Understanding the Ways In Which African Americans Cope With Spousal Loss

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BACKGROUND OF STUDY:

* The issue that we are focusing on this study is to show that African Americans experience higher levels of complicated grief symptoms and lack of financial and emotional support, especially when they have spent less time speaking to others about their loss experiences. In order to obtain the research, we conducted a semi-structured interview to gather the data from participants. The findings resulted in African Americans cope with spousal loss the same as Caucasian Americans do, with them leaning more on religion to get through their bereavement.
* Keywords: grief, loss and religion

STUDY METHOD:

*Background:*

* Background: “African Americans experienced more frequent bereavement by homicide, maintenance of a stronger continuing bond with the deceased, greater grief for the loss of extended kin beyond the immediate family, and a sense of support in their grief, despite their tendency to talk less with others about the loss or seek professional support for it.” (Laurie A. & Neimeyer, R. A)

*Hypothesis:*

* Hypothesis: African Americans have a more difficult time processing bereavement than their counterparts after losing their spouse.

*Purpose:*

* The purpose of this study is to look at the different methods in which African Americans cope with bereavement of their spousal loss.

FINDINGS:

* Gender: 17 females and 5 males (total of 22 participants)
* 86% claimed Christian (Catholic protestant or any other Christian denominations as religious affiliate
* 81% did not participate in grief recovery programs
* This study proved that religion can provide different thinking about the world and how to cope with the different stressors that come with it. The results of this study showed with the relationship and help and guidance from God, they develop trust and believe that God will manage control within their lives; knowing what is best for them and can help them through many of the challenges they may face in the future.

DISCUSSION:

* The willingness for the participants to participate in the study
* Due to the severity of the study, participates weren’t comfortable in participating in the study.
* Focus on the areas that didn’t have strong enough data for the population such as the programming, services, and evidence that helped them after the loss while they were grieving
* Create a test and run a series of trials to see if we can improve those numbers, see why and why they don’t utilize the services and see if we can increase the probability of African Americans utilizing more of the programs and services by providing them with resources, support and financial assistance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:

* Social workers role: advocate, educate, inspire and provide support
* Social workers can: create support groups, events and programming and offer resources

CONCLUSION:

* African Americans did have a more difficult time processing bereavement than their counterparts after losing their spouses, but their coping strategies were similar to Caucasian population than different.

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