Amazing grace – jonathan kozol

The book " Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation" gave me a look into one of the most segregated and poverty stricken communities in the United States, the South Bronx in New York City. These are children who in America are the forgotten ones or the ones that are too little heard.

Many of the children and adults who had told their stories had died from gunshot wounds, fires because of unsafe buildings, AIDS, or cancer. Kozol gives tribute to them in the eulogy at the end. The author gives very good descriptions of what life for these people must be like give me a vivid picture.

Many of the young children have no childhood, view homeless shelters as an improvement over previous and current living situations, see no opportunity of employment for adults, live surrounded by environmental waste and violence, are physically disfigured by household fires because the city and landlords neglect their responsibilities, say they live " like rats", see God and death as liberating forces and pray every night before going to bed " God bless mommy.

God bless Nanny. God don't punish me because I'm black" (Kozol, p. 69).

Religion has been associated with mental and physical health outcomes. The life stress process is one possible mechanism through which religious phenomena and mental and physical health outcomes are linked. For many people, religiosity is an important coping resource in times of stress, like the poverty in Kozol's book. Involvement in religious activities or behaviors may offset the deleterious effects of stress on mental and physical health.

However, the stress-buffering role of religiosity is not straightforward. Studies of this phenomenon yield inconsistent findings. For example although Krause (1998) reported that religious coping buffered the effects of stress (neighborhood deterioration) on self-rated health, he did not find a buffering effect when functional disability was the outcome variable.

Maton (2001) suggests that research on religiosity should be based to understand "…when, for whom, and in which ways facets or forms of religion and spirituality contribute to the outcomes of interest" (p. 610).

So it is particularly important to understand religiosity as a coping resource in specific community contexts. Communities that have been exposed to high levels of stress and where religion is salient are ideal contexts in which to further examine this issue.

Religion has been defined as, " a search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament 1997, p. 32). This definition emphasized the sacred conventions such as beliefs, practices directed toward a divine or superhuman power and the functional aspects like making sense of problems of religion.

In the United States researchers have become increasingly interested in the relationship between stress and religious phenomena. There are a number of possible ways that religiosity may lessen the impact of stressors.

Religious cognitions may enhance coping by influencing whether or not an event is appraised as hopeless. For example, the belief that one can turn to God for help and strength may facilitate one's adaptation to difficult situations.

Attributions to a purposeful God may help individuals to find meaning in stressful events. Religious attributions are associated with looking at stressful events in more adaptive ways, and this ultimately fosters personal growth (Park & Cohen, 1993).

It appears that the role of religiosity as a stress buffer may vary depending on the number of stressors, the specific type of stressor experienced and the particular facet of religiosity.

Combining stressors in this manner reveal little about the interaction between religiosity and particular types of stressors. It can be argued that this practice may undermine the fact that stressors are qualitatively different from one another in terms of their impact and the types of resources needed for coping.