

Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Graduate Summer Fellowship Award

Each section (I-III) should be placed at the start of a new page. All required materials must be included in a single document, uploaded to the electronic submissions system, no later than 5PM on the published day of the deadline. Departmental review is required for this program, as well as a letter of support. Applicants should submit their application with enough time to receive review prior to the close of the deadline. Taft does not accept an obligation to review applications that have not received intradepartmental review by the close of the deadline.

I. General Information

- A. Name: **XXXXXXXXXX**
- B. M#: **XXXXXXXX**
- C. Department: **XXXXXXXX**
- D. Project title: **Unapologetically Black and Unashamedly Christian:
Exploring the Complexities of Black Millennial Christianity**
- E. Project Location: **Cincinnati, OH; Nashville, TN; Chicago, IL**
- F. Probable Results of a Grant (such as publications, working papers, and presentations): **The data collected will be the foundation of my dissertation project. As a result, I will be using this data to develop conference presentations as well as academic articles for publication.**
- G. Have you already or will you in the future apply for other grants for this travel, including departmental support? **I have applied for department enhancement monies for this research project as well.**

II. Taft Grant History

Project Title	Grant Type	Date	Award Amt.	Project Status
Pre-ABD: Strategies for Success; Social Media & Academia: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly	Graduate Student Conference Travel Award	April 2018	\$500	This presentation was later incorporated into the Alpha Kappa Delta Sociology Honor Society NCSA Preparing Future Faculty certificate program.
Black Lives Matter & Black (Student) Activism: A Narrative of (Black) Student Responses to Racism in Collegiate Environments	Graduate Student Conference Travel Award	April 2016	\$475	This manuscript is in the final revision stage. It is being prepared to be sent out for publication in the Western Journal of Black Studies

III. Project Narrative

A. Statement of Purpose

For much of the twentieth century, the resistance to Black oppression was formulated in the Black Christian church, the oldest Black social institution (Du Bois 2003[1903]), and the space where an oppositional Black consciousness was first formed (hooks 1989; Morris 2001). Historically, the Black church has, as one of few social spaces continuously controlled by Black people, facilitated consciousness raising and Black liberation movement mobilization. In addition to serving as a safe space for Black people, shielding them from the harsh realities of American racism, the church primarily existed as a place of worship, where Black people gained strength and courage from a faith that promoted liberation theology. Black social life today differs from the past, as church attendance rates have decreased, the amount of secular spaces fostering Black oppositional consciousness, such as colleges/universities and virtual communities, have increased, and other-worldly theologies discouraging collective action have become more prevalent (Morris 2001). Despite these changes within the Black community and society at large, one aspect of American culture, overt racial injustice, has continued to define the Black experience and inspire action. It is an opportune time, then, to revisit the role of the Black Christian church in this ongoing struggle for justice. This project specifically seeks to determine the extent to which the Black Christian religious tradition plays a role in Black consciousness raising and mobilization today. To do so, I rely on approximately 60 in-depth interviews with Black millennials (aged 22-37) who identify as Christian to examine how their religious faith contextualizes their perceptions of Black liberation. To ensure a diverse sample, participants were purposefully recruited based on variations in denominational affiliation, church membership, and social activism. By fixating on the faith of participants rather than on the church itself, the findings of this study

extend the extant literature addressing the relationship between Black liberation efforts and Black Christianity which to date, has focused primarily on the institutional role of the Black church. Through interrogating the paradoxical relationship between Black Christianity and Black resistance, in which Christianity inspires social activism for some while simultaneously preventing it in others, this research provides insights on how religious beliefs inform understandings of racialized experiences and impacts attitudes towards resistance.

B. Role of Project in Degree Program

This project plays a major role in my degree program, as it is my dissertation. The research I am currently collecting will undoubtedly utilize the methodological skills that I've developed throughout our extensive quantitative and qualitative methods course series.

Furthermore, this project will build on the conceptual framework I developed through my department's comprehensive exam specialty paper, in which I claim that sociological research on Black Christianity has been too focused at the institutional and ideological levels and that more attention needs to be paid to the interpersonal level, in order to understand how Christianity may operate as a source of subversion to social inequality. As my dissertation, this project is a requirement for me to complete the program.

C. Current Status and Expected Outcomes

This project is currently in the data collection phase. To date, I have identified the project's scope which is to fill a gap in the sociological literature regarding the influence of Christianity in contemporary Black social movements, and have established a research question: How do Black Christian millennials perceive and respond to racial inequality? I have conducted the literature review necessary to situate this project in existing sociological research. This literature review is currently under-review as a stand-alone publication in *Sociology Compass*. Further, I have created a methodology which my dissertation committee, Dr. Earl

Wright II (chair), Dr. Anna Linders, and Dr. Derrick Brooms, have all approved. Finally, I have submitted this study to IRB and received approval. I released my recruitment flyer and have had over 70 people express interest in being interviewed! The remaining steps to complete this project include conducting the interviews, analyzing the transcripts, presenting the data, and writing up the findings. The monies from this grant will be used to offset data collection and analysis fees such as, interview travel costs, transcription rates from www.temi.com, and NVIVO software subscription fees. I expect to present this data at the Association of Black Sociologists conference in New York City, NY in August 2019, as well as send an article manuscript out for publication by October 2019.

D. Impacts on Intellectual Development

This research project is helping to strengthen my ability to “do sociology:” interpreting social theories and applying them to everyday realities in order to develop new understandings of the social world within which we exist. For example, prominent social thinker Karl Marx’s Conflict Theory argues that inequality exists when one group in society exploits another subordinate group for their benefit. This framework has been used to understand racism, sexism and poverty. I am particularly interested in discovering what factors contribute to why individuals and groups choose to take action against the exploitation they experience and what mechanisms they employ when doing so. This project contributes to this broader conversation by interviewing Black Christian Millennials about their perceptions and responses to racial inequality to determine how if at all, their religious beliefs shape their social activism. In this way, it is clear that this research project positively impacts my intellectual development by allowing me to use my sociological imagination to produce meaningful research capable of changing our society for the better.

Other Sources of Funding

While I am eligible for other sources of funding when presenting the data from this project at conferences via departmental monies and GSGA, I have limited options when it comes to obtaining money to support the research process. The only other source of money I am eligible for is my department Enhancement Award, which I have also applied for. This project is not eligible for financial support from UC International Programs.