

The Role of the Church in Supporting African American Caregivers

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Background

- Long-standing tradition suggest that extended families and churches are two of the most influential networks of support within African-American (AA) communities.¹
- Despite extensive literature that highlights the role of the church as a means of social, emotional, and spiritual support for AA caregivers, there is limited research within OS/OT that looks explicitly at the support provided by the church.^{1,4,5}
- Limited research in OS/OT on AA populations.

Research Aim

Exploring the role the church plays in providing support to African-American caregivers.

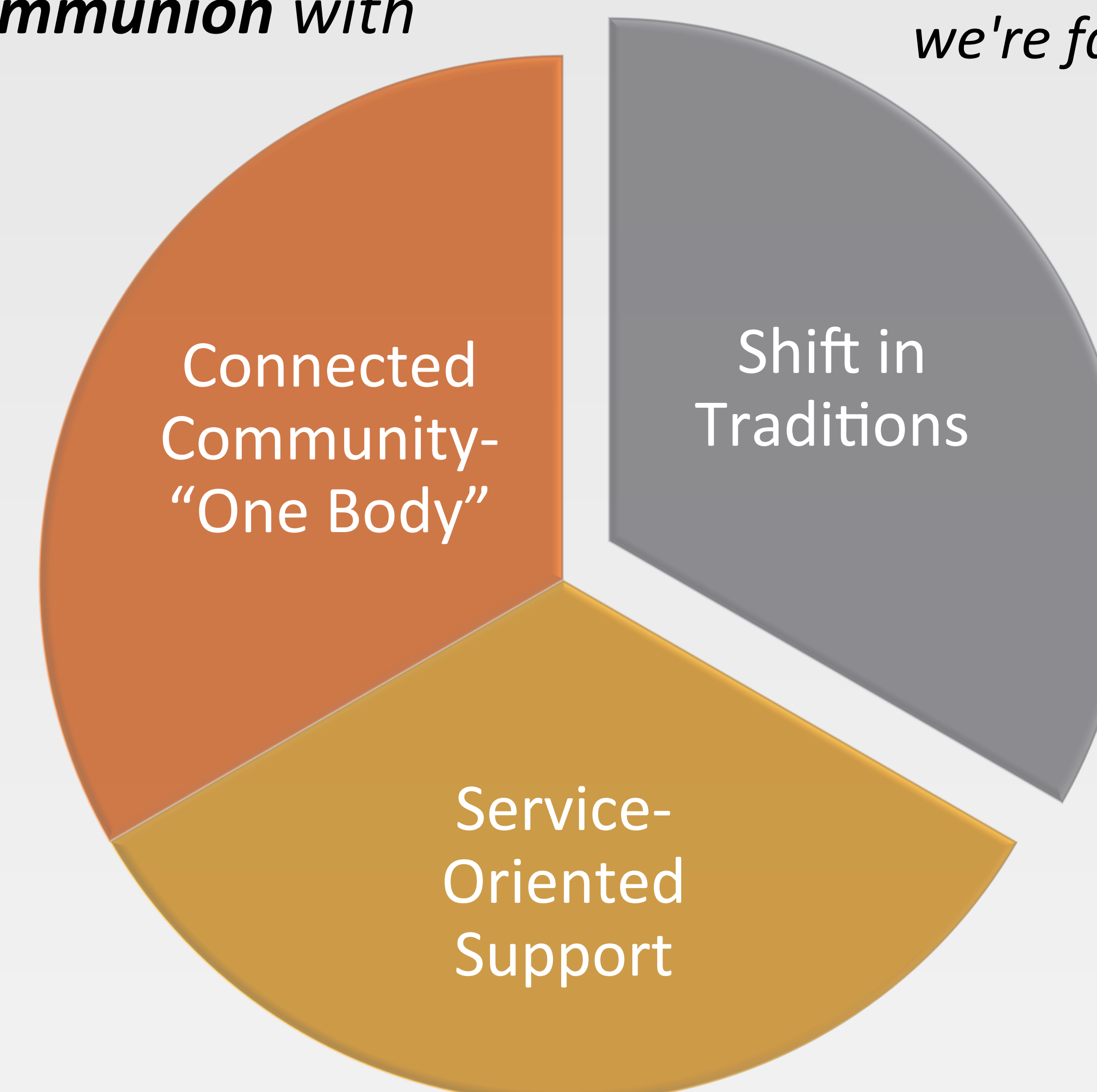
Methods

- Qualitative Descriptive Study
- One-on-one, Semi-Structured Interviews
- Convenience & Purposive Sampling
- 4 Participants
 - 2 African-American Caregivers
 - 1 African-American Caregiver & Pastor
 - 1 Caucasian Pastor
- Descriptive and categorical coding and analysis

Findings

*"And we would just witness to them about life, and what was going on in the community, what was happening at church, we would **sing songs, read verses, and then have communion with them.**"*

*"It means being a part of a **family**. I think of the church as family. You're **one body in Christ**, but we're family."*



*"I think **it's changed a little bit over the years... You don't have smaller churches.**"*

Discussion

- Service-oriented support was described by participants and exemplified belonging as contributed to others.²
- Shifting traditions was conveyed as a loss of connectedness by AA caregivers.
- Findings suggest that AA caregivers can benefit from additional church support such as caregiver groups or respite time.

Implications

- OTs can assist and encourage AA caregivers to engage in caregiver support groups as well as respite services.
- OTs working with caregivers should recognize and address feelings of disconnection and lack of belonging
- Areas of further research include noting generational changes and shifts in values of historical, cultural traditions.

References

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