBC – Boat Rock Community Baptist Church

FIBC – First Iconium Baptist Church
 SJMBC – St. John Missionary Baptist Church
 FBC – Friendship Baptist Church

Table 4.3
Demographics of Interviewees

Questions	CUMC	FCUCC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC	FBC
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	M	M	F	F
Age	25-50	50 over	50 over	50 over	25-50	25-50	50 over	50 over	50 over
Position Title	Church Historian	Church Historian	Church secretary	Pastor's wife/ secretary	Church secretary	Pastor	Pastor	Church Librarian	Church Historian
Time pos held	15 yrs	15 yrs	15 yrs	23 yrs	15 yrs	22 yrs	12 yrs	8 yrs	8 yrs
PT/FT	PT paid	PT paid	PT paid	PT paid	PT paid	FT	FT	PT unpaid	PT unpaid
Other		retired	retired	Secretary for not for profit				retired	retired
Founding date	1926	May 1867	May 1867	1983	May 1984	May 1984	1883	1866	1866
Members	7,000	10,000		100	1,500		100	5,000	

Table 4.4
Questions 1-3

Questions 1-3 refer to the individual responsible for collecting records for the church.

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
1. Who collects	Church historian	Church historian	Pastor & wife	Pastor and Church secretary	Pastor & volunteer	Librarian & Historian
2. Paid position to collect materials	No	No	No	Yes	Yes/ No	No
3. Budget to collect	Sort of – can request funds	No	No	No	No	No

Question 1: The data state that pastoral leadership and church staff collect church records based on format. There are two formats that all six churches refer to: financial and membership records (administrative data) and the church history (historical data). In three instances the pastors collect or retain historical documentation of their church and their personal activities in leadership. In the other instances, the history is maintained by retired members who are interested in maintaining such documentation. All of the churches have a system for documenting financial and membership records.

Question 2: The office staff persons are a combination of paid and unpaid positions in three out of the six churches. These staff persons maintain the administrative data of the church (FBC, CUMC, FCUCC). In one case, the financial documents are maintained by a finance committee (FIBC). This involves collection of funds and data entry. Those who collect and maintain the history for the church are all volunteers.

Question 3: There is no budget or line item allocated to the maintaining of church records specifically at any of the churches. The church secretary or other office staff persons

are responsible for filing programs of mainly special occasions and maintaining electronic files regarding membership.

Table 4.5
Questions 4 and 5

Questions 4 and 5 refer to the use of technology in the collection of records.

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
4.a Computer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
b. computer longevity	Not sure	Not sure	Recent - within the last 10 years, personal	Recent - within the last 10 years	Recent - within the last 10 years	Not sure
5. Computer usage	Membership, tithes/ offerings	Membership, tithes/ offerings	Membership, tithes/ offerings	Membership, tithes/ offerings	Membership, tithes/ offerings	Membership, tithes/ offerings

Question 4: All churches involved in the study have and use computers. No person interviewed could recall when the computers were installed or when they began to use them to maintain administrative and/or historical data.

Question 5: The computers are used mainly for data entry of financial transactions and membership information. Technology is used to create and maintain a website for five out of the six churches and is often outsourced. This is the way in which the history of the churches is made accessible to the public. An electronic copy of the history narrative is not always saved or maintained; therefore to recall the history of the church, all church staff interviewed refer to the last filed program bulletin for an annual anniversary.

Table 4.6
Questions 6-9:

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
6. Info organized and kept by church						
Personal letters			Yes	Yes	Yes	
Sermons -print, audio, video	Yes, audio, video	Yes, audio	Yes, print	Yes, all	Yes, print	Yes, audio, video
Business correspondence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Program bulletins	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Photographs				Yes		
7. Kept where	Church office, audio room and home	Personal home & outside repositories	Personal home	Church office and personal home	Church office and personal home	Church office & library and home
8. Availability	permission	permission	permission	permission	permission	permission
9. Use of materials	Congregation only	Historian discretion	Pastor discretion	Pastor discretion	Pastor discretion	Pastor discretion

Question 6: The materials maintained by the church are minimal and different from that which is maintained by the pastors or those interviewed. The office staff persons maintain program bulletins and business correspondence for the church in the church. All the churches have some sort of audio/video ministry. This department maintains audio and/or video documentation of the Sunday worship services and/or special events. The pastors often kept material that directly related to them, such as personal letters, printed/electronic versions of their sermons, photographs and some program bulletins. The other interviewees maintain

whatever is given to them. One church (FCUCC) is unique in that it resides in an historic building on the National Registry and is deemed a national landmark. Church documents can be found in multiple public and private repositories regardless of permission or knowledge of the church because of this historic status and because of prominent community leaders being a part of its congregation.

Question 7: Records are stored in multiple places. Some but few are stored at the church itself, therefore most of the materials are located in the homes of those interviewed and at outside institutions.

Question 8: The audio/video materials are not accessible to the public or parishioners without a fee and are not produced or kept for historical or archival purposes. Only one church stated that permission is needed to obtain records (CUMC), but in actuality they all require permission from the pastor, depending upon what type of documentation it is, what it will be used for, and where it is stored.

Table 4.7
Questions 10-13:

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
10. Congregation participation	Yes, by giving informally materials	Yes, by giving informally materials	No	No	No	No
11. System						
Administrative	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Unsure	Yes
Historical	No	No	No	No	No	No
12. Larger body	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Administrative	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Historical	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
13. Challenges	Storage	Storage	Storage	Support staff	Support staff and interest	Storage

Question 10: Two of the interviewees acknowledged that the congregations (CUMC, FCUCC) participate in the collection of materials, but informally.

Question 11: There is no formal system in place for any of the churches for historical data, but there is one for administrative data. All interviewees provided minimal understanding and explanation of the system for collecting administrative data. All those interviewed stated that the systems involved either a committee of church members who collected and counted the monies during Sunday worship services and that the recording of the financial transaction or data entry is performed throughout the week by church office staff.

In regards to both historical and administrative data, all churches rely on office staff to file; however, no checks and balances system is established to guarantee efficiency or

effectiveness. Those interviewed maintain the history, but only three (CUMC, SJMBC, FBC) mentioned rewriting the history and making it available. One expressed difficulty in rewriting the history when she came across a discrepancy in the founding date of the church. After extensive research in archival repositories and securing a copy of the church deed and other supporting documents, she discovered the church was founded two years prior to the date that they knew.

Question 12: Two congregations (CUMC, FCUCC) are affiliated with larger bodies that support archival documents and programs, but neither institution participates. These larger entities request numbers of membership and financial contributions. The extent of the historical data requested is the founding date, and lists of past and present presiding ministerial staff, especially the pastor.

Question 13: Five out of the nine interviewees stated that their greatest challenge was storage. Others noted that lack of interest and someone to actually do the work (support staff) seemed to be the greatest challenge.

Table 4.8
Questions 14 and 15

	CUMC	FCUCC	BRCBC	FIBC	SJMBC	FBC
14. anyone from outside shown interest	Not sure	Yes	No	No	No	Not sure
15. donated church related papers to outside	Not sure	Yes	No	No	No	Not sure

Question 14: Only one of the interviewees (FCUCC) admitted to notifying an outside repository to store and collect church materials. However, materials from the three oldest institutions can be found in multiple repositories.

Question 15: There are records of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ at the Robert W. Woodruff library of the Atlanta University Center, the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia and the Archives Division, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System and the Atlanta History Center, to name a few.

There is significant financial documentation in the Auburn collection that is of great value; specifically “the Application For Loan, November 18, 1874, Loan application for property at 111 Courtland Street, Contract For Sale Of Realty, December 5, 1941, Contract for the sale of a tract of land in the city of Atlanta to the First Congregational Church, Warranty Deed, April 26, 1909, Warranty Deed for the consideration of the rebuy aiding in the establishing and perpetuating a Congregational Church in Atlanta, Transfer Deed, November 18, Real Estate Transfer Deed from Edgar Ketchum To First Congregational Church, Transfer Deed, July 18, 1877, Real Estate Transfer Deed from Edgar Ketchum To First Congregational Church, Payment Receipt, January 10, 1933, Payment made by W. J. Faulkner, for First Congregational Church Charter Amendment.”¹⁶⁰

In addition to financial, administrative and historical documentation of the church, there are papers of individuals that also include materials relating to FCUCC. The collection at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center spans the period 1867-1999, with

¹⁶⁰Finding Aid, the First Congregational Church, U.C.C., Atlanta, Georgia records. Archives Division, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System.

the bulk dating 1982-1993. Most of the collection is programs from worship services, but it also includes programs of funeral services, events, and church anniversaries. Annual and financial reports, correspondence, memoranda, agendas, and minutes make up the rest of this collection. A bound volume of the history of the church entitled *Records of the First Congregational Church of Atlanta, Ga* can be found in this collection. It includes the early history of the Church from 1867-1882, minutes, lists of members, baptisms, marriages, and deaths.¹⁶¹ The collection at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center also has related collections such as one of the former pastors, Dr. Henry Hugh Proctor. There are also articles of clothing from membership that were donated to the Atlanta History Center.

Papers of parishioners can be found at two repositories in Atlanta, Georgia that include materials pertaining to Friendship Baptist Church (FBC). The papers of former Pastor Samuel Williams are at the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, in the Archives and Special Collections department. In this collection are Williams' sermons and other materials that document the church's history, such as budgets, correspondence, pamphlets and bulletins.

Additional records regarding FBC can be found in the papers of Samuel Howard Archer, Jeanette Harvey Hamme, and Edward Randolph Carter and Andrew Jackson Lewis located at the Archives Division of the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History, Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System. The Samuel Howard Archer papers record his involvement in FBC. The Hamme collection includes papers recording her participation on the Deaconess Board of FBC. The Edward Randolph Carter and Andrew

¹⁶¹Finding Aid, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Archives and Special Collections department.

Jackson Lewis papers are a combined collection that includes materials pertaining to Carter's religious activities and duties as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church between 1905 and 1942 and his writings and sermons. There is also documentation of Andrew J. Lewis's involvement with FBC including correspondence (1942-1983), financial reports, annual reports (1943, 1978-1985), and programs.

There are articles in various media formats regarding current and former pastors of most of the churches studied often due to their involvement in civic, political and/or social action events. To note a few examples, individuals such as Dr. Joseph Lowery who pastored Cascade United Methodist Church, and former President of the Southern Christian Leadership Council, or Reverend Timothy McDonald, III, the pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church, member of the People for the American Way Foundation and former President of the Concerned Black Clergy of Atlanta, Georgia. In addition to information regarding church leadership, the churches studied may be in historic areas or buildings. St. John Missionary Baptist Church has a cemetery on its property adjacent to the sanctuary that may lead to information regarding its history and membership.

Survey Data

The responses to the survey questions are compiled in the tables below. The following survey was conducted to obtain a better understanding of what types of recordkeeping practices exist in the church and if the attendants are aware of them. The survey was conducted during worship services and three hundred and ninety-five (395) were randomly distributed. The worshippers included members and nonmembers. One hundred and thirty-five (135) surveys were returned. The survey began with demographics. The majority of the participants are female (62.2%) and the rest male (31.9%). Approximately six percent (5.9%)

did not respond. Approximately fifty-five percent (54.8%) of the respondents are between the ages of twenty-five to fifty; 29.6% are over fifty years of age, 11.9% are under twenty-five and 3.7% did not respond. Approximately forty-six percent (45.9%) of the respondents are college graduates, 34.8% had some college, 14.1% completed high school and 5.2% did not respond. See Table 4.9.

Table 4.9
Demographics

Table 4.9a
Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	43	31.9	33.9	33.9
	Female	84	62.2	66.1	100.0
	Total	127	94.1	100.0	
Missing	System	8	5.9		
Total		135	100.0		

Table 4.9b
Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	< 25 yrs old	16	11.9	12.3	12.3
	25-50 yrs old	74	54.8	56.9	69.2
	>50 yrs old	40	29.6	30.8	100.0
	Total	130	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	5	3.7		
Total		135	100.0		

Table 4.9c
Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	H.S.	19	14.1	14.8	14.8
	Some college	47	34.8	36.7	51.6
	College graduate	627	45.9	48.4	100.0
	Total	128	94.8	100.0	
Missing	System	7	5.2		
Total		135	100.0		

Eighty percent (80.7%) of the participants indicated that they knew the history of the church. While 16.3% responded that they did not know the history of the church, and 3% did not respond. See Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Q1: Do you know the history of the church?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	22	16.3	16.8	16.8
	Yes	109	80.7	83.2	100.0
	Total	131	97.0	100.0	
Missing	System	4	3.0		
Total		135	100.0		

When asked how they acquired this information, approximately forty-five percent (45.2%) of the participants responded that they knew about the church’s history from a sermon or church event. Eleven percent (11.1%) indicated that they knew of the church history from media created within the church, twenty percent (20%) from a combination of media within the church and by sermon or church event, while 2.2% responded from media outside of the church and 4.4% responded other. Seventeen percent (17%) did not respond. See Table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Q2: If yes, how did you come about this information?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sermon or church event	61	45.2	54.5	54.5
	Media within church	15	11.1	13.4	67.9
	Media outside church	3	2.2	2.7	70.5
	Other	6	4.4	5.4	75.9
	Combination: media & sermon/event	27	20.0	24.1	100.0
	Total	112	83.0	100.0	
Missing	System	23	17.0		
Total		135	100.0		

When asked who maintained this information, forty-three percent (43%) referred to an office person or church secretary/receptionist. Approximately twelve percent (12%) indicated the pastor. The majority of the respondents showed confidence that someone in the church who held an official position was maintaining and recording the history of the church. See Tables 4.12 and 4.13.

Table 4.12
Q3: Who maintains this information?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Pastor	12	8.9	11.8	11.8
	Church historian	9	6.7	8.8	20.6
	Church librarian	3	2.2	2.9	23.5
	Church secretary/receptionist	44	32.6	43.1	66.7
	Deacon/trustee	5	3.7	439	71.6
	Committee/officers	10	7.4	9.8	81.4
	Other	10	7.4	9.8	91.2
	Don't know	9	6.7	8.8	100.0
	Total	102	75.6	100.0	
Missing	System	33	24.4		
Total		135	100.0		

Table 4.13
Q3a: Do they hold a position?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	10	7.4	10.95	10.9
	Yes	72	53.3	78.3	89.1
	Don't know	10	7.4	10.9	100.0
	Total	92	68.1	100.0	
Missing	System	43	31.9		
Total		135	100.0		

It was important to approximately fifty-six percent (55.6%) of the participants to maintain this documentation in order to tell future generations and to maintain the memory of the church and its members. Twenty-three percent (23.1%) indicated that it was important to maintain this information to understand the origin of the institution, eight percent (8.5%) felt that keeping this information would bring understanding of how the church functioned and seven percent (6.8%) noted that keeping records maintains good business practices. See Tables 4.14 and 4.15.

Table 4.14
Q4: Is it important to maintain this information?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	1	.7	.8	.8
	Yes	124	91.9	99.2	100.0
	Total	125	92.6	100.0	
Missing	System	10	7.4		
Total		135	100.0		

Table 4.15
Q5: If yes, why is it important?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	To tell the future generations (legacy/memory)	65	48.1	55.6	55.6
	To understand how church began/originated	27	20.0	23.1	78.6
	To understand how church functions	10	7.4	8.5	87.2
	To maintain good business practices	8	5.9	6.8	94.0
	Other	7	5.2	6.0	100.0
	Total	117	86.7	100.0	
Missing	System	18	13.3		
Total		135	100.0		

When asked who recordkeeping is for, society or the church, forty-six percent (45.8%) of the participants responded the church twenty-eight percent (27.5%) noted society and twenty seven percent (26.7%) indicated both. The effects of keeping records are larger than that of simply the church. See Table 4.16.

Table 4.16

Q6: Do you feel that recordkeeping is for society at large or simply to preserve a memory to something that is important to the church?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Society	33	24.4	27.5	27.5
	Church	55	40.7	45.8	73.3
	Both	32	23.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	120	88.9	100.0	
Missing	System	15	11.1		
Total		135	100.0		

Seventy-four percent (74.3%) believe that recordkeeping practices have been affected by changes in society, twenty-four percent (23.8%) disagreed, and two percent (1.9%) did not know what impact society may or may not have had on recordkeeping practices. See Table 4.17.

Table 4.17

Q7: Do you think recordkeeping has been affected by changes in society?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	25	18.5	23.8	23.8
	Yes	78	57.8	74.3	98.1
	Don't know	2	1.5	1.9	100.0
	Total	105	77.8	100.0	
Missing	System	30	22.2		
Total		135	100.0		

Seventy-one percent (71.4%) of the respondents believe that these changes are a result of the impact of societal issues, seventeen percent (17.1%) indicated that the church impacts this practice, three percent (2.9%) thought that both have played a role, and nine percent (8.6%) stated other. See Table 4.18.

Table 4.18
Q7a: If yes, please state how?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Societal issues	50	37.0	71.4	71.4
	Church issues	12	8.9	17.1	88.6
	Both	2	1.5	2.9	91.4
	Other	6	4.4	8.6	100.0
	Total	70	51.9	100.0	
Missing	System	65	48.1		
Total		135	100.0		

Table 4.19
Group Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Congregation 7:45	79	58.5	58.5	58.5
	Congregation 10:45	40	29.6	29.6	88.1
	Clergy	16	11.9	11.9	100.0
Total		135	100.0		

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The study conducted focused on how current practices for documenting the history and activities of the black church can be improved or established to allow for a greater level of archival accountability. The objective is to represent a consensus about what constitutes suitable documentation for local church archives. This study investigated the attitudes of black church leadership and members toward preserving and maintaining records for purposes of institutional memory, as well as for legal and administrative reasons. The chief proposition underlying this research is that the custody of records directly affects how the memory of the institution is used and preserved, therefore it is the most important task to not only maintain the historical data but also to keep them within the possession of the black church.

The challenges of this research included getting churches to participate, getting access to church documents, getting interviewees to share accurate information and getting people to explain the practices that are believed to be in place.

It has been concluded that this research especially the content analysis portion resulted in limited records to examine. The materials found were unorganized, poorly stored and in multiple locations within the church and in outside repositories. The interviews resulted in minimal or no professional /formal practices as it pertains to recordkeeping. The survey

portion of the research resulted in that the majority of participants believed records were being maintained. They stated the importance of keeping records and its significance on society and written history. Some formal system needs to exist. Custody of records should be in hands of church and perhaps later transferred to a local repository. Churches should seek professional assistance and attempt to better systemize current practices, archivists should reach out to local repositories and educators should place more emphasis on record keeping practices within their curriculum.

Although most of the people interviewed and surveyed knew the history of the churches studied, it was believed that the church itself was the primary keeper and organizer of such documentation. However, after having visited each church and learning of its systems or lack of systems in place to record and report such information, it became clear that this was not the case. There is limited evidence of a current, concise, accurate and/or detailed history of any of the churches or thorough records of their functionality administratively. The data reported state that most of the church related information is revealed in a sermon or annual event/program. There is no means of finding this information on other occasions, because there is no easily accessible means to retrieve such information.

The study participants insisted that someone in the church held a position and maintained such information. However, it took weeks for an individual to be identified to be interviewed for this study. In addition as this research progressed it became evident that there is no paid or assigned position, or set duties to include the responsibility of adequate recordkeeping practices. For two of the churches that are over a hundred years old, sporadic private repositories held most of their vital records, for others, documents remained in the hands of interested persons or not at all.

It can be concluded from the data that the majority of the participants believe that the maintenance of this history is vital for the church itself and it is not of interest to society. People understood and agreed that it is the history of these churches that in forms the future and that the following generations must have the accurate and credible sources of knowledge. The church is becoming more universal in thought and behaviors. Surprisingly some of the participants avoided the label of the “black church.” However, the mission and actions speak to the needs of the black community at many levels. These churches remain open to all races, but blacks are who respond to their services. The black church is not only a place of worship, but also cultural, historical and national haven. The importance of the black churches lies in their origin but more so in their purpose, actively contributing to society, theologically and politically; liberating the oppressed and advocating civil rights. The black church should better protect the authenticity and reliability of their documents and preserve the context of their collections by maintaining as much physical control of their materials as possible, rather than not collect any documents at all or allow outside repositories to impose value on them or to not collect. Although outside repositories can preserve and protect materials from being damaged, lost or destroyed, with minimal training and assistance black churches can adequately maintain their own materials.

The primary sources of information about the black church are the sermons and the events conducted within the churches. There is evidence in each church of the social movement or political activities of individuals and the church as a collective that can prove to be important sources for any person wanting to explore the relationship between the black church in the city and country, and in local and national politics. Through various documents representing social justice forums, or use of church space for such activities or by noting guest speakers or

those on the membership rosters can all be primary sources to explore the black churches involvement in American society. Materials can be used for genealogy purposes as well and to share about the triumphs and tragedies of an American community.

An archive needs to be created to house precious documents and the records need to be processed, properly contained, and accessible before all is lost or remain in the custody of numerous repositories. What happens when the people (the participants of this study) realize that none of these materials are being properly retained and cared for? Only their tax records are easily accessible, but that the history is not current, accurate or even accessible. Should a private repository hold legal documentation such as mortgages and deeds? The church can serve as a place for genealogical research as well, holding membership and baptismal records and marriage licenses. Most importantly, there are materials that can connect the church's past with its future, providing documents that can bring forth reliable solutions to current congregational and even societal challenges and revive ministries or bring fresh ideas to the body. A powerful statement cited in a thesis was made regarding the "collective soul."

It states:

The records contain the voice of members, living and dead, that have contributed to the life of our church. It is our peculiar communion of Saints. Whether their voices are wise or foolish, they are a living part of the conversation we have about who we are, and what we are about, and their voices should be listened to with respect. It follows then, that the archives is a spiritual storehouse, and that it has an important role in the life of the church.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Stewart, Bob. "United Church B.C. Conference Archives." Vancouver, British Columbia:

The voices of the predecessors within the black church need to be saved by the church, what other entity will understand them. Therefore, it is recommended that each black church establish an archive through proper administrative procedures. Proper administrative procedures should include: permission or appointment by the pastor, church leadership and/or congregation; an operating budget, assistance from a professional archivist; a survey of conditions and approval of a site; appropriate archival shelving and supplies; and policies that clearly state the purpose and method of access for the respective archive.

The general perception of the people about the maintenance of church documentation is a very important position, and worthy of an official staff position. For accountability purposes it is suggested that this position be appointed by the pastor or church leadership and presented to the congregation for approval and involvement. Once a specific position is established it would be logical to request a budget (that would be incorporated in the churches overall budget) indicating that such an undertaking has value.

The greatest challenge these churches face is the lack of training or understanding of how to store, organize and access the best materials to accurately and adequately represent the historical and administrative activities of the church. It is recommended that the church seek professional assistance from a local repository. There are several training opportunities and even local professionals willing to volunteer advice and time to assist black churches in preserving such information. To determine the best site or place to establish an archive within the existing facility it will be necessary to utilize books that provide step-by-step instruction on how to assess the situation and begin the process. It will require knowledge of

archival systems and processes, as well as the establishment of retention policies, procedures, and accepted practices. Staff training is critical in order to ensure ongoing proper maintenance of the archive. Additionally, it is essential to seek expertise. This is the most effective way to build an archive, and adequately consider the appropriate temperature, settings and conditions. This expertise can also provide training in simple preservation techniques to protect materials from damage.

It seems that in the last 50 years congregants have not invested the same detail and effort in recording church activity. Evidence from the 1800's and early 1900's show logs of activities, membership and business meetings. Heading into the 21st century with a large increase in technology, this detail in documentation is lost and such reporting is minimal almost obsolete. One of the challenges with in the church is to increase the level of commitment from membership that has a skill set or knowledge to provide these services. "Teachers don't want to teach Sunday school, accountants don't want to serve on the finance committee, librarians don't want to assist with a library,"¹⁶³ therefore I advocate that professionals from the outside incorporate churches in their outreach programs to help build moral and change this dwindling level of commitment or desire to share the congregants gifts and talents.

Once a site is determined, appropriate shelving and supplies will be needed. The documents chosen to be preserved need special storage boxes and shelving for longevity and damage prevention. Finally, develop a collection policy stating the mission, purpose and accessibility of the materials collected. It is important to clearly state what to collect, why it

¹⁶³ Interview with Reverend Timothy McDonald, III pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church. November 2003

is be collected and how it is being collected and accessed. This will help create a sustainable archive and give them more value and provide the church with more clarity.

It is recommended that professional archivists align themselves with local cultural institutions such as churches, through personal motivation or professional associations. Reaching out and assisting to build local repositories will strengthen existing collections.

It is recommended that educators of seminaries, bible colleges and religious studies add to their curriculum on church administration with a strong archival component. Many of the church leaders and congregants interviewed and surveyed had some type of formal education. In particular it would be valuable if a curriculum in the institutions listed above or in the any area of higher education emphasized the value in these churches maintaining a durable recordkeeping system.

It is a long process to establish an archive. It is imperative to have a committed and trained individual to record, organize, access and maintain this vital information. It is important for the church to have custody and access to its own material. These recommendations are to encourage black churches to establish an archive with the purpose of providing a safe place to their store records. The intent should be to provide access and the preservation of its church and traditions as well as its impact on society.

Future Research

Future research includes assisting a local black church with establishing a system; documenting the process and identifying best practices and identifying local repositories that will develop a mentoring/consulting type relationship with a church. This future research will further address the issue of custody and how the value and appraisal that the church puts on materials may be different from that of an outside repository. The implementation and

coordination of outreach programs between the church and professional archivists may create new innovative policies that will satisfy the needs and cultures of the institution.

The efforts will contain input from church representation and it is important for all information to be valued the good and the bad. A minister not looking at the good but rather his own glory will find this challenging. An evaluation of church histories will help determine what records should be kept and that a church history doesn't have to only reflect the administration of each pastor but can be simply chronological. Access is important but the system should not be so simplistic that valuable documents get overlooked or that respect for the process is diminished.

Be not ashamed of the disorganization or scandal or feud that may result or be uncovered by the documents kept. These growing pains can be mended with the preservation of these documents, the future protected because the people are empowered with knowledge. Access and privacy issues lead to permission. A process should be established through appointment or election with guidelines and a checks and balances system to control and maintain objectivity. Every person, corporation, institution, and government creates paper records every day; an archivist can find this material anywhere from office filing cabinets and storerooms to attics and basements. Private papers and official records can be donated, transferred, even purchased or borrowed. When creating an archive especially when appraising documents, those involved must consider the quantity, uniqueness, legibility, and physical condition of all the material and arrange and describe whatever documents are kept.

Collaboration with an outside repository or professional archivist will assist in the development of a comprehensive archives policy that clearly defines its purpose and goals and the type of material it will acquire and have the archives policy approved and endorsed

by the sponsoring or collaborating institution. The archivist will assist in acquiring appropriate material, actively gathering records from the church community and assist with policy making that will clearly state what material is in the archives and where it came from. The archivist will assist in storing them properly and securing them against theft, damage, and environmental or human hazards and help make the archival materials available for use by the creators, donors, and the general public at the discretion of the church.

An archive should ensure appropriate and permanent care for records of historical and administrative value, in order to make them available for use both now and in the future. In the future, it will be important for professional archivists to reach out to the black church and view it as a cultural repository and assist them in building a resource that can contribute greatly to the development of our national collective community. The church is a cultural icon as well as a living memory of community and social action.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Joshua 4:1-9 contemporary English version: After Israel had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua: Tell one man from each of the twelve tribes to pick up a large rock from where the priests are standing. Then have the men set up those rocks as a monument at the place where you camp tonight. Joshua chose twelve men; he called them together, and told them: Go to the middle of the riverbed where the sacred chest is, and pick up a large rock. Carry it on your shoulder to our camp. There are twelve of you, so there will be one rock for each tribe. Someday your children will ask, "Why are these rocks here?" Then you can tell them how the water stopped flowing when the chest was being carried across the river. These rocks will always remind our people of what happened here today. The men followed the instructions that the LORD had given Joshua. They picked up twelve rocks, one for each tribe, and carried them to the camp, where they put them down. Joshua had some other men set up a monument next to the place where the priests were standing. This monument was also made of twelve large rocks, and it is still there in the middle of the river.

Appendix I

Survey

A Study of Recordkeeping Practices and Memory in Selected Atlanta Area Black Churches

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Meredith Evans, and I am a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a member of First Iconium Baptist Church in Atlanta where Timothy McDonald, III is the pastor. My dissertation will 1) investigate what types of recordkeeping practices exist in black churches and 2) better understand how these practices affect the institutional and collective memory of selected black churches.

There is no personal or collective risk or discomfort directly involved in this project. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your consent or discontinue participation in this study at any time. The hope is that this questionnaire will be distributed to at 30 members of your church. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are consenting to participate. Your name is not required. Completion of this study will take approximately **10-12 minutes**.

At the conclusion of my research, I will make available a summary of my results to all interested participants. If you have any questions or desire further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 640-0239 or at mrevans@email.unc.edu or my faculty advisor, Claudia Gollop at (919) 962-8362 or at gollop@ils.unc.edu. Otherwise, I thank you in advance for your time and consideration and would appreciate having you complete and return the survey below to the pastor.

Please answer the following questions:

Check the following:

- Gender of participant: Male ___ Female ___
- Age of participant: under 25 ___ 25-50 ___ over 50 ___
- Level of education: H.S. ___ some college ___ college graduate ___

1. Do you know the history of this church? Yes or No
2. If yes, how did you come about this information? (eg. public event, newspaper, television, church event, church bulletin, church program, sermon, conversation)

3. Who maintains this information? _____

Do they hold a position in the church? If so what is their title? _____

4. Is it important to maintain this information? **Yes** or **No**

5. If yes, why is this important?

6. Do you feel that recordkeeping (maintaining church documents, such as minutes of meetings, bulletins, history, membership roster, newspaper clippings) is for society at large or simply to preserve a memory to something that is important to the church?

for society or **for church**

If answered 'for church', please state why keeping this material is important? _____

7. Do you think recordkeeping has been affected by changes in society? **Yes** or **No**

If answered yes, please state how?

8. Please write any further comments here.

THIS STUDY HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ACADEMIC AFFAIRS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD. You may contact the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research project; (contact Barbara D. Goldman, Chair, at (919) 962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu).

Appendix II
Interview Questions



Date

Dear Sir/Madam:

Please allow me to introduce myself as a graduate student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a member of First Iconium Baptist Church, Atlanta where Timothy McDonald the III is the pastor. My dissertation will 1) investigate what types of recordkeeping practices exist in black churches and 2) better understand how these practices affect the institutional and collective memory of selected black churches.

During the past year, I learned of many important studies pertaining to the black church and the resources that were used to collect the data reflected. My literature review overall, however, has revealed very little about the use of documents coming from the actual church studied. Therefore, I am requesting your assistance in this endeavor. I would be most appreciative if you could spare approximately thirty minutes to complete the following questions regarding what type of documents and artifacts that your church maintains, how you maintain them and where.

This project has an Atlanta focus, and I intend to conduct my research with individuals and religious institutions in the city. For this purpose, you can remain anonymous if preferred. There is no personal or collective risk or discomfort directly involved in this project. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw your consent or discontinue participation in this study at any time. At the conclusion of my research, I will make available a summary of my results to all interested participants. If you have any questions or desire further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (678) 640-0239 or at mrevans@email.unc.edu or my faculty advisor, Claudia Gollop at (919) 962-8362 or at gollop@ils.unc.edu.

Otherwise, I thank you in advance for your time and consideration and would appreciate having you complete and return the enclosed consent form(s), which I have provided.

Meredith R. Evans
Doctoral Candidate

THIS STUDY HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ACADEMIC AFFAIRS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD. You may contact the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board if you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research project; (contact Barbara D. Goldman, Chair at (919) 962-7761 or aa-irb@unc.edu).

A Study of Recordkeeping Practices and Memory in Selected Atlanta Area Black Churches

Please answer the following questions to the best of our ability.

Demographics (optional)

- Name, denomination of church:

- Gender of participant: Male ___ Female ___
- Age of participant: under 25 ___ 25-50 ___ over 50 ___ (ask or observe)
- Position title ___
- Length of time in position ___ full-time or part-time
- Other occupation _____ full-time or part-time
- Length of time church had position _____
- Date institution was founded ___
- Approximate number of members _____

Collection & Dissemination of history

1. Who collects and maintains all church documents? (Administrative and historical)

2. Is this a paid position? What is the title of this position?

3. Is there a budget to collect and maintain these documents?

4. Is there a computer system? How long has there been one?

5. What is the computer used for? (For example membership or tithes/offerings)

6. **(Circle all that apply)**
What type of information about the church is organized and maintained?
 - a. Personal letters
 - b. Sermons (audio / video / both)
 - c. Business correspondence
 - d. Church bulletins
 - e. Church programs
 - f. Photographs

g. Other _____

7. Where are these materials housed?

8. **(Circle One)**
Are these materials?

- a. readily available
- b. by permission only

9. **(Circle One)**
Who can use these materials?

- a. the congregation only
- b. the general public for genealogy or scholarly purposes
- c. both

10. Does the congregation participate in the collecting of church related documents particularly pertaining to its history? If so, how?

11. Was there always a system to gather this type of information (membership, financial, business, history related)?

12. **(Circle One)**
Is there any larger institution, body or repository that has information pertaining to your church as it relates to your

- a. church history
- b. church business correspondence
- c. church membership
- d. a & b
- e. all of the above

Please name the place. For example State Archives or local University Library.

13. What challenges does your church face trying to collect and maintain these materials?

14. Has anyone approached you or the institution about having the materials mentioned above? For what purpose? (For example Church anniversary or Newspaper article)

15. Has your church or members of your church donated, or made a decision to donate any of these materials to a library or repository for archival purposes? If so who and when and where did the donations go. (E.g. Family of Deacon gave church bulletins to the public library).

16. Do you think recordkeeping has been affected by changes in society?

Comments:

Thank you very much for your time and input.

Appendix III Church websites

Cascade United Methodist Church

- <http://cascadeumc.org>
- <http://www.ioni.com/cascade/history.html>

CUMC strategic plan:

- <http://cascadeumc.org/clientimages/31914/strategicplanning/2006strategicplan10-3-05final.pdf>

Friendship Baptist church

- <http://www.fbcatlanta.org/contact.htm>

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Atlanta

- <http://www.firstchurchatlanta.com/pages/1/index.htm>

First Iconium Baptist Church

- <http://www.firsticonium.org/>

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