MULTI-RACIAL TEAM LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH:

A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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A Thesis

Presented to

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

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For Patti.

I will always be grateful for your love and support. You have been the encouragement I have needed and the companion I have wanted. Thank you for walking this journey with me.

You and me, yea.

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PREFACE

When I think back over my doctoral journey, I am a mixed bag of emotions: glad, disheartened, challenged, unsure, confident, hopeful. There have been moments of great excitement, and times of great discouragement. Nevertheless, I remain grateful for this opportunity, and thankful for the journey. I remember driving to Louisville for my entrance exam to the program with no idea of what to expect. I remember receiving word of my acceptance, surprised by the open door in front of me. As vividly as I reminisce on the good times of the journey, I also remember the difficulties along the way. The uncertainty of my abilities, the death of a close friend, the isolation of the pandemic, the burden of pastoring a church, the responsibility of caring for aging parents, the neglected tasks of everyday life.

As I come to the end of the journey, I am overwhelmed by the countless individuals who have contributed to my successful completion. This would not have been possible without the love, support, memories, and encouragement of so many, and these words cannot fully capture my gratitude and appreciation for their investments.

First and foremost, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to rescue me a sinner. I never thought doctoral work would be a part of my journey, but I am more than confident that God has ordered my steps and I can confidently say, "I have no regret."

To my cohort family, without a doubt we have become more than just a group of people pushing towards this finish line. Kyle, Lindsay, Chad, Rob, and Michael, thank you for your example and encouragement. "Survive and advance!"

To the members of Grace Community Church, thanks for demonstrating the power of grace—in both word and deed. Your encouraging words and prayers for me kept me going. To the elders and staff, your support throughout the journey was essential to my finishing. For the late Mike O'Day, I am grateful for his friendship and encouragement to take this doctoral journey. He was a brother who provided inspiration for me from the very beginning.

When thinking about all my family, I am grateful for their belief in me and encouragement for me. Your prayers and support meant so much. Mom and Dad, you have always been my biggest cheerleaders, and for your confidence in me, I will always be indebted to you. Courtney and Jackson, I could not ask for a bigger blessing than you are in my life. Thanks for supporting me in this journey.

Finally, a special thanks to my wife, Patti. Words could never fully express my appreciation for you, my best friend, you and me, yea. I don't know what I was thinking, pursuing a doctoral degree in the midst of all the other stuff. But as difficult as the journey has been, there's no one else I'd rather have as my friend and partner. You've been my support, encouragement, my help. Thank you for being my comfort, my resting place, and my peace. God has truly blessed me with you. I look forward to the rest of our journey together.

John Ivey Harris, Jr.

Marietta, Georgia

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH CONCERN

"I have been disappointed with the White church and its leadership."[1]

When considering the circumstances in which the above words were written,

one immediately senses the immense racial tension among the religious leaders of the

day. Although some progress has been made, the church still seems deeply divided along

racial lines, with little evidence of any substantial advancement toward unity and

reconciliation. In 2018, the Barna Group asked over 3,000 respondents whether they

agreed that the history of slavery in the U.S. still significantly impacted Black Americans

today. The study found that half of practicing Christians (50 percent) "mostly or totally"

acknowledged ongoing repercussions, slightly ahead of the proportion of the general

population who feel this way (46 percent).[2]

The concern of racial tension among religious leadership is the subject of the

following thesis. The research coalesced around three important disciplines—race,

church, and leadership—the following research was driven by a desperate need for the

church to address the ongoing racial divide among its leadership so that more progress

toward racial unity could be accomplished. It is an assumption of this research project

that the convergence of unique aspects of each discipline provides great possibilities to

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[1] Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 83.

[2] One notable takeaway is that one half of the respondents believe that the history of slavery continues to impact Black Americans today. Mathematically that means one half does not. There is a racial disparity regarding these results; nearly twice as many Black Christians than White Christians believe that the history of slavery continues to impact Black Americans today (79 percent to 42 percent). Barna Group. *Where Do We Go from Here? How U.S. Christians Feel about Racism, and What They Believe It Will Take to Move Forward*, 2019.

address the concerns of racial reconciliation more adequately. This thesis will consider the nature of these three entities—race, church, and leadership—before further defining the research purpose.

Research Problem

One cannot talk about the problem of racial tensions among religious leaders without first acknowledging the broader strains on race relations in the United States. Although conflicts among different tribes and people groups have historically existed, the ethnic division addressed in this research is the nature of the relationship between Blacks and Whites.[3] Certainly, the United States is diverse in its ethnic makeup, and this diversity brings its own set of cultural and social challenges. Although broader ethnic conflicts exist, the Black and White racial divide in the United States has unique dynamics formed by distinct historical events and shaped by certain struggles and injustices.

Race Relations in the United States

From its inception to today, the United States has struggled with Black and White race relations. Though it was initially imported from Europe, it did not take long before the roots of racism were well established in the new nation's laws, values, customs, and practices. For example, some tried to prove that race is a distinction among

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[3] For this thesis, I used Beverly Daniel Tatum's understanding of the following terms. According to Tatum, the terms *White* or *Caucasian* both refer to Americans of European descent. The phrase *People of Color* refers to those groups in America who are and have been historically targeted by racism. This act includes people of African descent, people of Asian descent, people of Latin American descent, and indigenous peoples (sometimes referred to as Native Americans or American Indians). Although Tatum agrees that the term *African-American* is familiar, she sees it as not as inclusive as the term *Black* used to mean the Black experience in America and may include Black people who are not descendants of Africa (i.e. Afro-Caribbeans). The term *non-White* can be offensive because it defines groups of people in terms of what they are not. Beverly D. Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 101.

humans on the biological level.[4] However, the current view in the scientific community is that the genetic diversity that exists across the entire human race is small.[5]

The irony is that though racial distinctions have failed the test of science, biology, and anthropology, the concept of race is still socially and politically real. Kristen A. Renn writes, "The early twenty-first century is marked by the paradox of a society increasingly believing that race is not a biological reality—yet the social meanings, both positive and negative, ascribed to racial categories and the people who belong to them, are as powerful as ever."[6] These racial categories and biases are as powerful as ever because, over the many generations, individual and institutional racism has deeply shaped the Black/White relationship. In both seen and unseen ways, cultural patterns and economic policies have created a deep division between Blacks and Whites, leading to deficits of trust, levels of suspicion, and even acts of violence.

Throughout its brief history, the racial tensions in the United States have affected different groups differently. One example of the impact of racism on race relations is the degree to which the cultural norm of stereotyping affected the identity development of Black people. For any person, self-identity development is shaped by many contributing influences, including family, culture, tradition, ethnicity, economics, education, values, and heritage. However, stereotyping has significantly shaped their self-

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[4] At different times in history, there have been attempts to prove scientifically that race is a distinction among humans on the biological level. In the early 1800s, Samuel Morton conducted research to demonstrate biological differences between races. Morton claimed that he could define the intellectual ability of a race by the skull capacity. A large volume meant a large brain and high intellectual capacity, and a small skull indicated a small brain and decreased intellectual capacity. He was reputed to hold the largest collection of skulls, on which he based his research. He claimed that each race had a separate origin, and that a descending order of intelligence could be discerned that placed Caucasians at the pinnacle and Negroes at the lowest point, with various other race groups in between. Peter Robb, *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (India: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20.

[5] Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, "Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race," *The American Psychologist* 60, no. 1 (January 2005): 16–26.

[6] Kristen A. Renn, "Creating and Re-creating Race," *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 14.

identity for many Black Americans, especially Black American men. In a letter to a White friend, Black hip-hop artist Shai Linne recounts all the many examples of being stereotyped as a Black male. Referring to his awareness of being stereotyped his whole life, he writes, "This is about how being a Black man in America has shaped both the way I see myself and the way others have seen me my whole life."[7]

With each passing generation, it has become painfully clear that a vast chasm exists between the White experience and the Black experience in America. Building a bridge between the two groups will require an effort on both sides to understand the predicament of the other. For example, the White person must be willing to face the reality that their understanding of the Black experience is quite limited. The Black person, for their part, must take more responsibility for finding ways to break cycles such as victimization and inferiority. The Black person must realize that someone else's stereotypical view of them does not have to be the deciding factor that defines who they are. From the White side of the chasm, given how awareness of stereotyping affects Black identity development, the White community would do well by identifying with the struggle of the Black experience and lamenting with them the injustice and abuses the Black community has experienced, whether they have personally contributed to them or not. This empathy would be a good faith first step toward closing the racial gap and building humanity of dignity and justice for all. These are a few aspects of the nature of race in America that create the problem the research attempted to address.

The Presence of the Multi-Ethnic Church

Not only is there a need for a more constructive conversation between Blacks and Whites in society, but there is also a huge need for a more open and honest discussion of racial tensions within the church. Despite the church's dismal record in race relations,

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[7] Shai Linne, "George Floyd and Me," *The Gospel Coalition*, accessed June 8, 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/george-floyd-and-me

there has been some progress in the recent decade. A growing number of churches have become more aware of the increasing multi-racial nature of our country. In light of this, homogenous models of church that focus on reaching a single racial group will not be as effective as they have been in the past. The church is learning that it must adjust to its new racial future. This process will inevitably include making bold, biblical steps toward developing churches to meet the needs of people of different races and cultures. Mark DeYmaz and George Yancey warn, "The ability of contemporary and future Christians to provide a relevant witness to a multi-racial, multicultural society is at stake. If our God is not big enough to provide us the spiritual strength to overcome racial barriers in our society, then how can we ask a hurting world to trust such a feeble deity?"[8] The church has a grand opportunity to be relevant to society and provide the leadership to do so.

The Inevitable Influence of Leadership

How important is leadership? Few could deny the impact a great leader (or, unfortunately, a poor leader) can have on an organization's performance and employee morale. Leadership pervades an organization, and leaders shape their organizational cultures according to their preferences and beliefs.[9] Regarding leadership and race relations, the issues and initiatives usually fall into the realm and practice of multi-ethnic diversity. Much multi-ethnic progress has been made over the past sixty years in the leadership and administration of institutions such as education, business, medicine, media, and the military. This progress has happened largely due to an emphasis on training and development. Leaders have advanced in multicultural awareness, knowledge,

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[8] Mark DeYmaz and George Yancey, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), forward, par. 1, Kindle.

[9] Edgar H. Schein and Peter A. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2016), 20.

and skills to respond appropriately to the problems and opportunities of both domestic demographic changes and globalization.[10]

However, even though effective leadership has been instrumental in making great strides in dealing with multi-ethnic diversity, there is still much need for progress in Black/White race relations. This problem of Black/White race relations is a redemptive opportunity for the church; therefore, it is the critical area of leadership within the church that this research project ultimately addressed. With the reputation of the gospel at stake, the progress of Black/White race relations in the church rests upon the character and competence of its leadership. This research demonstrated that by applying the biblical model of servant leadership to Black/White leadership teams, many challenges arising from power struggles and stereotyping could be minimized. Essentially, multi-racial leadership in the church would require a different kind of leadership structure and mentality—a leadership attitude and mindset modeled after the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. The purpose of this research project was to address these problems by observing empirical evidence of biblical principles being applied to Black/White Team Leadership in the context of the local church.

Research Purpose

This thesis focused on the challenges and opportunities at the convergence of race, church, and leadership. Although much has been written separately on these three important disciplines, the problem is that there is currently little empirical research that considers racial questions in the context of the church and no research that deals with Black/White dynamics among the leaders in the local church.[11] This present research

[10] Mary L. Connerley and Paul B. Pedersen, *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment: Developing Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005), "The Need for Multicultural Skills," chap. 1, par. 3, Kindle.

[11] Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, 1st ed. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008). Of all the precedent literature on the topics of race, church and leadership, Korie Edward's *The Elusive Dream* comes the closest to the focus of this research project.

project sought to put the conversation about Black/White race relations into the redemptive community of the local church and, even more strategically, to investigate the nature of Black/White leadership teams in the local church.

This two-phase, sequential mixed methods multi-case study aimed to examine and identify patterns and practices in Black/White leadership teams in churches and determine significant factors that contribute to their successes and failures. In the first phase, quantitative research questions identified the correlation between race relations and leadership dynamics among pastors and church elders in as many as ten to thirty evangelical churches in the Atlanta area. Information from the first phase was then explored further in a qualitative phase. In the second phase, qualitative face-to-face in-person interviews were used to probe significant relational and cultural dynamics among multi-racial leadership teams by exploring cause and effect aspects of the multi-ethnic teamwork with select leaders at three to ten churches. The reason for following up with qualitative research in the second phase was to discover at a more personal and experiential level how racial diversity and race relations affect church leadership effectiveness and how church leadership practices and structures contribute to race relations and multi-ethnic team dynamics.

Delimitations of the Research

Many have written on race relations, the local church, and leadership discipline. The following delimitations characterized and focused this research on narrowing this project's scope. First, this project focused exclusively on evangelical churches as defined by the four aspects of the Bebbington quadrilateral. Developed by David W. Bebbinton in his book *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, the author describes the four main qualities that makeup

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Although Edwards presented the results of her in-depth study of interracial churches, her focus was much less about the leadership structures and patterns within multi-racial leadership, and more on the influence that race had upon the character of the church.

evangelicalism as Biblicism, Crucicentrism, Conversionism, and Activism.[12] Although some discoveries may apply to other institutions beyond the evangelical church, the intent was to explore the unique dynamics in Black/White team leadership structures of evangelical churches.

Second, the geographical focus was limited to the area of Atlanta, Georgia. Although race and ethnicity play an important role in organizations worldwide, this project recognized the unique challenges of ethnic relations in the Southeast regions of the United States due to centuries of racial tensions and conflicts. The area east of the Mississippi and south of Jamestown, Virginia, represents a particular type of racial tension formed over the decades by slavery, unjust laws, and protests. From the early years of Colonial America to the modern Civil Rights Movement, the southeastern region of the US has remained the caldron of much of the tension and the origins of much of the change. Finally, the city of Atlanta sits at the epicenter of this historical conflict. Serving as the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the location of the Confederate Memorial carved into the side of Stone Mountain, the Atlanta area offers much insight into the dynamics of race relations. Because of these factors, the nature of multi-racial team leadership is germane to the Atlanta region. Therefore, the discoveries from the research are most applicable to the churches in this geographical area.

Third, the exclusive focus of the research was on the relational dynamics between White leaders and Black leaders serving together. Again, the research was done assuming that some of the conclusions would be helpful to other ethnic diversities.

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[12] Bebbington is widely known for his definition of evangelicalism, referred to as the Bebbington quadrilateral first provided in his 1989 classic study *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. Bebbington identified four main qualities used in defining evangelical convictions and attitudes: Biblicism: a particular regard for the Bible (e.g. all essential spiritual truth is found in its pages); crucicentrism: a focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross; conversionism: the belief that human beings need to be converted; and activism: the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1st ed. (London, Routledge: Routledge, 1989), 20.

However, the main intent was to discover the unique aspects of the Black/White relationship among leadership teams in the churches in the Atlanta area.

Fourth, the project was intentionally limited to leaders. This study was not a research project about multi-ethnic congregations, which has been the focus of much writing and experimentation over the past decade. The intended target of the research was on the decision-making and directional leadership personnel and structures of local churches. For some churches, this was the elders or deacons. For others, the research focus was on the staff personnel. While the project was done with the premise that the multi-ethnic congregation is both a cause and an effect of the leaders, the emphasis was exclusively on the leadership personnel, structure, and practices.

Fifth, research was limited to leaders serving together on a team. In a church, this is known as a plurality form of leadership. In his book *The Plurality Principle*, Dave Harvey states, "The Bible rarely talks about stand-alone leaders. Instead, it speaks of plurality. When I use the term plurality, I'm referencing the scriptural evidence that more than one leader led New Testament churches."[13]

Sixth and finally, the project was intentionally limited to a complementarian form of the leadership structure within the local church. Complementarianism holds that "God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and the Church."[14] Leadership in the church is usually characterized by the belief that only men should be appointed to authoritative leadership positions, which does not mean that women cannot teach or lead in the church. Though we live in an egalitarian culture, the complementarian view believes that the Bible unapologetically refers to the church's

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[13] Dave Harvey, *The Plurality Principle: How to Build and Maintain a Thriving Church Leadership Team* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 25.

[14] Reformed Theological Seminary, "Thinking and Living Biblically in a Gender-Neutral Society - Male Authority and Female Equality: In the Beginning," accessed June 12, 2021, https://rts.edu/resources/thinking-and-living-biblically-in-a-gender-nuteral-society-male-authority-and-female-equality-in-the-beginning/.

leaders as men. Jeramie Rinne notes, "Elder describes a specific office, a divinely appointed role, a distinct position within the organizational structure of a local church, just as father is a distinct, divinely appointed position in the family. And as with the role of father, so God has sovereignly summoned qualified men to the role of elder."[15]

Research Questions

The following two questions were developed to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. What are the demographic and cultural characteristics of churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?
2. What are the common ministerial perceptions and practices of pastors in churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

Definitions and Terminology

For this study, the following terms and definitions are provided:

African American. African American and Black are used interchangeably to describe persons of African ancestry born and living in the United States of America.

Black Church. The term Black Church refers to Protestant churches that currently or historically have ministered to predominantly Black congregations in the United States. While some Black Churches belong to predominantly African-American denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), many Black churches are members of predominantly White denominations.

Leadership Mindset. The attitude present in "leading" or guiding other individuals, teams, or entire organizations.

White Privilege. Refers to the myriad social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race, such as a clerk not

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[15] Jeramie Rinne, *Church Elders* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 28.

following you around in a store or not having people cross the street at night to avoid you.[16]

Research Methodology

The methodological approach in this research included finding three to ten churches across the area of Atlanta, Georgia, currently operating with a Black-White multi-racial leadership team. The quantity of three to ten churches was reached based on the article "The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research" by Mira Crouch and Heather McKenzie. By using an example drawn from a study of persons with a history of cancer diagnosis and treatment, Crouch and McKenzie make the case that "a small number of cases (less than 20, say) will facilitate the researcher's close association with the respondents, and enhance the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings."[17]

Within any research area, different participants can have diverse opinions. Qualitative samples must be large enough to assure that most or all the perceptions that might be important are uncovered. However, at the same time, not too large data lest the data become repetitive and, eventually, superfluous. Suppose a researcher remains faithful to the principles of qualitative research. In that case, the sample size in most qualitative studies should generally pursue input until new data collection does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation. Based on the argument that a maximum

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[16] Richard Delgado, "Critical Race Theory: An Introduction," in *Critical America*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[17] Mira Crouch and Heather McKenzie, "The Logic of Small Samples in Interview-Based Qualitative Research," *Social Science Information* 45, no. 4 (December 2006): 483-499. Crouch and McKenzie argued that because research based on interviews often sought to penetrate social life beyond appearance, it is necessary for the "researcher to be immersed in the research field, to establish continuing, fruitful relationships with respondents and through theoretical contemplation to address the research problem in depth" (p. 483). The authors stated, "From a realist standpoint, here concept formation through induction and analysis aims to clarify the nature of some specific situations in the social world, to discover what features there are in them and to account, however partially, for those features being as they are." They concluded that "since such a research project scrutinizes the dynamic qualities of a situation (rather than elucidating the proportionate relationships among its constituents), the issue of sample size - as well as representativeness - has little bearing on the project's basic logic" (p. 484).

number of twenty individual interviews approaches this saturation point, this research project included a sample of three church leadership teams with two to five members on each team.

Although the Atlanta Metro area is well populated with many churches, finding churches with multi-racial leadership in place was no easy task. Because purposive sampling is subjective, careful attention was made to choosing a sample representative following the approved purpose statement, thesis, and interview instruments.

This research focused on evangelical churches in Atlanta, Georgia, led by a multi-racial leadership structure consisting of pastors and church elders. The multi-racial leadership teams included in the population sample of the research comprised Black and White racial diversity.

This explanatory sequential mixed method multi-case research project was conducted in three stages. First, through networking of contacts and referrals, rapport was established with as many multi-racial leadership teams as possible. The goal of stage one was to build trust and determine which church leaders demonstrated a willingness and capacity to participate in the project.

The second stage of the research included a quantitative survey with as many as ten to thirty churches. The online survey tool used a six-point Likert-scale questionnaire to collect participants' data. The data were then collected in various forms to prepare for the next stage. This survey helped to discover such things as the length of time the multi-racial team had served together, the team members' ethnicities, the church's racial makeup, and other basic statistical information. The data were collected and analyzed to determine the demographics among multi-ethnic leadership teams and became the basis for forming stage three interview questions.

The third stage consisted of face-to-face interviews with the participating leaders in the three to ten churches. For maximum transparency and honesty, these in-person interviews were conducted in a confidential setting and were recorded with the

participant's permission or otherwise properly documented for later reporting. These interviews helped uncover the issues and dynamics which had the greatest influence on the effectiveness of multi-ethnic team leadership. Through a predetermined set of standardized questions, the researcher captured the real-life experiences of the ups and downs of multi-racial team leadership. These qualitative findings were recorded and used to report on the findings.

Conclusion

Although much has been written on race, church, and leadership, the present research was done to demonstrate that there was much to be discovered at the crossroads of all three of them. Not just one of these is the sole problem we face, nor is one of them the lone cause of the other's evils. Each one spreads its germs, collectively contributing to society's sicknesses. Race relations have been dramatically infected by the wrong beliefs of the local church and significantly informed by the immoral influences of leadership attitudes. For its part, the local church has been shaped by the condition of race relations and defined by the prevalence of leadership abuses. Finally, certain leadership mindsets and models have infiltrated the local church, while other prevailing leadership attitudes have highjacked race relations.

This research hypothesized that the convergence of race relations, the local church, and leadership practice held great potential for racial reconciliation in society. What might happen if we were willing to explore the interrelated and symbiotic relationship between these three? Martin Luther King's revealing words written from the Birmingham jail may point us to such an intersection, where at last, we might experience the spark of cultural revival, church revitalization, and societal renewal that so many have aspired to find. If these possibilities hold some hope for a breakthrough, then exploring the junction of these three conventions will be worth it.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Race, Church, and Leadership

Since this research project was about multi-racial church leadership, the

precedent literature was reviewed in the three broad areas of race, church, and leadership.

A summary of each primary discipline is provided to begin the literature overview,

highlighting a few significant areas where it relates to the thesis.

The Meaning of Race

One must use the language of race to talk about race relations—including all

the problems of racism. Although some argue that the language of race is a part of the

problem, we must begin with a common understanding of the word's etymology. In their

book *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, Audrey Smedley and

Brian D. Smedley make the case that from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the

concept of race was a useful way of categorizing people according to their qualities and

unique differences.[1] This categorization illustrates the viewpoint that the concept of race

is a human-invented classification system or a social construct. At different times in

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[1] Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, "Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race," *The American Psychologist* 60, no. 1 (January 2005): 37. Smedley and Smedley added,

> Spanish hegemony in Europe was extensive, and the country's contacts with the English increased significantly. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, race developed as a classificatory term in English similar to, and interchangeable with, people, nation, kind, type, variety, stock, and so forth. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, when scholars became more actively engaged in investigations, classifications, and definitions of human populations, race was elevated as the one major symbol and mode of human group differentiation applied extensively to non-European groups and even to those groups in Europe who varied from the subjective norm. Of all the terms commonly employed to categorize human beings, *race* became the most useful one for conveying the qualities and degrees of human differences that had become increasingly consonant with the English view of the world's peoples.

history, however, some have tried to scientifically prove that race is not a mere human invention but rather a distinction on the biological level. In the early 1800s, Samuel Morton demonstrated biological differences between races.[2] Unfortunately, Morton's flawed and biased findings were used to justify hundreds of years of horrors, such as slavery and genocide. People like W. E. B. Du Bois began to confront these unscientific claims in response to these views.[3]

Over the past hundred years, science has unequivocally demonstrated that race is not biologically real. The current view in the academic community is that race is not even a legitimate scientific reason for the diversity among humans. Smedley and Smedley conclude, "The consensus among most scholars in fields such as evolutionary biology, anthropology, and other disciplines is that racial distinctions fail on all three counts—that is, they are not genetically discrete, are not reliably measured, and not scientifically meaningful."[4]

Any discussion about race inevitably touches on race relations. These social meanings that are ascribed to racial categories are not only powerful, but they have a powerful effect on relationships between people of different races. Because of the influence on society, we must set this reality in the broader context of the past and the present.

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[2] Peter Robb, *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20. According to Robb, Morton claimed that he could define the intellectual ability of a race by the skull capacity. A large volume meant a large brain and high intellectual capacity, and a small skull indicated a small brain and decreased intellectual capacity. He was reputed to hold the largest collection of skulls, on which he based his research. He claimed that each race had a separate origin, and a descending order of intelligence could be discerned that placed Caucasians at the pinnacle and Negroes at the lowest point, with various other race groups in between.

[3] W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Original ed. (G&D Media, 2019), 20. Du Bois was concerned that race was being used as a biological explanation for what he understood as social and cultural differences between different populations of people. He spoke against the idea of "White" and "Black" as discrete groups, claiming that these distinctions ignored the scope of human diversity.

[4] Smedley and Smedley, *Race in North America*, 16–26.

The concept of race is a social construct about which we have had an ongoing conversation in the United States for a long time. Even so, one aspect of the current debate on race relations includes the question of just how pervasive race truly matters. Some see racism as a stain on the past that has been wiped clean by modern civil rights laws and improved cultural sensitivities. Others argue that although legislation has helped move the needle some, the cancer of racism still exists, and there is still much work to be done to root it out of society.[5] Despite slavery being long abolished in the U.S., race relations continue to struggle under the weight of inequality and injustice. These inequalities appear in education, jobs, government laws, incarceration, and law enforcement.[6] Malcolm D. Homes and Brad W. Smith explain, "Blacks see the police as oppressors protecting the interests of the White community . . . . Many minority citizens perceive the police as a real danger in their day-to-day lives."[7]

According to a new Pew Research Center survey, most adults in the United States say the legacy of slavery continues to impact Black people's position in American society today.[8] A similar percentage of Christians have the same view. In his latest research on the topic, George Barna asked respondents whether they agreed with the history of slavery in the U.S. still significantly impacts Black Americans today. Half of practicing Christians (50 percent) "mostly or totally" acknowledge ongoing repercussions, slightly ahead of the proportion of the general population who feel this

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[5] Andy R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 20.

[6] Daniel E. Reinhardt, "The Impact of Servant Leadership and Christ-Centered Followership on the Problem of Police Brutality against Minorities" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 1.

[7] Malcolm D. Homes and Brad W. Smith, *Race and Police Brutality: Roots of an Urban Dilemma* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 2-6.

[8] Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, "Views on Race in America 2019," accessed April 9, 2019, https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/04/09/race-in-america-2019/.

way (46 percent).[9] The belief that there are ongoing repercussions can be summarized by saying that the United States is a racialized society, which is to say that we are a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships.[10] A racialized society allocates "differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed."[11] Race matters in many aspects of life in the United States.

The viewpoint that the U.S. is a racialized society has been strongly promoted through many books, articles, speeches, and lectures. However, with so much emphasis placed on race, Emerson and Yancey warn of the dangers of growing weary of these issues and debates: "Out of frustration, we run the risk of becoming indifferent to the whole thing. It's complicated, it's messy, it's risky—best to just avoid it when possible. As a result, much of the racial dilemmas that keep emerging in the U.S. become mere background noise that we try to ignore."[12]

One final aspect of race worth mentioning is the diversity of opinion on what racism is, or at least how it should be defined and understood. The different perspectives can cause a "talking past one another" phenomenon. Some emphasize the personal and individual nature of racism, while others focus on the systemic or institutional nature of the problem.[13] For example, this is a popular definition of systemic racism today:

> Systemic racism consists of organizational culture, policies, directives, practices or procedures that exclude, displace or marginalize some racialized groups or create

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[9] Barna Group and the Reimagine Group, *Where Do We Go from Here?: How U.S. Christians Feel about Racism, and What They Believe it Will Take to Move Forward*, 2019.

[10] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 5th ed. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 20.

[11] Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

[12] Michael O. Emerson and George Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Toward a Mutual Obligations Approach*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), in "Race in the United States—In But a Few Pages," chap. 1, par. 2.

[13] Andy R. Feagin and Kimberley Ducey, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018), 20.

unfair barriers for them to access valuable benefits and opportunities. This is often the result of institutional biases in organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of privileging some groups and disadvantaging others.[14]

In addition to these divergent views about how to understand racism, one also must be aware of the latest influence of the critical race theory (CRT), which is the theoretical framework in the social sciences that uses critical theory to examine society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power.[15]

Although the need for understanding is great, the problem is that race relations' difficulties are seldom discussed in constructive ways where trust is high, and mutual understanding is pursued. Because our country is composed of diverse peoples, it is necessary to understand race and race relations so that we may coexist with mutual respect and human dignity. Next, we will examine the second area of concern: the context of the local church.

The Nature of the Local Church

The second area of this present research is the entity of the church. In this section, a broad framework of the church will be established within which the research will take place and be applied. Mark Dever defines the church as "the body of people called by God's grace through faith in Christ to glorify him together by serving him in his world."[16] The definition given by the Charleston Association is:

> A particular gospel church consists of a company of saints incorporated by a special covenant into one distinct body, and meeting together in one place, for the

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[14] "Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism: Glossary | Ontario.Ca," accessed September 17, 2020, https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism/glossary.

[15] Richard Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*, 20. Through the writings of authors such as Delgado, Derrick Bell, and Robin DiAngelo, the philosophy of CRT has moved from the academy into popular discourse. Still, other writers such as Helen Pluckrose and Voddie Baucham are more hesitant to put much confidence in the tenets of CRT.

[16] Daniel L. Akin et al., *A Theology for the Church*, Revised ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2014), 768.

enjoyment of fellowship with each other and with Christ their head, in all his institutions, to their mutual edification and the glory of God through the Spirit.[17]

The church is one. The church is one and is to be one because God is one. Christians have always been characterized by their unity (Acts 4:32). The unity of Christians in the church is a sign for the world reflecting the unity of God himself. In his book *Union with Christ*, Todd Billings writes, "The oneness of the church is a gift. The church is not one because of achievement but because of the oneness of Jesus Christ himself. Because Christ is one, all who are in Christ are one—given one inheritance and one Spirit who enables Christians to grow in this unity in Christ."[18]

The church is holy. The church is also characterized by holiness. The church's holiness describes God's declaration concerning his people and the Spirit's progressive work. The church is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, composed of saints set apart for God's special use. Dever notes, "Certainly a church that resigns itself to evil fails dismally. This holiness of status is a being set apart, not a being cut off, which status results in holiness of action in the world."[19]

The church is universal. The church is universal because God is the "Lord of all the earth" (Rev 5:9). While each local church is part of this universal church and is an entire church itself, no local church can be said to constitute the entire universal church. Christians in the church must exercise care in their orthodoxy and orthopraxy in their particular context of time and culture. Since the initial inclusion of Gentiles into the first-century church, the church has obeyed Christ's mandate to spread his gospel to all nations so that the church will finally be composed of people from all nations. The Bible describes Christ as saying, "with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe

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[17] Mark Dever, "A Summary of Church Discipline," in *Polity* (Washington: Center for Church Reform [9Marks Ministries], 2001), 118.

[18] J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 157.

[19] Akin et al., *A Theology*, 777.

and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). This saying means that in a world of poverty and injustice, the church should seek not simply to give "handouts" to meet the bare necessities of those in need but to display the hospitality that pursues relationships of mutual love wherever possible.[20]

The church is apostolic. This term means it is founded on and faithful to the Word of God given through the apostles. Only with the apostles' teaching is the church, as Paul describes it to Timothy, "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15). Donald Bloesch's summary of the four marks of the church shines a light on the relevance of this research:

> The church is already one, but it must become more visibly one . . . in faith and practice. The church is already holy in its source and foundation, but it must strive to produce fruits of holiness in its sojourn in the world. The church is already catholic, but it must seek a fuller measure of catholicity by assimilating the valid protests against church abuse . . . into its own life. The church is already apostolic, but it must become more consciously apostolic by allowing the gospel to reform and sometimes even overturn its time-honored rites and interpretations.[21]

The church's mission. Lastly, the characteristics of the church cannot be fully implemented apart from a concrete understanding of the mission and purpose of the church. While the church may be involved in many different expressions of good works, at the heart of the church's mission is the worship of God, the edification of the church's members, and the evangelization of the world. More specifically, Kevin DeYoung states, "The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship and obey Jesus Christ now and in eternity to the glory

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[20] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 117.

[21] Donald Bloesch, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 103.

of God the Father."[22] This research attempted to maintain this understanding of the church's mission, even as interviews and conversations were held with various church leaders.

The Importance of Leadership

The third and final area of this thesis is the broad topic of leadership. Since we are considering the dynamics of multi-racial church leadership, this section will focus on several key aspects of leadership that are most relevant to the research questions.

The trends of leadership. Leadership as a discipline has not remained static over the last century. In his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Peter Northouse does a flyover of the practice of leadership from the early 1900s to the modern era.[23] Although each decade was marked by change, Northouse demonstrates that the 1980s brought the most significant change. Because of the many nuances of leadership theory, an all-inclusive, universally accepted definition of leadership has not been possible. Although there is no universal definition, some leadership trends have surfaced over the last several decades. Daniel Reinhardt summarizes these trends well:

> Contemporary leadership rejects coercion as an acceptable practice, and instead understands leadership as influence. Position power is less effective and personal power is preferred as a more effective means of influence. Additionally, leadership has become less leader-centric, focusing on the holistic relationship of leaders and followers. Power is more equally distributed, and, generally, organizations have deemphasized hierarchies and the chain of command preferring more informal structures that emphasize collaborative relationships and shared goals.[24]

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[22] Kevin DeYoung, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 241.

[23] For an excellent review of Northouse's history of contemporary leadership, see Daniel E. Reinhardt's thesis, "The Impact of Servant Leadership and Christ-Centered Followership on the Problem of Police Brutality against Minorities" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020).

[24] Reinhardt, "The Impact of Servant Leadership and Christ-Centered Followership," 59.

These trends in leadership create some unique opportunities for multi-racial church leadership. We will see later in this chapter how biblical church leadership corresponds to some of these changes.

The forms of leadership. Leadership comes in different forms and expressions. Traditional forms of leadership are usually more hierarchical in structure than others. In contrast, *shared leadership* is much more interactive in which group members lead each other toward the desired goal. Craig Pearce and Jay Conger state that the key distinction between shared leadership and traditional leadership is "that the influence process involves more than just downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader."[25] Likewise, Nigel Bennett argues, "*Distributed leadership* is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organization . . . . [it] is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action.[26] Another form of leadership developed by Robert Greenleaf is known as *servant leadership*.[27] Servant leadership is not a rigid system of leadership but an uncompromising principle that is follower focused and applicable in multiple contexts. In its application, it flows from character more than behavior. It is more about 'being' than 'doing.' In his excellent survey, Mark McCloskey outlines what he terms *transformational leadership*. McCloskey states, "Transformational leaders create and clearly communicate agendas for moral, ethical, and spiritual change that lift people out of their everyday concerns. Whatever separate interests they hold, the transformational leader forges consensus

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[25] Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, 1st ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), chap. 1, par. 1. Kindle.

[26] Nigel Bennett, Christine Wise, Philip A. Woods, and Janet A. Harvey (2003). "Distributed Leadership: A Review of Literature," *National College for School Leadership* 3.

[27] Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership, A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness: The Eucharist as Theater,* 25th anni ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 20.

among followers in pursuit of a better future worthy of the best efforts of both leader and follower."[28]

Lastly, Justin Irving writes about *empowering leadership*. He states, "This leadership commitment is about prioritizing follower focus and empowering followers for service of the team's mission."[29]

Organizational culture and leadership. One final aspect of leadership relevant to our research is the concept of organizational culture. According to Edgar Schein, culture can be reduced to combining three things: artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions. It is the accumulated shared learning of a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave concerning those problems." Schein also observes, "It is important to recognize that inside the organization there may be clear consensus on who has power, who has authority, and who has status, but this may be by far the most difficult element to decipher for someone who is not an insider."[30]

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[28] Mark McCloskey, *The Art of Virtue-Based Transformational Leadership: Building Strong Businesses, Organizations and Families*. (Bloomington, MN: The Wordsmith, 2014), introduction, "Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership," para 5, Kindle. Contrary to transformational leadership, McCloskey explained that "the transactional leader seeks to make a deal that will appeal to the self-interest of both leader and follower. The result is usually an exchange based on the wants or needs of the two parties."

[29] Justin A. Irving, *Leadership in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2019), 26-27. A particular relevant part of Irving's book is his thoughts on developing a follower focus:

When teaching on this subject, I (Justin) talk about this as helping to move followers beyond the Ceiling of Self-Interest. The Ceiling of Self-Interest acknowledges the limitations in autocratic and leader-centered models. When the leader-follower relationship is based primarily on exchange, followers tend to relate to their leaders in a minimalistic manner. Rather than devoting discretionary effort to organizational goals, followers respond by giving only the necessary and required dimensions of their implicit or explicit leader-follower contract. In other words, when what is asked of them reaches the ceiling of their self-interest, extra effort is no longer given to required tasks.

[30] Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 170.

The Convergent Points of Race, Church, and Leadership

Although much has been written separately on the topics of race, church, and leadership, this thesis focuses on the challenges and opportunities that exist at the convergence of these three important disciplines. Now that we have briefly explored the three disciplines of race, church, and leadership, we need to take a closer look at the point at which the literature synthesizes the three areas. The familiar Venn diagram is a helpful way of understanding the intersections of the three disciplines. First, the combination of *race* and *church* leads to a discussion on race relations in the church in America. Second, the overlap of *church* and *leadership* highlights the church's different leadership structures and responsibilities. Third, the convergence of *leadership* and *race* emphasizes the factors of authority, decision-making, and trust among multi-racial leadership teams. Figure 1 illustrates the convergence of these three areas of concern.
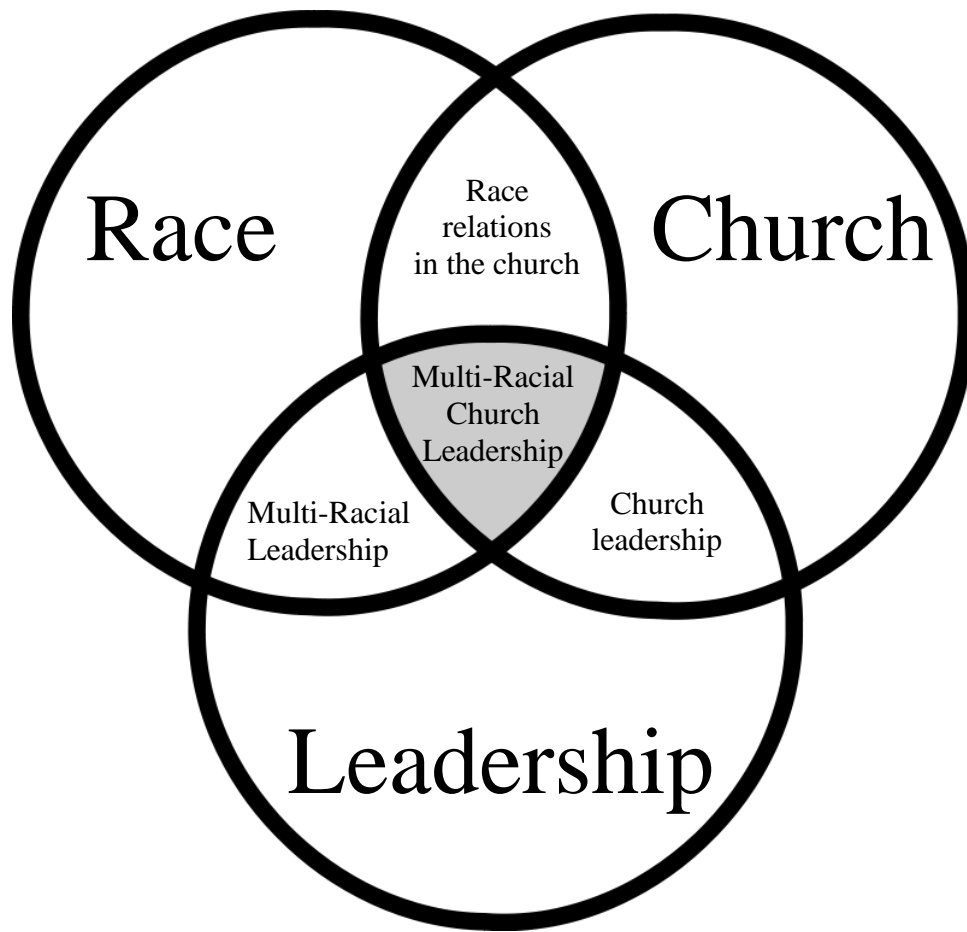
Figure 1. Convergence of these three areas of concern

As the precedent literature in race, church, and leadership was reviewed, it was discovered that while much has been written in each area, less material was found in the convergent areas between the pairs of two of the three disciplines. Little to no material could be found in the central convergent area of all three. There is an increasing gap in the literature when studying the convergence of any two areas and an even greater void in the literature when approaching the overlap of all three.

As the relevant literature was explored, it was important to keep the research questions focused throughout the reading. This chapter is divided into three sections that

correspond to the three convergent points of the three main areas of concern—race, church, and leadership—to best communicate the findings in the precedent literature as related to the research questions. Each section gives an overview of the convergent area and a report on the relevance of each convergent area to the research questions.

Convergent Area 1: Race Relations in the Church

The history of race relations and the church in America is a complex, multifaceted story that cannot be oversimplified. Many questions arise when attempting to trace the history of race relations in the church. How have the Christian churches and theologians shaped conversations about race? In what ways has the identity of the church fallen along racial lines? What are the primary religious themes articulated in light of race, for example, pro-slavery or abolitionist and, in more recent times, for or against civil rights? Moreover, from a more theological focus, what are the most pertinent religious issues driving the contemporary racial situation in the United States? We will not be able to cover all these inquiries in this brief section, but we must be mindful of the scope of the issues as we consider the empirical research.

Overview of Race Relations in the Church

History records certain outspoken voices against the injustices of racial inequality. Over the centuries, many churches and denominations took courageous steps to confront the slave trade,[31] Jim Crow laws,[32] segregation,[33] White supremacy, and

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[31] Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 20.

[32] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781469604541.

[33] Mary Beth Swetnam Mathews, *Doctrine and Race: African American Evangelicals and Fundamentalism between the Wars*, *Religion and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), 20.

institutional racism.[34] Despite the progress, the White church today still faces the reality of its complicity in the evils of racism in America. One of the leading abolitionists of the nineteenth century was a Black minister, theologian, and orator named Frederick Douglass. In 1852, in a speech on the Fourth of July, he leveled criticism at the church of America, stating:

> But the church of this country is not only indifferent to the wrongs of the slave, it actually takes sides with the oppressors. It has made itself the bulwark of American slavery, and the shield of American slave-hunters. Many of its most eloquent Divines, who stand as the very lights of the church, have shamelessly given the sanction of religion and the Bible to the whole slave system.[35]

In his book *The Color of Compromise*, Jemar Tisby states, "Historically speaking, when faced with the choice between racism and equality, the American church has tended to practice a complicit Christianity rather than a courageous Christianity. They chose comfort over constructive conflict and created and maintained a status quo of injustice."[36] Tisby claims there is a huge need for a more open and honest discussion of racial tensions within the church. However, there must be an authentic acknowledgment by the White church of its historical complacency for the conversation to begin. The church must not maintain a status quo of injustice. Rather, the church must acknowledge its historical passivity in standing against racism and accept the responsibility of fighting for equality and justice for all people.

In other words, instead of complicating the problem, the church must lead the way, initiate the conversation, set the example, and transform the culture. As John Perkins states, "There is no institution on earth more equipped or more capable of bringing transformation to the cause of reconciliation than the Church."[37] Perkins goes on to say,

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[34] Kevin Jones and Jarvis J. Williams, *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention: Diverse African American and White Perspectives* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2017), 20.

[35] Frederick Douglass, *"What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"* (n.p.: 1852), 20.

[36] Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 16.

[37] John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 63.

The problem of reconciliation in our country and in our churches is much too big to be wrestled to the ground by plans that begin in the minds of men. This is a God-sized problem. It is one that only the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can heal. It requires the quality of love that only our Savior can provide.[38]

Although the church was actively complicit in the past, the current problem is that the church remains passively complicit by not speaking biblical truth into the conversation nor setting the right example of multi-racial fellowship and leadership. This research hopes to demonstrate that the church has both a biblical responsibility and an incredible opportunity to lead the way in helping society overcome these racial barriers.

Why Do Race Relations in the Church Matter to the Research Question?

As I approached this research, I was interested in the factors that shape multi-racial church leadership. In other words, through open and honest dialogue, I sought to have real conversations with people experiencing real life, which is what Meredith McGuire labels "lived religion."[39] The value of listening to each other's stories is to understand more sincerely the dynamics that shape our relationships but not merely to understand. Understanding the issues of race relations in the church is important, but awareness and understanding must lead to true empathy and unity. The foundational biblical truth that leads us into this reality is our union with Christ.

Paul writes the following to the Christians in Galatia: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).[40] Jones and Wilder write, "Union with Christ is identification with God's Son that leads to participation in God's life and to incorporation into the

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[38] Perkins, *One Blood*, 9.

[39] Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). McGuire's premise is that scholars must study religion, not as it is defined by religious organizations, but as it is lived in people's everyday lives.

[40] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

communion of God's people."[41] Billings asserts, "Union with Christ should be the source of the church's God-given identity as a people who are unified, reconciled, and acting with justice."[42] That is to say, the initiative and strategy of multi-racial church leadership must be built on the biblical foundation of a Christ-centered Community. A robust theology of union with Christ in the context of the Christian community was examined during the research. Only in the deep waters of a Christ-centered Community can the church experience redemptive change in race relations on a personal and corporate level.

Convergent Area 2: Church Leadership

No matter the church, leadership is a given. Every expression of the human community has some form of leadership. This thesis assumed that elders handled the leadership and oversight of the church. Individually and with other leaders, the elders handled overseeing and shepherding the church body to the extent that, when taken together, the elders play a visible and significant role in leading the church to achieve its mission and adhere to its values, doctrinal beliefs, and biblical distinctions.

Overview of Church Leadership

There is no shortage of material— both ancient and modern—about church leadership. For this thesis, a brief overview will highlight the areas most relevant to the research. Robert Thune states, "According to the Bible, the church is to be led by a

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[41] Timothy P. Jones and Michael S. Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2018), in "Union with Christ," chap. 1, par. 1, Kindle. The authors added,

> The life of the Christian leader is marked by union with Christ, communion with others, and a mission to exercise dominion over some specific aspect of God's creation. The result of this gift of union, communion, and mission should be holy ambition to multiply the manifest fame of God's name and to see people formed into the image of Christ. A Christ-following leader embraces these privileges with humility, seeing these gifts as undeserved opportunities to participate in the growth of God's kingdom.

[42] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 114.

plurality of called, qualified men known as elders."[43] Several aspects of Thune's description of elders are worthy of exploration and relevant to the research question.

Elders of a church as called. A part of being called has a built-in aspiration. Paul writes to Timothy, "If anyone *aspires* to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task" (1 Tim 3:1). Elders aspire to the task of leadership. They sense a sort of internal compulsion. The Holy Spirit leads them to pursue the responsibility of leadership in the church. Timothy Laniak writes, "Those who are called to leadership in the covenant community are called to take care of those whom God calls 'my sheep.'"[44]

While the calling to be an elder has a subjective dimension, the aspiration must be tested and confirmed by other godly leaders in the context of a local church community. This confirmation is symbolized in the biblical practice of "laying hands" on a new elder, representing his commissioning by God and the church (1 Tim 5:22).

Elders of a church as qualified. God has certain expectations for those whom he calls to be elders. The Bible takes these qualifications and responsibilities seriously. Primarily in Paul's first letter to Timothy and a letter to Titus, God lays out the character qualities and characteristics that must be true of an elder if he is to fulfill this noble calling within the church with integrity. In his book *Shepherding God's Flock*, Benjamin Merkle writes, "What both sets of characteristics display are a man who has grown much in his relationship with the Lord, who lives humbly before God and others, and who wants to reflect the character of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit."[45]

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[43] Robert H. Thune, *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders,* 1st ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 21.

[44] Timothy S Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart. New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 314.

[45] Benjamin L. Merkle, *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2014), 291.

Elders of a church as a plurality. When the Bible speaks of elders, it consistently speaks of elders in terms of *plurality*. A team of elders leads a healthy, functioning biblical church. The New Testament is filled with descriptive and prescriptive accounts that indicate that the eldership of New Testament churches was plural, not singular. Whatever the specific role each elder played in the church, the biblical model of church leadership demands that qualified elders serve together as the spiritual leaders, shepherding the flock as a team.[46]

What are some of the implications of a team of elders in understanding leadership in the church? Merkle gives three excellent observations: First, it implies that no one person has sufficient gifting, energy, insight, or perspective to fulfill all that is needed in the governing and teaching of a local church. Second, shared leadership implies a division of labor. Although there are common goals and responsibilities for all of the elders together, there are also certain needs that can be attended to by one elder, leaving others free to attend to different needs and responsibilities. Third, the encouragement and stimulation that members of an elder team can provide to one another are incalculable. People should know that they are not in this alone but have other like-minded, spiritually minded people who will pray fervently with them, think carefully through issues, and decide with them how best to proceed. These invaluable actions greatly benefit those elders and the churches they are called to shepherd.[47]

How Is Church Leadership Important to the Research Question?

Church leadership creates culture. The organizational structure of the leadership shapes the ethos of the church. The decision-making processes and authority structures set a tone and create an environment. The underlying assumptions determine

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[46] Robert H. Thune, *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders*, 1st ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 21.

[47] Merkle, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 295.

how the leaders treat each other and how they lead the church. In other words, the values of church leaders impact multi-racial dynamics and thus relate to the thesis research in three important ways.[48]

Church leadership as collaboration, not isolation. The leader of every local church is the head, Jesus Christ. He is the Chief Shepherd and Senior Pastor. Every other church leader is a part of a team of leaders. In terms of leading the church, no one is isolated. Rather the church is led by a plurality of leaders committed to collaborating to discern the Chief Shepherd's direction and priorities. This type of collaboration keeps the leaders accountable to one another and helps them to sharpen one another. Consequently, this teamwork provides the dynamic for multi-racial leadership to thrive.

Church leadership as stewardship, not ownership. It is also important to remember that the responsibility of this team of under-shepherds is to lead and manage the household of God. Church leaders do not own any aspect of the church. Nothing about the church belongs to them. It is not their church; Christ's church is entrusted to them. The mission of the church is not theirs. The people of the church are his responsibility, not his property. Timothy Paul Jones and Michael Wilder state, "The position to which the leader is called is not sovereignty over the community but stewardship within the community, submitted to the leadership of Christ."[49] Church leaders are the property of the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased them with his blood. This truth has theological and practical implications for multi-racial church leaders.

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[48] Jones and Wilder added, "Christian leaders are not soloists or free agents who forge paths for our organizations according to our own independent hopes and whims. We are accountable to the people around us in the church, and we are called to follow in the footsteps of the God who goes before us." Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You*, "Followership, Delegated Power, and the Necessity of Community," chap. 1, par. 5. Kindle.

[49] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You,* in "Dynamics of Christian Leadership," chap. 1, par. 5.

Church leadership as authoritative, not authoritarian. The power of church leadership comes not from position or platform but from the proclamation. Jones and Wilder add, "Any power that the leader exercises is given by God. The purpose of this divinely delegated power is not to provide a leader with a platform for personal fulfillment or professional advancement. It is to guide the people of God toward the mission of God for the glory of God."[50] This delegated authority enables church leaders to lead authoritatively, but not as authoritarians. While issues of authority and control have plagued race relations, this reality has real implications for a multi-racial leadership team.

Convergent Area 3: Multi-Racial Leadership

Over the past fifty years, organizations have become increasingly diverse regarding gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. This diversity has impacted team dynamics, such as decision-making, creativity, and innovation. However, increased cultural differences within a workforce also bring potential costs in higher turnover, interpersonal conflict, and communication breakdowns.[51]

Overview of Multi-Racial Leadership

Multi-racial leadership is more than a diversity of race. It consists of a diversity of cultures. Mary Connerley recognizes that "cultural differences can arise from more than just geographic or ethnic differences. It is our premise that all the ways that make people diverse can also lead to cultural differences."[52] Regardless of how diversity is defined, the challenge of multi-racial leadership requires adjustments by members of

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[50] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You,* chap. 1, par. 7.

[51] Taylor Cox, "The Multicultural Organization," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (February 1991): 34–47, http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/ame.1991.4274675.

[52] Mary L. Connerley and Paul B. Pedersen, *Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment: Developing Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2005), "Multiculturalism and Diversity," chap. 1, par. 5. Kindle.

the organization. According to Norma Carr-Ruffino, the adjustments to diversity depend on the organization's tolerance for ambiguity, the demand for conformity, and the value placed on diversity, cultural fit, and acculturation.[53]

Some approach the subject as a moral imperative. In most businesses and organizations in the United States, White men dominate at the highest leadership levels. Thus, a major motivation for investing in managing-diversity initiatives is that it is morally and ethically the right thing to do. It also seems that achieving social responsibility goals, in the long run, enhances economic performance.[54]

Another motivation for leadership diversity found in the literature is related to productivity. One explanation for why diversity is good for group performance is based on the notion of *cognitive heterogeneity*. Scott Page developed this premise most substantively and argued that expressing different perspectives and ideas should improve performance, particularly in groups facing complex tasks requiring innovation. Page acknowledged that the positive effects of diversity were contingent on groups believing in the value of diversity but noted that groups should believe in it because, logically, diversity is good for performance.[55] A similar perspective comes from a study by Sommers, Warp, and Mahoney. They concluded that "belonging to a diverse group can lead White individuals to process information more thoroughly."[56]

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[53] Norma Carr-Ruffino, *Managing Diversity: People Skills for a Multicultural Workplace* (Cincinnati: Thomson Executive Press, 1996), 20.

[54] Taylor Cox, *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 1994), 11. Cox added, "This fact and the pervasive tendency for ingroup members to be favored over out-group members in human transactions combine to make dominance-subordination and other equal opportunity issues prominent aspects of diversity work in organizations . . . . Moreover, it is certainly prudent to include . . . social responsibility objectives such as promoting fairness and improving economic opportunities for underachieving members of society."

[55] Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20.

[56] Samuel R. Sommers, Lindsey S. Warp, and Corrine C. Mahoney, "Cognitive Effects of Racial Diversity: White Individuals' Information Processing in Heterogeneous Groups," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44, no. 4 (July 1, 2008): 1129–36, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.01.003. They noted,

Finally, leadership diversity impacts virtually every area of life and society. From business to government, medicine to law enforcement, military to education, no organization can escape the reality of a thoroughly pluralistic society. Writing about higher education, Kathleen Nussbaum and Heewon Chang state, "Diversity impacts every aspect of institutional life from student enrollment, faculty engagement, and curricular development to board governance and institutional outcomes."[57] Similarly, in his book *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making It Work*, Daryl G. Smith makes a compelling case that diversity is an imperative that must be embraced for colleges and universities to be successful in a pluralistic and interconnected world. Smith asserts,

> The question is not whether we want diversity or whether we should accommodate diversity, for diversity is clearly our present and our future. Rather, it is time to move beyond old questions and to ask instead how we can build diversity into the center of higher education, where it can serve as a powerful facilitator of institutional mission and societal purpose.[58]

There is much to glean from the many articles and books about leadership diversity. The distinctive mandate of biblical justice is a compelling reason for promoting diversity in church leadership. This research hypothesizes that there is much to learn from the experiences of multi-racial church leaders. Although the literature review brought more questions than conclusions, it supported our expectation that multi-racial church leadership will require a certain kind of leadership. The complexity and significance of our current racial challenges shift diversity from a programmatic emphasis to a heart-

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Admittedly, such anticipatory effects emerging before meaningful group interaction are likely not the only or even principal means through which racial heterogeneity is influential. But the present findings clearly render untenable the assumption that the effects of racial diversity on group performance are wholly attributable to the novel informational contributions of non-White members, and they do so in dramatic fashion: even absent social interaction or exchange of information, mere awareness of a diverse group composition was sufficient to impact the cognitive tendencies of White members.

[57] Kathleen B. Nussbaum and Heewon Chang, "The Quest for Diversity in Christian Higher Education: Building Institutional Governance Capacity," *Christian Higher Education* 12, nos. 1–2 (January 1, 2013): 5–19, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2013.740383.

[58] Daryl G. Smith, *Diversity's Promise for Higher Education: Making It Work* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 19.

level agenda demanding a new level of thinking and transformation of church leaders. The importance of these changes to the church's health cannot be overstated. In the following section, we will highlight one change that will be required.

What Is the Relevance of Multi-Racial
Leadership to the Research Question?

The relevance of multi-racial leadership to the church both exposes the church's weakness. It highlights the church's identity with the reputation of the gospel at stake and the continuation of multi-racial progress in the church rest upon the character and competence of its leadership. Leadership is vitally important. A great leader's impact on an organization's performance and employee morale are huge. Leadership pervades an organization, and leaders shape their organizational cultures according to their preferences and beliefs.[59] That is to say, leadership has been the problem, and leadership will be the solution.

Essentially, multi-racial leadership in the church will require a new kind of leadership, a leadership that is modeled after the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Jones and Wilder write, "A Christian leader is, first and foremost, a follower . . . . Because Christian leadership is at its very core 'followership,' Christ-following leaders must never pretend that they possess sovereignty above or separation from the people they serve. We are fellow bearers of God's image with the people we lead, and Christ himself has united us with them."[60] Delivered in the form of a challenge to modern church leaders, Jones and Wilder state, "We are not called to lead like Jesus in the sense of attempting to imitate his precise practices of management or administration; instead, we are called to lead as

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[59] Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 20.

[60] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You*, in "Followership, Delegated Power, and the Necessity of Community," chap. 1, par. 1. Kindle.

followers of Jesus."[61] Perhaps the lack of followership is why Dr. Martin Luther King would pen the words, "I have been disappointed with the White church and its leadership?"[62]

What factors determine the effectiveness of multi-racial leadership teams in local churches? What patterns and practices in multi-racial church leadership teams determine success or failure? These questions motivated this research, and our discovered answers require courage to make the necessary changes. Just as Jones and Wilder noted about the call for Christ-centered followership, these changes will be radical. "The claim that a leader is a follower first and never ceases to be a follower is radically counterintuitive."[63] We imagine that it was so for Jesus's first disciples as well.

Conclusion

As issues of race grip the nation, it is time for the church to lead the way in leadership diversity. This goal can be achieved by modeling it throughout its organization and ministry initiatives. To be sure, this will demand courage and heart. It will also require more than mere artificial tokenism. Suppose the key to improving race relations in a local church is Christ-centered community, and the biblical pattern of leadership for the local church is team-based plurality. In that case, the leadership of that church should reflect multi-racial diversity. Of course, for this to happen, there is a geographical assumption that the church is situated in a multi-racial community. However, beyond the

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[61] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You,* par. 3. Borrowing from Bruce Ware, the authors emphasized,

> In fact, in one sense, the people we lead should not be following us at all. We are followers of God, and the people we lead should follow God through us— that is to say, they should look at us and glimpse not our own personal whims and visions but God's will, God's way, and God's passion for the fame of his own name. Leaders . . . lead as they are led by Christ; they teach as they are taught of Christ; they build in the manner by which they have been instructed by Christ; and they labor for the glory, not of themselves, but for the glory of the one to whom belongs all glory and honor and praise.

[62] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 83.

[63] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes Before You,* par. 4.

neighborhood demographics, this type of transformational leadership will require a paradigm shift in the heart of the leaders. This heart change is not too different from the radical changes that happened in the early church when leadership had to adjust their expectations to align with the values of their founder. This act will be a major leadership course correction, but one that is both necessary for the church's witness and possible because of God's enabling help through His Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used during this research study. The research methodology includes a section on the research purpose, questions, design overview, population, sample, delimitations, limitations of generalizations, methods and instrumentation, research assumptions, and report findings.

Research Purpose

This two-phase, sequential mixed methods study aimed to identify patterns and practices in Black/White shared leadership teams in churches and determined significant factors contributing to their successes and failures.[1] In the first phase, quantitative research questions identified the correlation between Black/White race relations and leadership dynamics among Black/White leadership teams at three to ten evangelical churches in the Atlanta Metro. Information from the first phase was then explored further in a qualitative phase. In the second phase, qualitative face-to-face in-person interviews were used to probe significant relational and cultural dynamics among Black/White leadership teams by exploring cause and effect aspects of multi-racial teamwork with select pastors at three to ten churches. The reason for following up with qualitative research in the second phase was to discover at a more personal and experiential level how racial diversity and race relations affect church leadership effectiveness and how

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[1] The overall intent of this design was to have the qualitative data help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results; thus, it is important to tie together or to connect the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection. A typical procedure might involve collecting survey data in the first phase, analyzing the data, and then following up with qualitative interviews to help explain confusing, contradictory, or unusual survey responses. John W. Creswell and J. David, Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 278.

church leadership practices and structures contribute to race relations and multi-ethnic team dynamics.

Research Questions

The following two questions were developed to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. What are the demographic and cultural characteristics of churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

2. What are the common ministerial perceptions and practices of pastors in churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

Research Design Overview

The methodological approach in this research included finding three to ten churches in and around Atlanta, Georgia, that were currently operating with a multi-racial Black/White leadership team. The Atlanta Metro area is well populated with many churches, most racially and ethnically segregated. Thus, I found churches led by multi-racial Black/White leadership were no easy task. Because purposive sampling is subjective, careful attention was made to choosing a sample representative following the approved purpose statement, thesis, and interview instruments.

Overview of Research Procedures

As mentioned above, this research focused on multi-racial Black/White leadership teams consisting of pastors and church elders in evangelical churches in the Atlanta Metro area. The multi-racial Black/White leadership teams included in the population sample of the research comprised different degrees of Black and White racial diversity.

Population

The research population for this project was Black/White leadership teams of pastors and elders in evangelical, complementarian churches in and around the metro area

of Atlanta, Georgia. These leadership teams were comprised of both paid and volunteer positions.

Sample

The research population was narrowed to a sample of Black/White leadership teams of pastors and elders. It was hypothesized that the research sample would come from three to ten church leadership teams, with a minimum of three to give enough data but no more than ten so that the data would remain manageable.[2]

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select the study's participants. The goal of purposive sampling is to select the cases that will yield the most relevant and helpful data. Thus, the leadership teams that best assisted in understanding the research problem and answering the research questions of this study were "purposefully" selected.[3]

Creswell explains three considerations of purposive sampling: (1) participants in the sample, (2) type of sampling, and (3) sample size.[4] The participants of the purposive sample of this research study were Black/White leadership teams that provided rich content for a case study inquiring about team leadership dynamics in churches. The sampling strategy for this qualitative inquiry was "criterion sampling," as the churches selected met the criteria of navigating the dynamics of Black/White team leadership.

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[2] Samples for qualitative studies are much smaller than those used in quantitative studies. In their article, *The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research,* Mira Crouch and Heather McKenzie provide reasons. With a qualitative sample, there is a point of diminishing return. As the study goes on, more narrative data do not necessarily lead to more information because one occurrence of a piece of data is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the research analysis. Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the answers and insights behind a research question because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalized hypothesis conclusions. Moreover, because qualitative research is more labor intensive, analyzing a large sample would be time consuming and too impractical for this research project.

[3] Creswell describes purposeful selection as researchers selecting participants or sites that "best help them understand the research problem and the research questions." Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 246.

[4] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018), 296.

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Moreover, the sample size was limited to five to ten leadership teams to collect extensive detail about each site without being overwhelmed with too much data. In summary, purposive sampling was used to show that interviewees or participants were selected because of their experience as part of a Black/White church leadership team. The purposive sampling approach produced participants who have navigated the unique dynamics of Black/White relations in leading the local church.

Participants were selected via personal and web-based referrals. This criterion-based sampling differs from the typical quantitative study that employs randomly selected participants from a larger population. These participants were selected as they could provide a keen perspective of lived experience on the research topic that most church leaders do not possess. As a result of this purposive sampling, the researcher would gain experientially rich descriptions that would be viewed as experts via experience on the research topics. I did not have an opinion on defining the best sample size. Most researchers are of the thought that enough lies between three and ten. [5] The sample size for this study consisted of five church leadership teams, ultimately determined to gather quality and extensive data from multiple inputs.

Delimitations

Many have written about race relations, the local church, and leadership mindset. The following delimitations characterized and focused this research on narrowing this project's scope.

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[5] Mira Crouch and Heather McKenzie, "The Logic of Small Samples in Interview-Based Qualitative Research," *Social Science Information* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 483–99. Mira Crouch and Heather McKenzie stated, "In a qualitative framework, research based on interviews often seeks to penetrate social life beyond appearance and manifest meanings. This requires the researcher to be immersed in the research field, to establish continuing, fruitful relationships with respondents and through theoretical contemplation to address the research problem in depth. Therefore, a small number of cases (less than 20, say) will facilitate the researcher's close association with the respondents, and enhance the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings."

First, this project focused exclusively on evangelical churches as defined by the Bebbington quadrilateral.[6] Although some discoveries might apply to other institutions, the intent was to explore the unique dynamics in Black/White team leadership structures of evangelical churches.

Second, the geographical focus was limited to the area of Atlanta, Georgia. While race and ethnicity play an important role in organizations worldwide, this project recognized the unique challenges of ethnic relations in the Southeast regions of the United States due to centuries of racial tensions and conflicts. Because of these factors, the nature of multi-racial team leadership is germane to the Atlanta region. Therefore, the discoveries from the research are most applicable to the churches in this geographical area.

Third, the primary focus was on the relational dynamics between White and Black leaders. Again, the research was done assuming that some of the conclusions would be helpful to other ethnic diversities. However, the main intent was to discover the unique aspects of the Black/White relationship among leadership teams in the churches in the Atlanta area.

Fourth, the project was intentionally limited to leaders. This study was not a research project about multi-ethnic congregations, which has been the focus of much writing and experimentation over the past decade. The intended target of the research was on the decision-making and directional leadership personnel and structures of local churches. For some churches, this was the elders or deacons. For others, the research focus was on the staff personnel. Although the project was done with the premise that the multi-ethnic congregation is both a cause and an effect of the leaders, the emphasis was exclusively on the leadership personnel, structure, and practices.

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[6] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, 1st ed. (London, Routledge: Routledge, 1989), 20.

Fifth, research was limited to leaders serving together on a team. This act is a plurality form of leadership in a church.

Sixth and finally, the project was intentionally limited to a complementarian form of the leadership structure within the local church, which holds that "God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the Church."[7]

Limitations of Generalization

The focused nature of this multi-case study and purposive sampling limited its generalizability. The findings of this research may not necessarily generalize to all multi-ethnic church leadership teams. Moreover, this research may not necessarily generalize across other geographic areas where local and historical events do not affect race relations as much. Additionally, the findings from this research may not necessarily generalize across churches with theological and doxological practices outside of the orthodox and evangelical traditions. The intended goal of this mixed methods research is transferability, not generalizability. Consequently, the study only generalizes to the five participating church leadership teams; however, the findings may be transferable to other Black/White leadership teams throughout the United States.

Methods and Instrumentation

Through the years, painful experiences of hostility in race relations have eroded trust and built walls. Therefore, through carefully selected research instruments, participants needed to be accommodated in a way that elicited candor and truthfulness to produce the rich data this study intended to capture. Utilizing a multi-case approach, the

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[7] Reformed Theological Seminary, "Thinking and Living Biblically," https://rts.edu/resources/thinking-and-living-biblically-in-a-gender-nuetral-society-male-authority-and-female-equality-in-the-beginning/.

phenomenological goal of the project called for detailed first-person accounts of the participant's experiences. Creswell details how interviews, research diaries, and documents are effective instruments for gathering this type of data.[8] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin highlight that these instruments "facilitate the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings about the phenomenon."[9]

This explanatory sequential mixed method research project was conducted in three stages—Preparation, Data Collection, and Data Analysis. Each stage, and its corresponding instrumentation, are detailed below.

Stage 1: Preparation

Preparation for this mixed methods research began with organizing data from the precedent literature into areas of concern and interest. The goal of stage one was to share the vision and value of the research project with church leaders and determine which church leaders demonstrated a willingness and capacity to participate in the project. Building trust with church leaders was key.

Participant selection. Through the networking of contacts and referrals, rapport was established with thirty potential church leadership teams. After gaining permission to conduct field research from the necessary committees, certain church leadership teams were selected based on purposive and criterion sampling.

Development of interview questions. The formulation of good questions was key to receiving meaningful feedback. These questions were divided into two groups— quantitative and qualitative. First, a quantitative research questionnaire was developed to

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[8] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 185–87.

[9] Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 56-78.

obtain demographic data and each participant's personal preferences. This first set of questions helped to answer research question number one.

Second, a list of open-ended interview questions was prepared to be used with each participating leadership team. Interview questions were developed from a synthesis of information gathered from the survey questions and the literature review. The interview questions aimed to allow the participants to describe their experiences and perspectives on Black/White team leadership dynamics. By using open-ended questions and practicing good listening, the goal was to protect the reliability of the research through open and honest sharing about personal life experiences. The qualitative interview questions were shaped to reflect the nature of research question two. The scope of topics to be considered was arranged logically and naturally. Additional probing questions were created to glean as much lived experience as possible.

Expert panel. Another important aspect of preparation was establishing a group of expert contacts to aid in fine-tuning interview questions, protocols, and procedures. Consisting of several individuals with experience in empirical research and multi-racial groups, this group included (1) a seminary professor and research advisor, (2) a recent Doctor of Education graduate and adjunct professor, and (3) a pastor involved in a multi-racial leadership team. After the expert panel evaluated the interview questions, they were readjusted based on the panel's suggestions and resubmitted to them for final unanimous approval.

Pilot interviews. Two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview protocol for discussion flow and adherence to the overall research purpose to improve the interview effectiveness. The interview questions/schedule were then adjusted again and reviewed by the expert panel. This process assisted in the formulation of the wording and sequence of the final questions asked throughout the study. Finally, a schedule of the

activities and what to expect was established and communicated to all participating churches.

Stage 2: Data Collection

Data collection occurred in a sequential two-step process: (1) a research questionnaire and (2) participant interviews.

Quantitative data. During the data collection stage of the research, a quantitative survey was conducted with all five participating church leadership teams. A Likert-scale questionnaire instrument was utilized as an online survey tool to collect data from each participant. The data was then inserted into various forms to prepare the findings for the next step. This survey helped to discover such things as the length of time the Black/White leadership team had served together, the roles of each team member, the racial makeup of the church, and other basic statistical information. The data was collected and analyzed to determine the demographic makeup of churches with Black/White leadership teams.

Qualitative data. The data collection stage also consisted of gathering qualitative input. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participating leaders in the corresponding churches to capture and study the real-life phenomena of Black/White team leadership. These interviews were done to explore, explain, describe, or predict the ministerial perceptions and practices of Black/White team leadership in churches. Creswell defines qualitative research as "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem."[10] For maximum transparency and honesty, these in-person interviews were conducted in a confidential setting and were recorded with the participant's permission or otherwise properly documented for later reporting. These interviews helped uncover the issues and dynamics

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[10] John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014), 4.

which had the greatest influence on the effectiveness of Black/White team leadership. Through a predetermined set of standardized questions, the researcher captured the real-life experiences of the ups and downs of Black/White team leadership.

Member checking. After all the individual interviews were completed, the input was organized and used to lead a final conversation with the entire leadership team one week later. Information was gathered through direct observation of the team's interaction, and narratives were formed to illustrate the dynamics of the Black/White team leadership experience. These qualitative findings were recorded and then used to report on the findings.

Stage 3: Data Analysis

This study utilized three types of interpretational analysis: (1) "within-case analysis," (2) holistic analysis, and (3) "cross-case analysis."[11] When applying the within-case analysis, the data from each church leadership team was treated by itself. The implementation of analysis from within each case provided a comprehensive description of how each church's Black/White leadership team functions. The compiled and analyzed data on each particular case was interpreted to answer the research questions. In addition to the simple and focused analysis of each church, the data of each case was also analyzed more holistically, in what is known as holistic analysis. Creswell defines holistic data analysis as "the researcher examines the entire case and presents a description, themes, and interpretations or assertions related to the whole case. A cross-case analysis was conducted upon completing the analysis within each case. Emerging cross-case leadership patterns and practices were analyzed. Cross-case data were provided as "categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases." The goal of the cross-case analysis stage was to synthesize the data from across the case study

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[11]Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 462.

churches into a list of recommendations for practicing Black/White team leadership effectiveness.

The following describes organizing the data needed to address the research questions. Creswell provides an approach for data analysis that this study followed.[12] First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis once the data was gathered from the survey questionnaire and the interviews. The transcripts highlighted significant statements, sentences, and quotes from the participants. Next, all the data were studied to understand the overall meaning and themes. Then, by bracketing segments of data and recording a word that represents the category in the margins of the text or field notes, the data were coded. Coding was integral to this data analysis from the interviews and their subsequent transcription. The initial codes were determined by the research questions and precedent literature with the expectation that the data collection process added new codes based on unexpected theme emergence. A research journal was kept and used to identify significant participant quotes. Also, pre-codes were created based on significant statements and repetitive wording throughout the transcription phase. Two coding cycles were used: narrative and focused on maintaining reliability in the narrative process.

Consequently, the major themes derived from the coding process were organized, and the data about the case was summarized. A rich description of each case is written out by observing the major themes in each case holistically. Then, the interpretive meaning of each case based on the research questions is established. Finally, a comparative cross-case analysis identifies all the patterns and practices of effective Black/White team leadership.

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[12] The quantitative and the qualitative databases were analyzed separately in this approach. Then, the researcher combined the two databases by the form of integration called connecting the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection, which was the point of integration in an explanatory sequential design. Thus, the quantitative results were used to plan the qualitative follow-up. One important area was that the quantitative results could not only inform the sampling procedure but also point toward the types of qualitative questions to ask participants in the second phase. Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 278.

Research Assumptions

The case studies were not limited to one type of church governance. The research sought to uncover the dynamics of race and develop a roadmap for Black/White team leadership in all church governing structures.

Report Findings

The following two chapters of this thesis present the research findings and a description of the conclusions from the mixed-method multi-case study research. Chapter 4 provides findings from each case using a narrative that emerges from the data analysis. Chapter 4 further briefly describes how each church's leadership environment demonstrates healthy patterns and best practices for Black/White team leadership. The report also includes quotations, tables, graphs, and other writing strategies to aid in conveying the findings of the research. Following the individual reports, a cross-case analysis describes consistent leadership practices that will aid in churches' Black/White team leadership.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This multi-case study aimed to identify patterns and practices in Black/White shared leadership teams in churches and determined significant factors contributing to their successes and failures. This chapter outlines the compilation methodology of the data, details the participant information, summarizes the research findings, and evaluates the research methodology.

Compilation Protocol

For this mixed-methods study, the compilations protocol allowed for first-person accounts of the participants' lived experiences through in-depth interviews. The study developed progressively over three phases of data collection and analysis: (1) preliminary, (2) interview schedule, and (3) data analysis. After inputting the expert panel fine-tuned interview questions, a protocol was developed that formed the schedule for each of the eleven interviews. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for accuracy.

All interviews were analyzed using NVivo software. The formal data analysis process began with a coding process determined by the precedent literature, the research questions, and the participants' input. A three-step approach was used to analyze the resulting data. First, each category was reviewed for emerging patterns in the data. Second, the categories were evaluated to determine if there were any connections or correlations among the categories. Last, the categories were compared against the precedent literature.

Demographics of Population Sample and
Respondents

The research was conducted on three churches in the Atlanta area that met the criteria of being led by a Black/White multi-racial leadership team to discover the ministerial dynamics of multi-racial leadership in churches. From these three churches, eleven pastors were interviewed. Five of the pastors were White, and six were Black. Interview questions focused on the participant's experiences and perspectives on race relations and multi-racial church leadership. Because the intent of this research was to describe the participants' lived experiences, not to evaluate their effectiveness, these interviews represented the core of the research data. The interviews were important because they provided first-hand accounts from pastors of multi-racial leadership teams. They greatly assisted the research by providing a rich description of each team's experience.

Eleven interviews ranged from one to two hours. Participants were asked to complete a quantitative survey that obtained demographic information about themselves and the congregations they serve (see appendix 3); each of the participants completed this form.

Identifying Participants

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select this study's participants. Potential participants were identified through personal referrals and connected individuals who had professional dealings with this population. In total, eleven participants were chosen for this study. For anonymity, pseudonyms will replace the actual names of each participating leader and church in this research. A brief biographical description, including each participant's race, is listed below.

William. William (White) is the Lead Pastor of a four-year-old church plant named "Urban" Hope Church, located in Atlanta, Georgia. William and his partner Warren started the church in the Fall of 2017. William received his Master of Divinity

from Baptist Bible Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Westminster Theological Seminary. Before starting Urban Hope, William was on the pastoral ministry staff at another church in Atlanta. Before he moved to Atlanta, he led a church in the Chicago metro area. William was born in Lafayette, Indiana.

Warren. Warren (Black) is the Executive Pastor of Urban Hope Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Warren was instrumental in helping start Urban Hope Church in the Fall of 2017. He received a master's degree from Michigan Theological Seminary. Before starting Urban Hope Church, Warren was a bi-vocational Lead Pastor of a church in Lithonia, Georgia. He worked as a National Sales Director for a large company during this time. Warren was born in Birmingham, Alabama.

Louie. Louie (White) has served as the Lead Pastor of Park Street Baptist Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, since May 2016. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2005 and an honorary doctorate from a university in Virginia. Since pastoring his first church at age twenty-nine, Louie has had the privilege of pastoring churches in South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Florida. Louie was born in Savannah, Georgia.

Andy. Andy (White) is the Senior Associate Pastor of Park Street Baptist Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. He serves as Executive Pastor, Worship Pastor, and Church Administrator in this position. Before coming to Park Street in 2006, Andy served as Worship Pastor at a Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia. He received a Master of Worship degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Andy was born in Gastonia, North Carolina.

Claude. Claude (Black) is the Children's Pastor at Park Street Baptist Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. He received his bachelor's degree from Toccoa Falls

College. Before joining the staff at Park Street, Claude worked at the IT help desk for a large company. Claude was born in New Jersey and lived most of his life in Georgia.

Dwight. Dwight (Black) is the Local Missions Pastor at Park Street Baptist Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. He is also the founder of a non-profit organization that works to restore hope to youth in crisis by providing pathways for thriving adulthood. Dwight graduated with an Associate Degree from the Art Institute of Atlanta. He was born in Oklahoma.

Leo. Leo (Black) is the Pastor of Care Services at Park Street Baptist Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Leo also serves as Global Evangelist with a non-profit missions organization aiming to develop urban youth for missions through sustainable outreach and evangelism through the local Churches to make disciples. Before joining Park Street Baptist Church staff, he was a supervisor at an airline company. Leo was born in Miami, Florida.

Barry. Barry (Black) has served as the Lead Pastor of Perimeter Community Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, since January 2021. Barry holds a Master of Divinity degree from Liberty University and a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech. Before becoming Lead Pastor of Perimeter, Barry served as Student Pastor at a church in Atlanta, Georgia. Barry was born in Rome, Georgia.

Brady. Brady (White) serves as the Pastor of Local Outreach and Church Planting at Perimeter Community Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Brady graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cincinnati Bible College. Before joining the staff of Perimeter Community, Brady served for eighteen years as a multi-ethnic church planter in Mississippi. He was born in Toledo, Ohio.

Charles. Charles (Black) serves as the Business Administration Director at Perimeter Community Church in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. Charles received his Bachelor of Science in Engineering from North Carolina A&T State University. Before joining the staff at Perimeter Community, Charles served as the Executive Manager at a church in Atlanta, Georgia. Before that, he was on staff with New Generation Campus Ministries. Charles was born in Durham, North Carolina.

Kent. Kent (White) is the Worship and Communications Director at Perimeter Community Church in Smyrna, Georgia. He received his bachelor's degree in software engineering from Auburn University. Before joining the staff at Perimeter Community Church, Kent worked as an IT Business Analyst at Chick-fil-A Corporate Office. He was born in Twinsboro, Ohio, and spent much of his childhood in Hoover, Alabama.

Research Questions Synopsis

The data for this research project were collected and analyzed according to the study's two research questions:

1. What are the demographic and cultural characteristics of churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

2. What are the common ministerial perceptions and practices of pastors in churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

Summary of Quantitative Research Findings

The data collected from the quantitative survey helped determine the participants' demographic information and their corresponding churches.

Demographic Information

The following table gives a breakdown of the race category, birthplace, and level of education represented in the research. This breakdown is important in analyzing the cultural and educational backgrounds that shaped each participant.

Table 1. Demographic information from participants

Name	Race	Birthplace	Education
William	White	Lafayette, IN	Doctor of Ministry
Warren	Black	Birmingham, AL	Master of Divinity
Louie	White	Savannah, GA	Doctor of Ministry
Andy	White	Gastonia, NC	Master of Worship
Claude	Black	New Jersey, NJ	Bachelors
Dwight	Black	Oklahoma	Associates Degree
Leo	Black	Miami, FL	High School
Barry	Black	Rome, GA	Master of Divinity
Brady	White	Toledo, OH	Bachelor of Arts
Charles	Black	Durham, NC	Bachelor of Science
Kent	White	Twinsboro, OH	Bachelor of Science

Perception of Diversity

The quantitative survey also revealed perceptions of racial diversity levels. Analyzing the data, one can notice how race can influence the perception of diversity, both church congregants and the surrounding community.

Table 2. Perceptions of racial diversity (1=Highly Disagree; 6=Highly Agree)

Name	Race	Church	Racial Diversity in Church	Racial Diversity of Community
William	White	Urban Hope	6	6
Warren	Black	Urban Hope	5	4
Louie	White	Park Street	4	5
Andy	White	Park Street	3	6
Claude	Black	Park Street	2	6
Dwight	Black	Park Street	2	4
Leo	Black	Park Street	2	5
Barry	Black	Perimeter	5	5
Brady	White	Perimeter	5	6
Charles	Black	Perimeter	6	6
Kent	White	Perimeter	6	5

Perceptions of Economic Levels

The survey recorded the perceptions of socio-economic levels to determine the impact of economic class. Of importance was the level of consistency each participant had when answering about church, community, and self.

Table 3. Perceptions of socio-economic level (1=Highly Disagree; 6=Highly Agree)

Name	Race	Church	Level of Church Members	Level of Community	Level of Self
William	White	Urban Hope	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class
Warren	Black	Urban Hope	Middle Class	Upper Middle	Upper Middle
Louie	White	Park Street	Upper Middle	Upper Middle	Upper Middle
Andy	White	Park Street	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Middle
Claude	Black	Park Street	Middle Class	Lower Middle	Middle Class
Dwight	Black	Park Street	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Middle Class
Leo	Black	Park Street	Upper Middle	Middle Class	Middle Class
Barry	Black	Perimeter	Middle Class	Upper Middle	Upper Middle
Brady	White	Perimeter	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class
Charles	Black	Perimeter	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Middle Class
Kent	White	Perimeter	Middle Class	Middle Class	Middle Class

Racial Diversity within Churches

Anytime research on racial diversity is completed, it is important to know and understand the trajectory of change over the recent past. Figure 2 shows that most participants answered that their church has become more diverse. This finding helps to analyze the effectiveness of multi-racial leadership in maintaining racial diversity or drifting toward one racial group. In the past three years, the racial diversity of our church membership has become more diverse, less diverse, or remained the same (see figure 2).
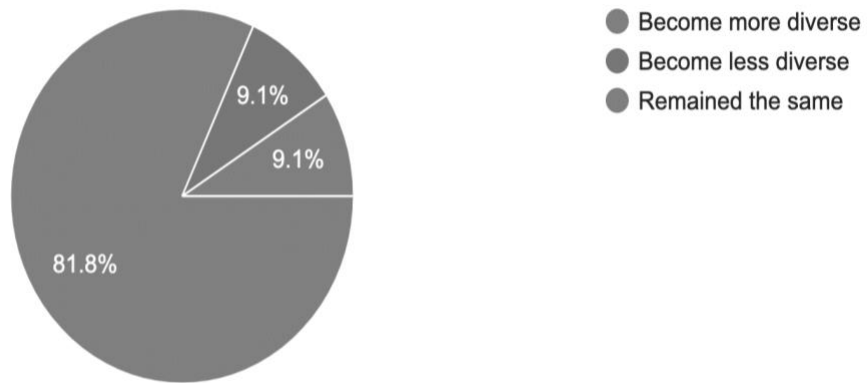
Figure 2. Church diversity

Importance of Multi-Racial Leadership

Figure 3. How important is it to you for your church to be led by a multi-racial leadership team?
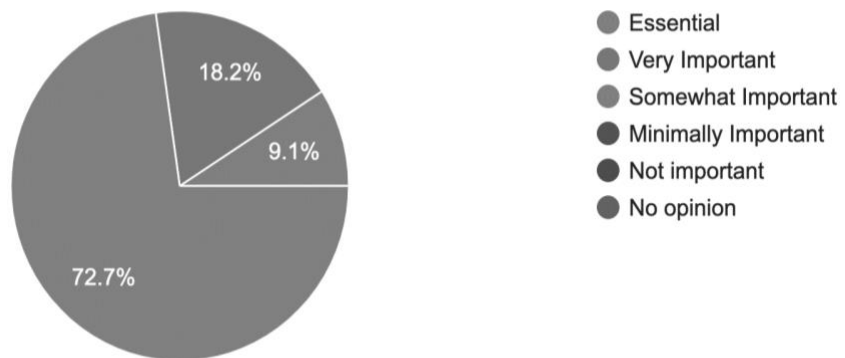
Those who participate in multi-racial team leadership believe in its importance. Of the leaders who participated in this research, figure 3 shows that over ninety percent agreed that it is essential or very important for their church to be led by a multi-racial leadership team. These data point was also supported in the in-person interviews.

Experience in Multi-Racial Leadership

           The participating leaders of this research not only believe in the importance of multi-racial leadership but also describe it as a positive experience. Of the survey participants, over ninety percent said that serving on a multi-racial leadership team was either fulfilling, fruitful, or somewhat rewarding.
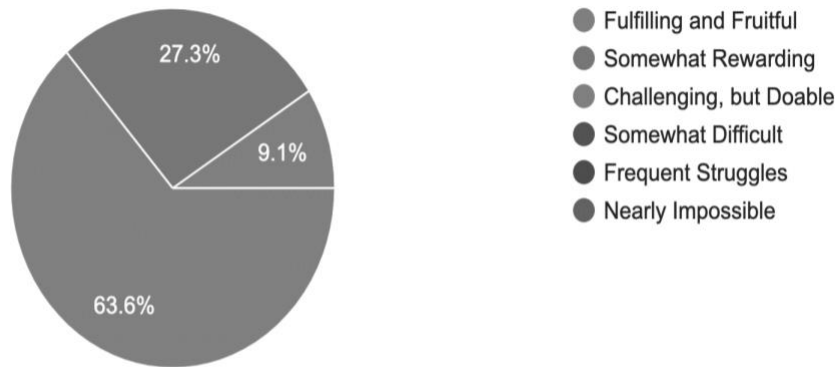
Figure 4. How would you describe your experience of
serving on a multi-racial leadership team?

Views on Racism in the U.S.

           Multi-racial leaders have strong and clear views of the amount of racism in the United States. Over eighty percent believe there is still much racism in the country, and almost twenty percent believe there is some racism.
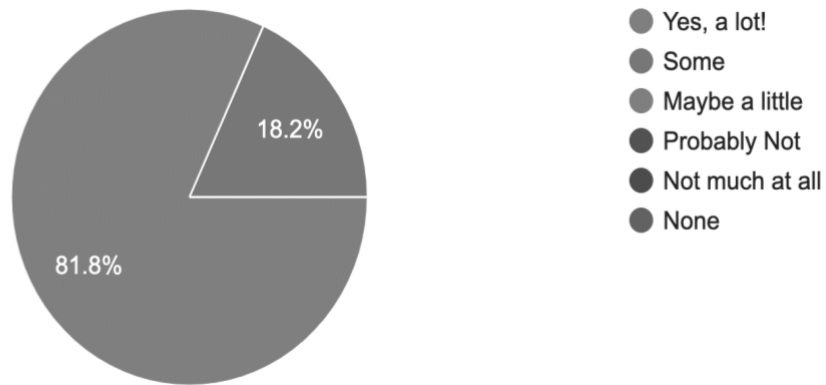
Figure 5. Does racism still exist in the United States?

Views on Racism in Their Church

When asked about the amount of racism in their church, the percentages shifted to only ten percent believing there was much racism, while ninety percent thought there was some or a little racism in their church.
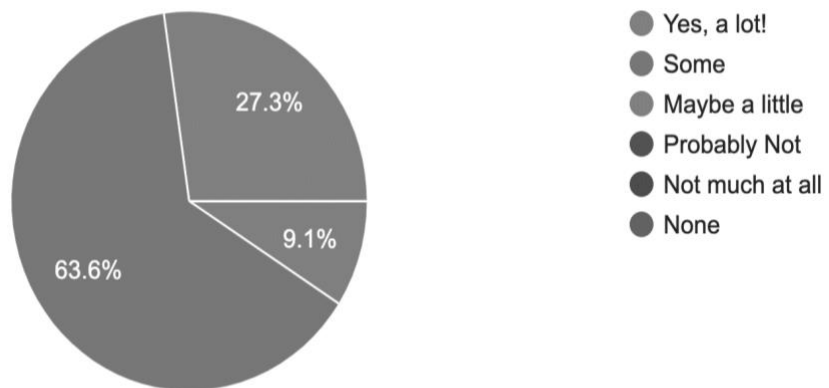
Figure 6. Does racism exist in your church?

Racial Identity

Regarding self-descriptions of identity, one-hundred percent of the leaders see themselves first as Christian. Ninety percent see themselves secondly or thirdly as either a husband or father. One interesting data point in identity was that White leaders tended to see their race as less important or relevant, while Black leaders ranked their race as more influential on their self-identity. This percentage supports conventional wisdom and other research on racial identity. The least used identity descriptors were either of the two political labels, Democrat or Republican.

Table 4. Identity descriptions

Name	Race	Christian	Husb	Father	Pastor	Amer	Bk	Wh	Dem	Reb
William	White	1	2	3	4	5				6
Warren	Black	1	2	3	5	6	4		8	7
Louie	White	1	2	3	4	5		6	8	7
Andy	White	1	2	3	4	6		5	8	7
Claude	Black	1	2	3	6	5	4			7
Dwight	Black	1	2	3	5	6	4			
Leo	Black	1	6	2	5	4	3	7	8	9
Barry	Black	1	3	4	5	6	2			
Brady	White	1	2	3	4	6		5		
Charles	Black	1	3	4	5	6	2		7	8
Kent	White	1	3	2	4	5		6		

Factors That Influence Racial Views

Regarding what factors have influenced the participants' racial views the most and the least, almost ninety percent said that the Bible was the number one influence.

After the Bible, the influential factors were evenly dispersed over items such as culture, history, and injustice. The least influence on racial views was books, events, and politics.

Table 5. Racial influences

Name	Race	Bible	Culture	History	Injustice	Events	Books	Politics
William	White	1	5	4	6	3	2	7
Warren	Black	1	2	3	5	4	6	
Louie	White	1	3	4	2	6	7	5
Andy	White	1	2	3	5	6	7	4
Claude	Black	2	1	3	4	6	7	5
Dwight	Black	1	4	3	2			
Leo	Black	1	5	2	6	4	3	7
Barry	Black	1	2	3	4	6	5	
Brady	White		1	3	2	5	6	4
Charles	Black	1	5	2	4	6	3	7
Kent	White	1	2	3	5		4	

Summary of Qualitative Research Findings

The input collected from the in-person interviews helped determine the lived experiences and perspectives of those a part of multi-racial leadership teams. Each of the three case study narratives includes an overview of the church, perspectives of race relations in the church, examples of different models of church leadership, and descriptions of multi-racial leadership experiences. These descriptions involve detailed testimony from different perspectives in the three participating churches.

Case 1: Urban Hope Church

Urban Hope Church was planted in 2017 by William and Warren. The church's mission statement is to make disciples who are growing in the gospel as a family while on a mission. At Urban Hope, they believe that disciple-making is not a ministry of the local church; it is *THE* ministry of the local church. Everything they do is aimed at helping people grow in their relationship with God, their commitment to their fellow believers, and their engagement with the world. They firmly believe that the good news of Jesus's work on behalf of sinners is the central theme of the Bible and, therefore, should influence every aspect of our lives. They believe a Christian never outgrows his need to live by faith in the gospel.

They see the church as a family of diverse people united by the work of Jesus. As a family, they purposefully take responsibility for one another. They have seen themselves as a disciple-making, leader-developing, church-planting body of believers from their inception. Urban Hope strives to be a congregation that is exceptionally generous with its time, talents, and treasure. They desire to be a church marked by prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit as they strive to serve others selflessly.

Race relations in the church. The gospel of Jesus Christ forms the relationships among the different racial groups within Urban Hope Church. From its inception, the congregation was multi-racial with an intense focus on the gospel. William states,

> We want to display the reconciling hope of the gospel. So, what unites us is far more than what divides us. In Colossians 3, it says, 'here, there's no Jew or Greek, barbarians or Scythians, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.' In other words, Paul is not saying that your differences disappear. [People] don't become non-Jewish when they trust Christ. Right? It just becomes a secondary identity. And so churches that try to lead with the value of diversity are going to be unhealthy because it's not Gospel-centered.

The beginning of Urban Hope Church was the merging of two church plants. Fishers of Men Church, a predominantly Black congregation, joined with a multi-ethnic group from

Blueprint Church in Atlanta, Georgia, to start Urban Hope Church. Therefore, not only was there the challenge of merging new relationships, but also overcoming the existing racial barriers. According to Warren, this took time. He adds,

> The first few Sunday mornings, if you were standing in the pulpit, you could look out and you could clearly see a line— a line separating the people that had come from one place or sitting in one section from the people of a different race who came from another place. And then, eventually and gradually, the line of division started to go away. But it didn't just go away. It didn't go away immediately. It took some work. I credit the Holy Spirit for working in the hearts of people who are gospel sensitive.[1]

Church leadership. The leadership style and structure of Urban Hope Church is a shared leadership model. Although the two main leaders, William and Warren, have different titles and unique gifts, they share the church's decision-making and pastoral duties. This approach to leadership came out of each of their convictions and past experiences. Warren, who was raised in and had previously participated in the leadership of a Black church, shared his belief that a shared leadership model creates a healthier balance of influence and protects the church from abuses that can arise from having power and authority centralized in one leader. However, making this transition was not easy for his Black church members. He recalls,

> So, in a Black church, there are things that if I'm pastoring in an exclusively Black context that I would never have to negotiate or create a compelling reason, in order for people to do something to mobilize. I could just literally say this is what we're doing, and people will say 'All right. Yeah. You said it.' I mean, there is a that dimension. I know that that's been my experience in terms of how people respond.[2]

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[1] Warren shared how the Lord prepared him and his church to merge with Urban Hope Church by teaching them about the multi-ethnic nature of the church. They went through a study of the Book of Acts. He recalled, "This idea of seeing all these multicultural names in the church and how the church was just growing beyond Jerusalem, it wasn't just you singularly. And I believe that was the Lord preparing us for this."

[2] Warren reflected on how his original church member's responded when he shared the idea about merging with another church. He illustrated their view of his position as lead pastor and commented,

> So for example, when I went from house to house to my flock to explain that I was going to begin sharing leadership with a White person, this was how they responded: While everybody knew that it wouldn't be gospel and it wouldn't be good to have misgivings about him being White per se, there was probably issues with me sharing the leadership. Because you have this iconic figure, the Black pastor, in their minds. Here I am. I am this relatively successful professional. So what is this? Is this

From his perspective, William adds,

> We have a Black pastor, and we got a White pastor, and they are both our pastors. So there must be this true shared leadership, I would say. This has been super helpful to us. Because there's certain conversations pastorally, where we'll hear about an issue in the church and either Warren or myself will say, you probably need to take that conversation, or I need to take that conversation, or you need to say this. It'll be more powerful coming from you . . . and that dynamic is really important.

Multi-racial leadership. From the beginning, Urban Hope Church was committed to pursuing diversity. Looking back on those first months of being a multi-racial church, the leaders remember the work of establishing a balance of leadership that would best represent the multi-racial dynamics in the church. This balancing work especially showed up in the preaching schedule and flow. Warren reflects,

> So when people got here, it was some adjustment. Because it took a minute to find a good balancing act for how often each one of us would preach. You know, there was a runway where I think maybe William even preached like three or four or five weeks in a row. And that was the first time that I had not spoken for two Sundays straight. Before that time, there had never been two consecutive Sundays where I hadn't been in the pulpit. And so this was about four or five, and I was starting to feel like, Well, Lord, is this my ego? Is this my call? Yeah, what's going on? And I could see it in the Black people's faces. They were saying, "When are you gonna get up there?" Yeah. So he and I had to start thinking through, what's a good balance in the preaching flow?

Case summary. Urban Hope Church started as a multi-racial church. Initially, there was a season in the beginning when the members had to build trust, but it wasn't because they were transitioning from mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic. Rather, it was the natural development of beginning new relationships and establishing trust and a shared vision. The most radically different dynamic was the shared leadership model that it introduced. Warren explains,

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forfeiture? Are you giving up? Are you saying that God no longer spoke to you and told you to lead our church? There are all these questions that you have to answer around why you want to make this move. And then of all people you want to partner with, it is a White man. Why? What is it that he's bringing to the table? So I had friends who I consulted with about this and who were like thinking that I did it exclusively for money. You know, oh, you're trying to make this change because of the prospect of being paid full time. Oh, they're baiting you. They're going to bait and switch or whatever.

And so, early on, there was this little dynamic about our respective personalities where in certain spaces, some of the members, regardless of where they came from, would prefer me over William and other members William over me. And so in the past year, that's dissolved. Yeah, that's virtually dissolved. What it is now, because there's also these layers of other people that have come that knew nothing about the dynamics of our respective past, now it's not an active distinction in the way they view the church. And even in who's leading the church, and in the groups and stuff like that. But there is this dynamic and it's not what you think it would be. You would think maybe there'd be this drift of, you know, all the Black folks will talk to me, and the White folks will sort of talk to him, whatever. It's not that, it's not that dynamic at all. It truly is. It truly is diverse. I think they tend to come to us for different things and different perspectives, which is great.

Case 2: Park Street Baptist Church

Park Street Baptist Church was started in 1943. It was described as a little church on the outskirts of Marietta, Georgia. Thirty-three charter members attended services in an old home on Park Street that was considered a mansion at the time. One longtime member, now a Sunday school teacher, remembers those early days well. He began attending the church in 1947 at the age of 10. By that time, the congregation had grown to about 170. Many people moved to Marietta from Atlanta around 1945, causing Cobb County's population to explode from just over 38,000 in 1940 to nearly 63,000 in 1950. A house of worship for the "outsiders" who came to staff the city's Bell Bomber plant during World War II, Park Street Baptist Church, by the 1970s, had become one of the largest megachurches east of the Mississippi.

Most people credit the former pastor with growing the church. He is remembered as a dynamic man and pastor making himself available to young people. Although he was pastor, he attended all the ball games around the county. Some 2,000 people would flood the church for Sunday services at the time. Now, swept up in the forces of a changing demographic around the church, that number has dropped below 500. Because of this drop in church membership, much of the facility previously used for ministry is now sitting empty and needing repair. Lead Pastor Louie states that "the church must decide what to do with its excess property. The church owns 11 acres, and its buildings total 250,000 square feet. Only 15 percent of that space is being used on a

regular basis. It's like somebody who's lost a lot of weight, and they still are wearing the same big clothes."

One way the church has changed its approach to ministry is to provide multiple services for different ethnicities. In addition to the English-language Sunday service, the church also offers six different worship gatherings on Sunday mornings, including Spanish, Portuguese, and Laotian services. Louie believes the church's decline over the years is also due to something he called mission drift. "We just got really busy doing good things inside the buildings and doing good things for ourselves," he shared. "The mission is that we're to love God and love people. If we can take that love of God into the community and love people as Jesus has loved us, it revolutionizes the whole purpose of the church."

For the past five years, Louie and the members of Park Street have been on a journey to rediscover that mission. "In practice," he says, "that means trying to minister to needs that are so relevant in our community." For example, the church offers financial courses, counseling to couples and families in distress, and premarital counseling. It offers the city's foreign-born population English lessons and helps guide them on their path to citizenship. It also means ministering to the community's needs by reaching out to the isolated at home or in school and helping those who have found themselves lonely and adrift during the pandemic.

Currently, their mission is to love God and love people and help others do the same. Their vision is to become a family of many cultures and generations living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in real relationships.

Race relations in the church. For most of its eighty years, the church has been predominantly white membership. Furthermore, the racial perspective of its members did not encourage good and healthy race relations. After Louie was voted unanimously to become Lead Pastor in 2016, he was surprised to discover the

undercurrent of racist ideas among some of its members. Louie describes the church

when he first arrived as "lily White," with the only diversity existing among the

custodians from Kenya. Louie reports,

> When I first came here, I did not realize how embedded racism was in the church
> here. But not just in this church, but also in many of our denomination's churches.
> When I would speak in other churches, I began to realize that we have a major
> problem. All of our churches are filled with older members, who are mono-ethnic
> with very little diversity. Yes, a lot of our church plants were multi-ethnic, but the
> motherships were dying. They were all mono-ethnic, and they were located in seas
> of diversity all around them. So when I came here, I realized that this church would
> probably close within three years if we did not make major bridges of hope for the
> future. So, I cast a vision that was, and still is, multi-ethnic, intergenerational,
> relationally relevant, and gospel-centered. This caused a major disruption within the
> church. I'm a leader, and leaders change the culture. I kept preaching that we could
> not turn a blind eye to the internationals in our community.

As Louie continued to lead the church to reach those in their community, he discovered

more of the inherent racism that existed in the minds and hearts of its members. He

recalled that solid racism began to manifest itself. Louie describes it further, "Back

during segregation and integration, Lester Maddox was the governor of Georgia. He sat

on the second row here for years. He was someone who would get baseball bats and beat

up Black people. He was welcome here."

Church leadership. The leadership responsibility at Park Street Baptist

Church is centered on the lead pastor and flows from the lead pastor position. Its

Executive Pastor, Andy, offered the most comprehensive description of the church's

leadership structure. Andy unapologetically shares,

> We are a pastor-led church, and we've had long-term pastors and people within our
> church do not challenge the pulpit. Now the pastor is the chief visionary, he works
> through the structure of the deacons spiritually through the service serving the
> church. He sees the staff leadership as the elders. I would be an elder. I'm not called
> an elder, but that's our function. So we don't have elders at Park Street per se. But
> the ministry team that's been put into place are the elders of the church, and the
> pastor is the chief under-shepherd. And then everybody who's on the ministry team
> are the elders. And of course, there's different levels of elders, or ministry team
> leaders. And also the pastor has heads of each of the committees standing with their
> deacons, trustees, personnel and finance, and then last year's Deacon Chair, who
> functions five-person advisory committee. When the pastor wants to make a
> decision or cast a vision into the future, he runs it by the advisory committee. Those

are his fellowship counselors and those people with, you know, who run. He runs things stories and he gets feedback. He also creates committees for specific tasks. So our pastor is the primary leader of the church and the visionary, but there are also handoffs and authority that bequeaths, according to our bylaws, the various other groups.[3]

Multi-racial leadership. Although Park Street's history has not had much diversity, the past five years have seen a drastic change in the racial makeup of its leadership. This change is due to Louie's leadership and commitment to the church to reflect the diversity in its community. He states that the sea of diversity around the church motivated him to look for and form a diverse, multi-racial leadership team. Louie describes it this way,

> So what I did is I championed diversity. And, sadly, I didn't know a lot of Black pastors who could come on my team. So I just fasted, prayed, and then networked with some of my kingdom leaders outside the church. And they were like, 'Hey, have you met Dwight? Hey, pastor, have you ever talked to Claude about children's ministry? So, my brother-in-law is now our Spanish Pastor. And also, our Brazilian ministry is very alive.

Louie's vision is paying off and becoming a reality as the church has embraced the multi-racial team. Louie believes that having a multi-racial team is essential to planting and growing a multi-ethnic church. When asked if a church can become multi-ethnic if it is led by a mono-ethnic team, Louie emphatically responds, "You can't! It's impossible! Because your leadership must reflect the community that you're trying to reach. If the surrounding community is diverse, then your leadership team must be diverse as well. Without that, you may have a token Black family in your church, but it is not a true multi-ethnic ministry."

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[3] Andy also added that there was a great respect for and allegiance to the authority of the pulpit as manifested in the preaching from the Bible:

> People leave before they challenge the leadership. We're not a church where there's a coup. Actually, given that we have a highly authoritative pulpit, within our church, there is huge regard for God's word as infallible, and it's talked about constantly. The person who inhabits both of them, the preacher-pastor, as well as gospel. So that's the driver for all of this discussion. In our bylaws, it is very much stated that we are a church that like a southern Baptist that has some policy where the power rests in the pews. So there's a balancing act between that. You know, there's a trust level, a huge trust level here at Park Street. So, people, if they have an issue with the pastor, they'll leave before they challenge. They may create a stir, but they ultimately go out the back door before they create a coup. It is because they won't get traction because it's not our genetic makeup. And that, by and large, came from our previous pastors.

Interestingly, Claude, a member of the multi-racial leadership team at Park Street, described the importance of multi-racial diversity as important, but it's not everything. He nuances it by saying, "There is a degree of importance. I know that it is important. It's not that it's not important. It's not that it's very important. Yeah, I think there may be sometimes where we may feel like it's very important, but I think it's just important." When pressed to describe what he meant, Claude states,

> I just don't think it means that you're paid staff is always going to be a perfect reflection of what your congregation looks like. But I don't think you can escape the fact that you still have leaders in different places where it just makes sense that it's going to be diverse. There's no way to escape that. Like you just can't. You can't get away from that. Like, you may have a predominantly White paid staff. But like we all know, paid staff doesn't get it done, and if you eliminate volunteers, then you don't have a church. So all I'm saying is that a multiethnic church is going to have diverse leadership. I don't know how important it is for all of the paid staff to be diverse, but I do know that leadership has to be diversified throughout the organization.

Speaking about the importance of being a multi-racial leadership team, Leo adds,

> For the most part, on the positive side, the church knew it needed to be diverse because they've seen the community change. I just don't think they knew how to handle it. And you know, all the changes that have been made I think they were all good. For 80 years of this building being here, I can see God's transition using the diversity of leadership to show the direction, which way the community is going, and which way the church is going. So, it's been positive. Now, it hasn't always been that way. Some people that were on staff when I first got here have gone. And, you know, for whatever reason. But I can see through Pastor Louie, he's living out what it says that all nations will be in heaven.

Case summary. Park Street is an example of a church that transitioned from mono-ethnic to multi-ethnic. The catalyst to make this happen was a lead pastor who had a vision for the church to be like heaven and to act like heaven. From the interviews, it was obvious that many long-time members decided to leave throughout this transition. Although it was hard on the existing staff and members, their belief in the vision compelled them to continue the mission together. As the church provided more opportunities to serve the community, the relationships between the members of different ethnicities continued to deepen. An increased understanding of one another happened

because of intentional conversations about race and racial issues. A deep conviction about the authority and relevance of the Bible was instrumental in transforming the church into a multi-racial community of believers. The church leadership model has been a top-down pastor-led structure throughout the process. Influence and direction have been centered on the personality and character of the lead pastor. Although the other team members are committed and loyal, the church's ethos reflects the lead pastor. His values permeate every area. His vision is reflected in every gathering. His outward passion for people rubs off on the other leaders and members. To illustrate this, one of the other pastors shares how important the Lead Pastor's presence is at the church. He states, "Louie [the Lead Pastor] will paint a reality that he wants it to be, not necessarily the reality that is. Because he wants everybody to see the other person from the inside out like he does because, he really is one of those people who has no racial guile. He is a very unusual person. I think this whole mission and vision hinges on a leader that's like that."

Case 3: Perimeter Community Church

Perimeter Community Church is a non-denominational church in Smyrna, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta. The church was started in 1988 by a group of Christians looking for more contemporary church culture. The original founders of Perimeter began meeting in a home until they eventually outgrew it and moved to a school. In 1989, the church called its original Pastor, a bible teacher from Scotland. As the church continued to grow, it became apparent to the leaders that they needed to look for a building. When the need was shared with the congregation, the necessary funds were raised, and the church purchased its first building. The only drawback to this building was its location. Instead of being in the community of its original founding, the church had to move to a neighboring community. The leaders remember the identity crises that this move caused. However, this move would not be the only move they would make, nor would it be the only crisis of identity. One of the church's current elders remembers that period. He

shares, "One of the hardest transitions in the life of a church is when the original pastor

moves on, and someone has to take his place. That's a pretty tough thing for a church to

go through." However, the church eventually found another pastor. It continued its

mission until the next transition in 2019 when the church underwent another location

change and an unexpected lead pastor transition.

Today, Perimeter Community Church has a Black Lead Pastor with a diverse

leadership team. Though it has not been easy, the church has transitioned from mono-

ethnic to multi-ethnic. The church sees itself as redeemed messy people pointing other

messy people to the gospel of Jesus. Their shared vision is to redeem lives, families,

communities, and the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ. The core values

demonstrate their commitment to diversity and discipleship. As a church, they seek to

love people one at a time, feed people the Word of God, connect them to God through

prayer and worship, and motivate them to serve.[4]

Race relations in the church. The racial make-up of Perimeter is 45 percent

White, 40 percent Black, 10 percent Latino, and 5 percent Asian. When the members of

Perimeter Community Church gather, it feels like having a meal with family. Just like the

table provides a central location from which we can all find the nourishment we need, the

church is a source of strength and life for all those who partake. The family at Perimeter

is made up of all colors and kinds. Brady describes it this way:

> We embrace all people. We desire all people. There's a spirit of real inclusion.
> because we've lovingly cared for others, no matter what stage of life they're out or
> what their ethnicity is, or what sort of economic status they are, we embrace people
> openly. It is part of our mission statement that we redeem lives and families and our

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[4] Their core values included (1) Love People One at a Time (Relationships), where every individual bears the image of God. Therefore, we will perpetuate the inclusive nature of God's family by loving all people with dignity, respect, and honor. (2) Feed People the Word of God (Spiritual Growth). The Bible, the word of God, is the final authority. Therefore, we will present it clearly, creatively, and consistently for spiritual nourishment and growth. (3) Connect People to God through Prayer and Worship (Intimacy). Through Christ, we have full access to our heavenly Father by His Spirit. Therefore, we will encourage personal and public pursuits of encountering God. (4) Motivate People to Serve (Humility). God is glorified through redeeming lives, communities, and the world. Therefore, embracing the mind of Christ, we will join Him in sacrificial service to the kingdom of heaven.

community and our world, so we really go after it. If you ask Black, White, Latino, Asian who come here, they would all say this is a very accepting church, there's a very genuine love that's felt and experienced here. People are very friendly and engaging in that. It's a place of gospel-centeredness.

The church members aspire to be a reflection of a New Testament church. Brady illustrates this commitment to the biblical model. He states,

We want to be intentionally on a journey towards oneness, as Jesus described it. And to do so, you have to address the Jew and the Gentile on a regular basis. And so when we think about the New Testament church, that's what they dealt with. The church in Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae, and Corinth, they were all multiethnic churches, multicultural, and it was Jew and Gentile, and there was a lot of disparity between the two of them.

Another of Perimeter's leaders shares the rewarding part about being involved in a multi-ethnic church. Charles adds,

I think what's rewarding for me is seeing people from all different backgrounds come to faith, and seeing someone different than me grow in their faith journey. You know, you'll see someone actually find Christ. And convert the light going off like, Wow, OK. You know, faith is not just a Sunday experience. I'm a part of this body. If. My faith life is not compartmentalized in this one same day, but it's like integrated in everything else. So I think seeing that play out for people and helping people find a purpose in life, that's rewarding.

Church leadership. Perimeter Community Church operated with a traditional leadership model of a lead pastor, a staff team, and a board of elders. This model worked well when the church was mono-ethnic, but as the church became more diverse than before, this model began to show some weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The leadership team realized that if too much responsibility and influence are placed on one person, navigating through diversity change depends on that person's leadership skills to deal with the specific issues that uniquely come with racial diversity. Perimeter's leadership team today is engaged and has ownership in solving problems and bringing solutions. This broad engagement of each team member has increased because of a shared emphasis that each member has value and brings a unique and valuable perspective. This equalizing of influence and input plays out in racial discussions and racially mixed

decision-making. For example, Barry describes his experience in watching this unfold in team dynamics. He states,

> When you have a multi-racial leadership team, you have an opportunity to grow in your understanding of each other. Because it's really complex, and there's so much room for misunderstanding. For instance, in one sense, the White man cannot experience the Black man's world. But to say that can seem condescending to the White man. To say to the White man, "You don't understand; therefore, you have no part in this conversation" does not build a team. It takes everybody on the team to move toward good solutions to complex issues. The team needs the perspective of the Black man who experiences real prejudice and injustice. The team also needs the perspective of the White man who, though he may not experience racial injustice, does however have tremendous influence to bring about change.

Effective church leadership requires this kind of approach. Perimeter's leaders have not always had a shared leadership model such as this. Their increased diversity might have exposed their need for more engagement, forcing them to either stop the diversity or make a change in leadership.

Multi-racial leadership. Over the past five years since this research, Perimeter has seen an increase in diversity among its people and in its pastoral leadership. As this growth in diversity was happening, it was not always easy for the leadership to interpret and understand what it meant. Barry, the current Black lead pastor, remembers the day in a staff meeting when the lead pastor at the time said something obvious to everyone but awkward to hear. Barry recalls, "In one meeting, the Lead Pastor said in front of everyone, 'Our church is changing, and the people who are coming look more like you, Barry, and the people who are leaving look more like me.' And it was like, oh yeah, that's true, everybody in the room was quiet. It was really awkward, but this is what everybody was seeing and experiencing."

Perimeter's story illustrates some of the challenges of transitioning to greater diversity. As the numbers of the minority racial group increased, it revealed the presence of racial division and racist attitudes. Barry again recalls how this affected the team:

> It was White Flight. That's exactly what it was. In fact, you know, there were comments that were made to our White Lead Pastor that said you need to be careful

or you going to turn this into a Black church! Oh, and also, there was one moment where somebody turned on a Wi-Fi hotspot on their phone, and it had a derogatory racial term. It would show up when people went into their phone to try to get on the WIFI, it would be one of the WIFI options that would show up, and it would not show up every Sunday. It would just show up on certain Sundays. And so that was like, OK, somebody is coming and trying to make a point. And so, we had to kind of work through those dynamics.

As the church's racial diversity increased, it continued to adversely affect the leadership, especially the lead pastor at the time. Kent shared his perspective of the impact on the White lead pastor. Kent reflects,

This opportunity and vision of becoming more racially diverse didn't primarily come from the lead pastor. It didn't even primarily come from other leadership. It was more that circumstantially God was at work in different ways. And then all of a sudden, the Lord just started to form us into a more and more multiethnic. And I think some of that is what he did through those individuals, but to be honest, not through our Lead Pastor at all. He was kind of bad at it. He tried, but he was pretty bad there. Great preacher, yes. Good preaching is good preaching. But it was through a lot of our outreach ministries that our church began to be more multi-ethnic. It was though that time that our church started more and more reflecting the community around us.

As the racial makeup of the membership at Perimeter became more diverse than before, so did the leadership team. As this happened, the leaders began to realize different dynamics as they worked together. For example, in comparison to when their leadership was much more mono-ethnic, they now needed to compromise and defer more to the other team members. Kent adds,

As we were becoming more multi-colored, we discovered the seventy-five percent rule. It said, "If you are attending our church, you shouldn't be happy with more than 75 percent of what's going on." Because if you are, then we as leaders are completely catering to you, and we are missing out on your brother or sister's preferences over here. And the same thing on the other side. So, for example, we sort of adopted that on the worship team. And it's like, the tension was real. Because this certain guy is playing guitar one Sunday, and we tell him we are playing five gospel-style songs, and he says, "But I'm a rocker! I don't like gospel. I don't know this stuff. I don't know how to do this stuff." And I told him, "Me neither, but we're doing it."

Case summary. Perimeter has weathered the storms of change. They have transitioned through different leaders, locations, and circumstances as a church. Early on, they did not intend to become more diverse. Their diversity grew due to putting their faith

in action and serving the community around them. It just happened that the community surrounding the church was more diverse than their membership.

Their leaders and members have grown in trust and confidence partly due to their commitment to the gospel and one another. The church does see itself as being messy. This perspective puts them on the road to humility and life change. Barry puts it this way:

> Yeah, in certain meetings, somebody will share an idea, and then somebody will say, "No, that will cause this or that." And people are like, "Oh, wow, I didn't know that." And that is the healthiest thing because it means that we're growing. Now, we are becoming more sensitive to each other for the next decision that needs to be made. Even, just on our team, we are more bold and more confident. I'll lay my perspective on the table because it's my perspective, it's my vantage point, and I have help at the table to make sure that it considers the masses.

Evaluation of Research Design

This section evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the research design. The study used a mixed methods approach to the research, employing a quantitative survey followed by in-depth interviews to explore the ministry perceptions and practices of pastors serving together on a multi-racial leadership team. Eleven church leaders from three different churches were interviewed in person, allowing for confidential conversations that were easily recordable for transcription. The one-to-one nature of the interviews allowed the researcher and participant to form a friendly bond. In some instances, the interview seemed like a personal documentary of each pastor's journey.

This research design also provided the best framework for interpreting the shared practices from the participant's personal and pastoral perceptions. The researcher's current role as a pastor of a church afforded beneficial insights into the conversation and resulting information from participants. However, at the same time, in conducting, analyzing, and evaluating the research, the researcher was aware of how similar experiences could form a confirmation bias in the interpretation and understanding of the findings. Also, the qualitative research methodology presents potential limitations rooted

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in the analysis process, which mainly rests on the researcher's thinking and decision-making. Therefore, a possibility exists for limitation based on the researcher's assumptions, interests, perceptions, and personal biases. Because of this, a strict research protocol that affirms the trustworthiness of the findings was developed to neutralize these factors and assure reliability.

In conclusion, the personal interviews that formed the foundation for the data input for this project provided rich, thick data that gives insight into Black and White leaders' perceptions of how they have experienced, processed, and dealt with multi-racial leadership. The data provided nine clear themes that emerged from the research. The similarities and connections in the data have been highlighted and contrasted. Thus, many possibilities of applicability and conclusions have emerged. In the next chapter, nine conclusions are delineated and expounded upon, providing direct answers to the research questions which have driven this study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 4 described three churches that are led by a multi-racial leadership team. Each of these three churches is in or around the Atlanta metro area. Each church values diversity among its members as well as its leadership. This chapter presents the interpretation and analysis of the above research findings. It describes the conclusions of the cross-case analysis findings of the three participating churches. These conclusions and applications are organized into nine shared practices across the three participating churches. These conclusions also make recommendations for other churches that desire to implement a multi-racial team leadership model. This chapter explains how the study's research findings contribute to the gap in the existing literature base identified in chapter 2. Finally, suggestions for further empirical research on multi-racial church leadership in the local church are also presented.

Interpretation and Analysis of Research Findings

This research thesis aimed to identify patterns and practices in Black/White shared leadership teams in churches and determined significant factors contributing to their successes and failures. The first guiding research question was, "What are the demographic and cultural characteristics of churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?" Chapter 4 revealed the demographic findings and unique perspectives of each participating leader. The second guiding question of this study was, "What are the common ministerial perceptions and practices of pastors in churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?" To answer this question, chapter 4 described case study findings from the various leaders in each participating church. The perspectives were

given in response to interview questions regarding the leaders' experiences in their multi-racial team leadership model.

Common practices were identified across the three case studies to study these exemplary church models and discover research applications further. Cross-case coding and analysis were conducted to find common ministry practices and habits patterns. In gathering data from these pastoral leaders, much wisdom and insight surfaced. Cross-case analysis revealed multiple common practices utilized by the church leadership to cultivate healthy and effective multi-racial leadership teams. Through content analysis and concerning the precedent literature, nine themes, described as shared practices among the case studies, emerged from the study. Each of the themes contained subsections of shared practices. The following section describes the nine themes and quotes from the cross-case data investigation.

Theme 1: A High Degree of Racial Awareness

The first theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have a high degree of racial awareness. Everyone in the world lives with different levels of mindfulness of racial differences. To some people, racial differences matter a lot. Others see the world around them through more of a colorblind lens. Racial awareness is the measurement of how much (or how little) a person views themself and others through a racial lens to evaluate how important race is to a person. It reflects one's feelings and ideas about what race means to them and others. By asking the participants questions about themselves, the researcher could detect their perspectives on race relations, including racial inequality between African Americans and whites. Each participating team member in the research demonstrated a high degree of understanding of the reality of the diversity of their team. The following report of the findings of racial awareness will be organized into three areas of consideration– racial identity, racial history, and racial intelligence.

Awareness of Racial Identity

One aspect of racial awareness is racial identity. Identities are the different categories that people use to describe themselves and others. They impact how we behave, what we value, and whom we think we are concerning the world around us. In her book *The Elusive Dream*, Korie Edwards describes three broad types of identity—personal identities, role identities, and collective identities. In the collective identity, Edwards includes the concept of racial identity. Illustrating the distinction of collective identity, she states,

> Where role identities are largely constructed by interpersonal interactions and expectations, collective identities are informed by intergroup relations. People develop a sense of their collective identities based upon real or perceived interactions of their group with other groups. The salience of these identities varies based upon a person's commitment to a particularly important social network (e.g., family, work colleagues), interactions with similar or different others (e.g., different racial group, gender, class), and understandings about broader intergroup relations.[1]

Much research has been done on how the experiences of African Americans shape their racial identity. The research has been done from different perspectives. In their journal article titled *Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity*, the authors categorized all identity research of African Americans into two approaches—the mainstream approach and the underground approach. They summarize that the "mainstream approach has focused on universal properties associated with ethnic and racial identities. In contrast, the underground approach has focused on documenting the qualitative meaning of being African American, with an emphasis on the unique cultural and historical experiences of African Americans."[2] Referring to the concept of "double consciousness" first developed by W. E. B. DeBois, Roberts Sellers et al. state that the

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[1] Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press). Kindle Locations 1043-1046. Kindle.

[2] Robert M. Sellers, Mia A. Smith, J. Nicole Shelton, Stephanie A.J. Rowley, and Tabbye M. Chavous, 1998, "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," *Personality & Social Psychology Review (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates)* 2, no. 1: 18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0201_2

racial identity of the African American resulted from the inherent struggle of being both

an African American and an American.

> Because of the inherent conflict between America's overwhelmingly negative view of the Negro and the Negro's own view of him or herself, the essential task of healthy ego development in African Americans becomes the reconciliation of the discrepancy between his or her African self and his or her American self.[3]

Whether those lived experiences are present or projected onto them from the past,

whether from the African self or the American self, African Americans form their racial

identities from the unique historical narrative of oppression and slavery. This reality

showed up in both Black and White participants' answers, demonstrating a high degree of

racial awareness of what forms the Black and White identity. Upon being asked to share

what it means to be Black, Barry shares,

> Inside of the experience of it, it has more to do with how I am seen by others than it does with how I see myself. The whole framework becomes something that is projected onto me, from within our societal context. For example, I have some Indian in me. But if I decide to go around saying that I am Native American, that's not how I'm going to be related to or seen. Why? Because there's something beyond me that puts me in that category of Black. There is a powerful, societal force that says this is the definition, and this is what it means to be Black, and I feel a sense of it coming at me.

Barry continues to explain how the outside pressure also shapes his understanding of

what it means to be White. He states,

> My understanding of what it means to be White is shaped by the experience of being Black that is forced upon me. For me, to see somebody who is White is to immediately know they don't have the Black experience. There is something that is true about the Black experience that is unknown to the White person. There is an unawareness of the Black experience in the White community, mainly because the White community is the majority culture. And because it is the majority culture, there exists a norm in such a way that the White community does not know there is a norm. And that doesn't mean that White people can't acknowledge an exception in this situation or that situation. But there's a real ignorance, and I don't see that as an insult. They can't know what they can't know. There is always learning that can happen. But they can't experience it in the same way, because that is not who they are. That is not their identity.

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[3] Robert M. Sellers, Mia A. Smith, J. Nicole Shelton, Stephanie A.J. Rowley, and Tabbye M. Chavous, 1998, "Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity: A Reconceptualization of African American Racial Identity," *Personality & Social Psychology Review (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates)* 2, no. 1 (1998): 18, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0201_2.

In a moment of real transparency about his lived experience of being Black, Barry shares,

> There's so much that is embedded in it. It's not even just what happens; it is what could happen, what might happen. There is emotion that's connected to various fears. So, for example, I have conversations with my son. Just something that seems little, like seeing a police officer with lights going after a car or coming behind you, and I am thinking they are coming after me, but they're going after someone else. In a situation like that, there's something that is behind those thoughts; that is unique to Black culture. The experience that the color of my skin is the motivating factor that causes the injustice, and I can't behave well enough if the offense is simply somebody's impression of my skin color.

One example of the impact of racism on race relations is the degree to which the cultural norm of stereotyping affects the identity development of Black people. For any person, self-identity development is shaped by many contributing influences, including family, culture, tradition, ethnicity, economics, education, values, and heritage. However, stereotyping shapes their self-identity significantly for many Black Americans, especially Black American men. Adding his thoughts on racial identities, Barry's teammate Brady states,

> To be White is to understand that White culture is the majority culture and to embrace it. It is to understand that with that majority culture comes privilege. And so things come with a certain ease. Culturally, in leadership dynamics and community dynamics, that privilege does come out. And bring Black means being oppressed. It means challenges. Being a minority and trying to navigate in a majority culture is extremely challenging. Having to deal every day with prejudice and racial tendencies and majority culture people towards minority culture people is a constant struggle.

Claude has a different perspective on his racial identity, but his answer still illustrates how racially aware he is. Sharing the expectation he feels from people of the opposite race, Claude adds,

> I feel like the assumption from others is that my race is a big deal. But for me, in my experience growing up, it's not that I'm not proud. It's not because I'm not aware. I think it's because I've never really worn my Blackness on my sleeve. I've never tried to prove my Black identity. I've always really felt like, I am who I am. I'm a product of the surroundings and the environments and the upbringing that I've been in. And I know sometimes it seems so cliché, but for me, I think we can put other things that are part of our identity before Christ. But for me, my race has always taken a backseat. So, when you ask the question, "What does it mean to be Black?," my gut reaction is it means I have a different skin color, and God created me a little

bit differently from somebody who's not Black. And for me, it's just as simple as that.

Charles's racial awareness shows as he distinguishes between skin color and cultural upbringing. Talking about the influence that one's environment has on his identity, Claude shares,

> Now, I can take it one step further. I know that I probably would not have this perspective if I had been raised in a different setting at a different time, with different parents, and different upbringing. I grew up in a Black family, but I didn't grow up in a Black area ever. It's not that my parents never wanted me to be around anybody who grew up in the same culture, but they knew it was a rough area. My parents came from very rough area up in New York and New Jersey. My dad grew up in the projects in Brownsville, New York. A lot of angry people, a lot of violence. Everybody who comes out is just pretty much rough around the edges because literally, it's just a matter of survival. And so, when my parents brought us down here to Atlanta, they were very intentional about making sure that we didn't grow up in the same environment. They didn't want us to grow up in an area where we wouldn't have a lot or where we would have a whole lot of bad influences. So, all of that shaped and formed my identity.

Claude's comments above illustrate that effective multi-racial leaders have a high degree of racial awareness, as demonstrated through racial identity development. However, personal identity is not the only trait of which they are aware. They also share an awareness of racial history.

Understanding of Racial History

The second component of racial awareness that emerged in each case study was understanding and acknowledging racial history. Throughout its brief history, the racial tensions in the United States have affected different groups differently. With that said, the attention on the part of the multi-racial leaders who were interviewed was focused on the history of racial injustice experienced by the Black person. There were many references to the oppression of Black people through slavery. There was a keen awareness of the effect of another one hundred years of Jim Crow laws. This concession to our nation's racial history marked each leadership team and created a relational environment of mutual respect and trust. Brady captures the history with much clarity when he says,

The first slaves were brought to our soil in Jamestown in 1619; that's factual. So if you take the onset of slavery from 1619 until today, that was four hundred and two years ago. So, for eighty percent of our history, we have enslaved and segregated, and oppressed minorities in our country. It has been the last sixty years, since the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-sixties when equal voting rights came about, that Blacks have had equal freedoms. So, of the four hundred years of settlement on this soil, the Black population has been treated equally according to the law for roughly twenty percent of our history.

Considering this racial history's effect, Brady shares, "It is important to note that our racial history created a dynamic and power structure that oppresses people of color. Throughout that history, the majority culture has held power and has written history because the one who holds power writes history."

It was apparent that though each of the leaders was raised in the same country, they were not equally exposed to the same racial history of their country. Each one learned different aspects of racial history during their life journey. However, while serving as a multi-racial team, it was clear that history was commonly acknowledged and respected. Leo illustrates how what he learned early in life was not the complete picture. Reflecting on the question of what it means to be Black, he shares,

For me, to be Black is still a learning experience because of the lack of knowledge and awareness that we had growing up in Miami. In Miami, we knew of Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and maybe a few others. But I didn't learn of W.E.B. Dubois, who was a strong African-American leader, until I married my wife, who was born in Mississippi, and raised on the south side of Chicago. I was never exposed to my racial history because it was not taught at school.

Leo did not learn it in school, but his story demonstrates that Black children did not learn it at home either. He continues,

One thing we suffer from in the African-American culture is that we don't take the time to lay out our history to our young people. That's a big problem in our culture. We don't get together as a family as we should. There's a saying that I remember hearing: "Don't let the funeral director plan your next family reunion." That's why we don't know our family or people's history, because we don't get together and share until someone dies.

Another component related to the Black story is the absence of a father in the home. This absence makes it difficult to pass on the tradition or retell the story of their past. Referring to the absent father, Leo expresses his concern, "It's hard to connect with

your past when you are raised by Hip-Hop music. All my uncles and my dad's brothers all went to jail. It's a lack of connectedness to the past, a loss of awareness of our history. And that's big in the African-American community. So, as a Black person, I feel like I am still finding myself because no one taught me my history."

Racial awareness has come through reading history for many of these leaders, both Black and White. For example, the more aware they became of the racial history of their culture, the more clarity there was for them about the racial dynamic of working alongside teammates of a different racial color. Leo shares some examples that have given him context and understanding of why Black people view the church differently.

> My understanding of history is that there were more White people walking with Martin Luther King than the media revealed. And they only reported what they wanted because they wanted to play the narrative that only the Blacks were marching. They wanted to create a deeper wedge than really existed. But on the other hand, history gives good reasons why the White church is viewed so poorly. For example, history shows that there were religious church leaders as slave owners, that they had slave's wives downstairs raping them, but they were upstairs having church. So there's still a mindset a lot of African-Americans have about the churches today. That's why we have so much separation because Blacks will say the White man wrote the Bible. And these same people were running the churches back then. Now, their descendants are running the churches. This is a part of our shared history.

As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2, Jemar Tisby, in his book *The Color of Compromise*, claims that there is a huge need for a more open and honest discussion of racial tensions within the church.[4] This research found that not only is that true, but that the open and honest discussion must begin with the leadership. The more awareness a multi-racial leadership team has of the nation's racial history, including the complacency with which the church has delt with the issue, the better equipped they are to work together and help the church move beyond racial division.

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[4] Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 16.

The Presence of Racial Intelligence

One final aspect of racial awareness is racial intelligence. For this research, racial intelligence does not refer to the difference in measurement of intelligence from one race to another; rather, racial intelligence is defined as the present-day awareness of racial dynamics between Black and Whites in culture and community. It is the measurement of person's awareness regarding the norms, values, customs, and struggles of a person of a different race. The shared practice of racial intelligence was essential in each of these racially diverse teams. Explaining the importance, William states confidently,

> I would say a guy that's going to be successful in a truly multiethnic church has to have a high racial IQ. While I grew up in diverse areas, it wasn't until my training at my previous church that I really became self-aware of some of this racial realities. Pastoral ministry is pastoral ministry to one degree, no matter the setting. But in another sense, pastoring in a urban setting is different than pastoring in a suburban setting. The issues that you're going to deal with are different. They're not better or worse; they are just different. And if you don't have even the dimensions of the debates, it will be impossible. If you say things in an urban setting like no Christian can be a Democrat, you can't pastor there. You're contextually clueless is what you are. Yeah. That's what I mean by having a high racial IQ. I mean that you have to understand your audience well enough to be able to connect to them.

William adds that effectively working together on a racially diverse team requires more than just understanding one another. It demands more than just a shared vision. Speaking of the deeper function of personality, William says that he believes there is a correlation between self-awareness and racial intelligence. "The more aware a person is of himself, the more aware he is of his own biases and prejudices," says William. Self-awareness creates a heart and mindset that gives a person a better chance of understanding the racial dynamics in the room. In referencing what it takes to work effectively on a racially diverse team, Brady adds, "I think the cultural competency has to be there no matter what ethnicity that person is from. They must be cross-culturally competent and willing to really engage all cultures and definitely be strongly competent in each of those."

According to many of the comments, having high racial intelligence is not easy. One of the reasons that being racially aware is so difficult is the dynamic between majority and minority cultures. Referring to racial awareness during decision-making, Warren explains,

> If we live in Liberia, the majority culture would be me. If we live in America, the majority culture is you. Wherever there is a majority culture, perspectives and preferences easily slide into policy without challenge. In other words, when making a decision together, there can be this expectation, "Of course, we would do it that way. Why not?" That assumption can happen because that's the perspective of the majority culture. Again, it doesn't matter who the majority is. When a person is in the majority, that's just the reality. So, for example, on our team, it's not that I go around with my racial antennae up. Why not? Because I know my White brother means well. But even so, I am on the lookout for the subtle assumption from majority culture that says, "Of course, this is the way we do it." He might never say those words, but there is a certain confident assumption surrounding the comment that says, "Well, why wouldn't we do it that way? Of course, we would." But, while the question in his majority culture mind is "Why not?," the question in my minority culture mind is "Well, because that's not the only way to look at it." If you are in the majority culture, that's all you know. You don't view it as being an expression of your majority culture or ethnicity. You just view it as being just how we do things.

The dynamic of racial intelligence is not only a question for those in the majority culture but also a question of what level of racial intelligence is found in the minority culture. Speaking from the minority culture point of view, Warren explains,

> Our church is a part of the Southern Baptist Convention, a majority White denomination. In my past, however, I have been a part of totally Black denominations that were grossly dysfunctional. Here in the SBC, we seem to have systems and structures that work well. But there is an element in my heart, where I wonder if I am agreeing to the systems and structures that have a history of working well, or am I merely acquiescing to White thoughts? There is an awareness on my part, within my own mind and heart, that when I agree to something, am I agreeing to something I believe is best and right, or am I just kind of giving up on making any meaningful contribution because I've just trusted because it's White, it's right.

Theme 2: A High Commitment to Substantive Diversity

The second theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have a high commitment to substantive diversity. The key to understanding this practice is that the leadership's commitment is high, and the diversity of the leadership is substantive. Organizations and churches do not tend to

become diverse accidentally. It requires intentionality and commitment partly due to the human tendency to gather with those like you— "bird of a feather flock together." As a result, those with similar interests or of the same kind tend to form groups. Without a high commitment to diversity, this human dynamic will cause a return to homogeneity. The churches in this study remained diverse because they were each highly committed to diversity. The findings were broken into the following three categories—substantive diversity, a journey toward diversity, and the blessing of diversity.

Substantive Diversity

The type of diversity the churches displayed was *substantive diversity*, referenced by Oneya Fennell Okuwobi in her thesis, *Keep Race on the Table*.[5] Addressing the difference between the number of diverse perspectives and the actual qualitative meaning and value of diversity discourse, Okuwobi suggests,

> Organizations use the language of including all cultural perspectives to promote support for diversity initiatives. In practice, however, those initiatives are nearly always operationalized using statistics to track the proportional representation of people of color. Focusing on numbers alone ignores the quality of interactions and opportunities within the organization for all, termed substantive diversity. Measurement of substantive diversity would require understanding feelings of belonging or inclusion, and levels of intergroup contact, as well as the proportion of minority representation, found in all levels and sub-segments of an organization.

These churches focused on more than mere quotas and numbers. They exemplified a genuine desire and commitment to be racially diverse in their membership and their leadership. For example, when Urban Hope Church was in the launch stage, founding pastor William shared, "In God's Providence, one of our prayers during that whole time was like, Lord, if we are going to plant the type of church that we feel like you are leading us to plant, I just have to have an African American brother to do this with me. This is a non-negotiable."

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[5] Oneya Fennell Okuwobi referenced the term "substantive diversity" from "Discrimination, Diversity and Work" by Vincent J. Roscigno and Jill E. Yavorsky. Oneya Fennell Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table'": Racial Attitudes and Diversity Discourse Among Leaders of Multiracial Organizations" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2017), 20.

Journey toward Diversity

The thread of substantive diversity ran through each interview. Diversity was not just something to show from the stage; it was embedded in the DNA of each church's ethos. However, even though this conviction was embedded deep, it was apparent that this value was not always as invasive in the past as it was at the time of the interviews. Speaking of his experience when he first joined Perimeter, Barry offers,

> When my family first came to Perimeter, there was a disconnect between what was happening on stage on Sunday versus what was the reality in the church leadership. Yes, when my family was looking for a multicultural church, we came to Perimeter, and that's what we saw on Sunday. But I later learned that it was only present in attendance on Sunday. You see, what you see on Sunday on is one thing, but then there's that dynamic of leadership decision making, that was another thing. The longer we were here, the more we learned that the culture of the church was not quite as diverse as its reflection in the Sunday experience. That's where the work had to be done.

Barry's experience illustrates the difference between outward diversity and substantive diversity. When he first arrived at Perimeter, there was a surface diversity discourse but not a substantive one. He joined the leadership team at a time when the church needed to make a transition to a deeper commitment to substantive diversity. Indeed, he was instrumental in helping the church to grow in its commitment to such a depth of diversity. The type of diversity that began at Perimeter can be described as a diversity that "impresses hearers that the concerns of all members within an organization matter. Minority groups are not simply present; their presence is felt in the way that the organization operates."[6]

At Perimeter, the work of changing the way the church operates to be more inclusive of minorities was a multi-year-long journey. Reflecting on how the church has progressed toward more substantive diversity, Brady recalls,

> Four years ago when I started, our church building was located near the baseball stadium. At that time, we were somewhat diverse. Then, we sold that property and moved here to this property. Here, we have become more diverse. Because even in the three-and-a-half-mile journey to this new location, we've journeyed into a more

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[6] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

diverse neighborhood. When we were a church over there, there was really no neighborhood around us, other than apartments. Yes, we were attracting some people from the apartments, but not a whole lot. But gentrification started to happen, when the baseball stadium was built. All the rent went up, and diversity went down. So, we decided to move here intentionally to follow the diversity and get into the neighborhoods more.

Even though Perimeter moved toward more diversity, the location of the church did not guarantee that the minorities of the church would truly have a voice. If done in a coercive and controlling manner, diversity discourse can reinforce mono-ethnic patterns, squelching the possibility of true substantive diversity. Okuwobi describes this dynamic, "Paradoxically, diversity discourse marks racial minorities as other, while at the same time pressuring them to conform to White standards. This type of diversity is selectively inclusive, focusing on including minorities who are of high status and familiar with middle-class White habitus."[7]

Brady shares the following about how Perimeter overcame this issue:

Because of that relocation plan that God led us to do, our church became more ethnically diverse than we were before the move. And not just our church, but also our leadership. And not just the diversity of leaders, but we intentionally decided to allow minority leaders to be in the highest positions of leadership. It has made us all more culturally competent. It has been good for us majority culture people to learn to submit to the leadership of our minority brothers. This shift toward a balance of who is leading the church has been a beautiful transition that's helped us embrace it even more. It's a journey. And it never ends. The journey towards oneness never ends.

Perimeter's multi-racial leadership team demonstrates a pronounced diversity discourse by highlighting the leadership of minority members of the organization. This action reinforces opportunity for all within the church by giving voice to all, rather than having a few leaders repeat the rhetoric concerning involvement and opportunity, allowing the church to organically address any institutional inequality that may or may not be present. Okuwobi reiterates, "Because it promotes the leveling of racial hierarchies within the organization, as well as gives voice to experiences of all, substantive diversity discourse positions an organization to address systemic racial inequality." The point is

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[7] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

that the leaders were committed to substantive diversity, believing that it brought much

value to the church's overall health.

In effective multi-racial leadership teams, each leader highly values racial

diversity. In their way of seeing it, racial diversity is not just a trend or the latest church

growth strategy. They firmly believe that every local church should reflect the

surrounding community. Reflecting on his early days in church ministry, Kent recalls,

> At first, our leadership wanted to be more diverse just to be more relevant, because
> that was the relevant, trendy thing to do, almost like a growth strategy. But then we
> learned that being a diverse, multi-ethnic church is a terrible growth strategy. If you
> want to be more diverse, by definition, you back away from a targeted approach,
> which every church growth strategist says is essential to have.

The Blessing of Racial Diversity

One after the other, these leaders continued to share their beliefs in the real

blessings of a racially diverse church. At the thought of leading a multi-racial church by

himself, Warren shares with sincerity,

> I don't think it would be nearly as sweet as it is today if I were leading alone. If you
> plugged me in as a Pastor at a multi-ethnic church, I would immediately work as a
> first order of business within my first year to bring along their first leaders, who
> were a reflection of another portion of the congregation. Well, I think people would
> enjoy my preaching, but I think I would lose some momentum in terms of
> connecting well with the people there. There would be a piece that would be
> missing. I know that because here right now there are times when one of us gets
> busy, one goes on family vacation, one of us is going out of town to do this funeral.
> I got this thing that I'm doing over here. And people will say, "What's going on?
> Where you been?" Now, that could be because our folks are spoiled, or it could be
> just kind of a reality.

Demonstrating the value of substantive diversity, Claude shares,

> Sometimes we lose the best of each other, like because we don't talk to each other in
> real life. I feel like that happened in the midst of this conversation. I feel like that is
> the blessing. That's the unique blessing, it doesn't mean like you're superior to me
> or I am to you, but the unique blessing of being diverse is that we have the potential,
> we have the opportunity, I should say, to be able to get the best out of each other and
> combine those two things. Like, that's all on the line because I think sometimes if
> you don't invest the time, you don't get there, you don't get to that place of real
> relationship.

Multi-racial leadership knows that there is a blessing in diversity. The value placed on it is not just theoretical; it is practical and life-giving. It comes from the belief that the other person's unique and different background contains and brings blessing. Claude continues as he shares the following with sincere expectation:

> But when you get there, I feel like that's where the magic is, so to speak, or the beauty of being multiethnic, because there are great benefits. I can learn from you. I can get the best of it, because there's a we, and not just a me. If you don't accept the fact that there are negative things about your culture, and I don't accept the fact that there are negative things about my culture, then we are both blind and foolish. But when you are with people that come out of another culture, then you have to take your blinders off, on both sides, and say, "Hey, what am I missing, and how can we bless each other?" We have to think, "I could learn a thing or two from you, and vice versa." It's one of those things to me that we put out in front, and it has a unique blessing in it.

Much has been written on the value of team leadership in the church and on the biblical model of the plurality of elders. In his book *Gospel Eldership*, Robert H. Thune states, "The New Testament is filled with descriptive and prescriptive accounts that indicate that the eldership of New Testament churches was plural, not singular."[8] This research added to the discussion by emphasizing that the blessing not only comes with plurality, but also with diversity. It confirmed that no one person has sufficient gifting, insight, or perspective to fulfill all that is needed in the governing and teaching of the local church.

Another leader shared the importance of trust in racially diverse relationships. Part of the blessing of racial diversity is building trust where trust would otherwise be lacking. Racial diversity is an opportunity to destroy barriers and build trust. Testifying the power of taking risks in relationships, Warren explains,

> I think the key to mending the racial divide is real relationships, just authentic relationships. And I think relationships that are framed by real trust have shared risk. In other words, I trust my White staff member friend because he took a risk in partnering with me in ministry. And he trusts me because in partner with him, I took some risks. So, there are areas in both of our lives where we took risks. Putting

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[8] Robert H. Thune, *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders*, 1st ed. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 21.

people of different racial backgrounds in an environment where they have shared risk, where they have shared burdens, shared weight with each other, and shared tears. Real relationship.

Eager to share an example, Warren adds,

There was a young White woman. In the Black community, this woman looks like the whitest White woman you can imagine. She looks exactly like the little girl on the Sunbeam bread bag. She has perfect blonde hair and blue eyes. Yeah, as a matter of fact, she was a cheerleader for the Alabama Crimson Tide. Any whiter than that, right? Her name was Betsy Taylor. Well, my mother passed away. Betsy got in her car and drove from Marietta to Conyers with three bags of food that she bought for me and my family. She said, "I just can't imagine what you might be going through, but I wanted to bring it over here." Here is the truth, I trust Betsy like a little sister to this day. The color of her skin doesn't matter. She's the prototypical young White woman and get this–Betsy asked me to officiate her wedding to her husband. That's a risk for her. She wanted me, in the midst of all her family and friends, to stand up and pronounce them husband and wife. So, we had shared risks in that situation. But here's the deal: shared risk destroys the barriers and builds trust.

Another blessing of racial diversity is the loving accountability that protects each group from harboring racist ideas or hostile animosity toward their brothers and sisters in the other group. Multi-racial leadership sees firsthand the safeguards that come from diversity. William explains, "It's not healthy for the church members to find their identity in their racial identity and not primarily in Christ." Expounding on the dangers of churches that over-emphasize the racial dynamic, William states,

Along the continuum of all the people in the church, let's say on one end of the spectrum there are Black racist ideas all the way to the other end there are White racist ideas. And all the people toward the center, both Black and White, having no racist views. We want to be a church where these Black and White people in the center feel at home. But we also are a church where the further you get out to the ends of the continuum, Black or White, you don't feel at home. Because we are going to say things that grate on these people's sensibilities. When you don't have a multi-ethnic, multi-colored, congregation, you lose the blessing of all those non-racist voices in the center, and you're left with the voices on the extreme edges. And, in either direction–Black or White–those racist voices on the ends get tolerated, even accepted, even promoted, by people that love Jesus. In a multi-racial church, those racist ideas cannot, as easily or practically, find safe harbor.

Louie went even further in his assessment of the importance of the church being racially diverse. With concern, he adds,

If we look out into the future ten to fifteen years from now, our kids who have grown up in multicultural schools, multicultural environments, multicultural everything, if they go into a room of people who say they're all Christians, and if

they all look the same in their racial ethnicity, they will be viewed as a cult. For that reason, a multi-colored church is a strong, compelling rationale for believing the gospel. Diversity was the testimony of the gospel in the New Testament church.

Theme 3: A Consistent Pattern of Race Conversations

A third theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have a consistent pattern of race conversations. Oneya Fennell Okuwobi surveys the different amounts of racial discourse among leaders within multi-racial organizations. She writes,

> Those with pronounced diversity discourse would speak often about having a diverse congregation as a goal of their church. They will likely promote the diversity by means of a mission or vision statement as well as sermons during worship gatherings. The opposite end of the spectrum is a limited diversity discourse. This would include leaders who speak about diversity rarely and do not allow the diversity of their congregations to impact the way in which their organization operates.[9]

Each church in this multi-case study exhibited a regular pattern of pronounced discourse. This pronounced discourse manifested itself in different ways. For instance, Park Street would periodically host panel discussions where a multi-racial group would discuss a particular racial concern or injustice. Louie shares, "Being a minister of reconciliation is being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. The key is listening to the hurts of another brother or sister, and listening to what they've experienced, and serving them with Christ's compassion. Gathering in each other's homes is the best way to discuss, converse and listen." This consistent pattern of race conversations was present in all three participating churches. The realities of these conversations were manifested in the following three ways—the difficulty of race conversations, the diversity of view on racial problems, and the pressures that affect racial discourse.

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[9] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

The Difficulty of Race Conversations

Although the initiatives for diversity discourse were well-intentioned at Park

Street, they could sometimes be awkward and messy. Claude, a Black church leader at

Park Street, shares,

> I can remember one time when our Lead Pastor, Pastor Louie, had us in a meeting in the gathering place that was really intentional. In fact, I want to say, a lot of deacons were there. It was a leadership meeting, volunteer leadership, and leadership. We were there to kind of talk about these racial tensions. And it was a little weird, I'm going to say. But like all things like that, like they can be a little bit weird. He had gathered us literally to talk about something that a lot of people felt like wasn't an issue. He had gathered us in the room, and we talked about the differences in our culture, the way we may relate to different things. It was just really awkward and weird. To illustrate this, let me say that I was actually in agreement with the 75 year old White man who was with me. He said to me, "Why do we need to do this?" And in my mind, I'm thinking, like, "yea why do we need to do this?" Because for us, it didn't seem like there was an issue here. It was like, somebody's trying to cause a conflict, coming up to us and saying, "Hey, let's talk about the differences between our different cultures," and stuff like that and see where there may be a misunderstanding between us. Yeah, but what if we are just fine with each other?

As much as the leaders preferred to be proactive in these conversations, often,

the interaction became reactive. Referring to the meetings when the leaders of the church

would discuss the racial incidents in the news, Claude recalls,

> Though these things were happening all across the country, they were all incidences that felt like they were happening right next to you. Following the shootings and racial violence and all of these different things and really all of these different events being highlighted, our church did a really good job, and Pastor Louie, our leadership team, did a good job of having a race conversation toward racial reconciliation. It was a panel that was a reaction to the George Floyd murder and the Amoud Aubrey situation, and really the goal was to have a moment of solidarity, really kind of thinking, what does all this mean for us? So, we brought in Dexter Hardy and his wife, who are a Black couple, Black family, and asked them, "What's your reaction to that?" And then we also brought in somebody else who was White and somebody else who was Black and so we had a mixed panel of people from different races the goal was solidarity to show our support not only for each other but to really kind of humanize the whole thing.

George Yancey states, "The way we talk to each other matters. It does not

matter if we're right if we cannot communicate our perspective to those who disagree."[10]

Yancey's point is that a regular pattern of talking about race can only happen if we have

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[10] George A. Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), Location 224. Kindle.

mutual respect for those with whom we disagree. Thus, the conversations with the church leaders revealed that having productive racial discourse was not always easy. Isaac Adams writes,

> One reason that conversations about race are so hard is because too many American evangelicals lack thinking with biblical nuance. Sadly, when it comes to using our God-given brains, evangelicals often have only two speeds. For the evangelical, if something is not essential for salvation, it's often regarded as unimportant. Issues, then, are either of speed 1: ultimate importance, or speed 2: no importance . . . . This either/or mental proclivity is why evangelicals often pit two good things against each other . . . . It's why we often see those who disagree with us as a part of the faithful or as a full-blown heretic–we only have two speeds.[11]

To help their church avoid these two extremes, Perimeter took the initiative to bring the church leaders and members together to ask questions and share their individual perspectives on racial injustices after they occurred. As an example of this, Barry recalls,

> We asked each other tons of questions. And it just created a dynamic where people who were already processing alone, but now it's like they're not processing in isolation. It was an open time of saying "here's what I think about this. Here's what, in my experience, this has been about. I've heard this term." And it was just a lot of conversations that I found myself in amongst the staff members, and really just coaching.

Referring to ways that Urban Hope would encourage conversation about race, Warren states,

> We've had roundtables, we've had panel discussions, and we've done a podcast, and we will also just get a zoom together, and we'll lead out in prayer, and we'll just ask people, what are they feeling, so that we can actually get some feedback, because we don't want to make assumptions about what people should be feeling. There's a level of transparency that we don't get about what people are really thinking and feeling unless we open up certain doors. You know, we'll get a group of people together, and then sometimes we'll do these podcasts or interact with the ideas in front of the people that we'll just send it out. Like, here's a conversation that we had when we dealt with three or four of the tough questions they may have come out of this particular situation. The Black/White dynamic and having regular conversations about how we typically feel or approach a given topic–that is a regular exchange, that we have to have.

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[11] Isaac Adams, *Talking about Race: Urban Hope for Hard Conversations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), 141-142.

Diversity of Views on Racial Problems

A regular pattern of race conversations does not imply that all churches have the same views on racial problems. Two churches can be committed to open discourse about race, but each is not similar in understanding the problems. Okuwobi separates the leadership in these types of churches into structuralist and opportunist categories. These two archetypes illustrate how different attitudes about race shape how organizations talk about race. From her research, Okuwobi shows that structuralist church leaders have well-developed and structural conceptions of racial inequality. They are vocal in communicating with their congregations, and perhaps the broader community, concerning issues of race.

Conversely, she discovered that "opportunist church leaders have a prominent diversity discourse but lack the expected underlying racial attitudes. Such leaders appear to manipulate diversity to gain market advantage over other churches. Their actions most closely reflect broader society in that they hold diversity as a sacred value while ignoring ideas of racial inequality underlying it."[12]

In terms of racial discourse and concepts of racial inequality, each of the three churches in this research seemed to lean heavily toward the structuralist archetype of leadership. This meant that discussions on or about racial issues were not mere opportunities to give the appearance of openness and hospitality, but rather the leadership team engaged in these conversations regularly and naturally. Consequently, the authentic conversations among the leadership team was an example to the rest of the church members.

Pressures That Affect Racial Discourse

Even with a structuralist view of racial problems, these churches had various pressures that determined where they fell on the spectrum of racial discourse. Okuwobi

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[12] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

writes that leaders' attitudes about structural racism "cannot be evaluated without an eye towards their context. Even when leaders hold structural views of race and racial inequality, and want to reflect those in diversity discourse, they may be hindered from or encouraged to do so by several factors."[13] For example, while the leadership at Urban Hope was committed to publicly addressing racial issues, they were also careful not to allow the racially focused headlines of the day set the agenda of their preaching and teaching. Warren speaks to this when he shares,

> What we did not want to do, is let the pulpit get hijacked by social issues. While we will do a special message series on certain things, we just didn't want our pulpit to become a news desk where we felt obligated to react to every single thing. But we felt that to not say anything made us irresponsible.

Urban Hope is also careful not to let race conversations drive everything. Even though diversity discourse is a value of theirs, they are careful not to allow the emphasis of it to overshadow other priorities of greater importance, like the church's mission. Speaking of how the church should stay unified, McCamack adds,

> Sometimes we think, "Hey, we need to get unified, so that we can get our mission." I would say that's the wrong tack. I would say you got to get on mission so that you can get unified. Missional movement creates unity in the church, and the reason there's so much infighting or division in even churches that value open and diverse conversations about race, is because they're not pushing the mission ball forward. Because when you get people moving together, they stop looking at all the things that separate them and they start looking at the thing that unites them.

Urban Hope illustrates that a church must maintain a careful balance between diversity discourse and missional movement. A regular pattern of race conversation does not necessarily mean that multi-racial discourse, where the conversation is focused on the racial dynamics of the situation, is the priority of every gathering. It means there is a healthy rhythm or pattern to the race conversations, but not so much that diversity discourse becomes the church's mission. This balance is difficult to maintain and requires much accountability and open discussion among the church's leaders.

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[13] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

Theme 4: The Substantive Presence of Racial Representation

The fourth theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have the substantive presence of racial representation. This practice is where the different racial groups on a multi-racial team have a healthy representation in all the different places of leadership, influence, and function. The presence of diverse racial representation showed up in the following ways—equality of influence, the role of cultural connectedness, and the challenges of maintaining racial representation.

Equality of Influence

First, representation is demonstrated as equality of influence. In the context of a multi-colored church, especially when the congregation is multi-colored, a balance of representation is important to ensure confidence and trust that each of the constituent racial groups in the congregation is being represented in the decision-making and direction of the church. To this end, William explains:

> Our Sunday morning worship service is the primary place where our people see the leadership coming from. And the people who are given the microphone are diverse. I think, by doing that, it causes virtually anybody in our church to say, "Oh, this is a church for my type of person." I think that has been the effect. People will naturally think, "Is this a White church, or is this a Black church?" And the reality is that it is just a people church.

Urban Hope Church was one of the most racially balanced churches in this multi-case study. Nevertheless, William and the other leaders knew that racial representation was not equally important to all races. According to them, a Black person is more aware of racial representation's presence (or absence) than a White person. William adds,

> As White people, we don't see the need for this as much because we live in a society where most of our preferences are catered to us and are represented. But if we as a White person went to Africa, and we come into a setting where we are the only White person there, then there would be a sense in which even if the people were welcoming and friendly, we would feel like, "Oh, this isn't for me."

This degree of awareness and intentionality on the part of the leadership has helped

Urban Hope become and remain a well-balanced, racially diverse congregation. William

explains again, "I think that what having a diversity of leaders has done is that it's made

people like, 'I could go to that church because they look like me.'" In other words,

representation matters, and not just in optics. It also matters in the weight of perspective.

Perspective, according to William, is important in decision-making. Moreover,

decision-making among leaders will either represent the congregation's needs or not.

William adds, "The decisions that Claude and I make, as the pastoral leadership team of

Urban Hope, are shaped by a White perspective and a Black perspective. And because of

that, our decisions often have a breath to them."

William offered a negative example of a situation where a well-intentioned

organization made a public statement about race. However, because the committee did

not have a Black perspective at the table, the statement came across as insensitive.

William shares,

> A few years ago, Southern Baptist seminaries made a statement on Critical Race
> Theory, and, in my view, there was really nothing wrong with the statement. There
> was nothing untrue, but the statement was tone deaf. Because they didn't have the
> actual Black perspective in the room. Just one Black guy in the room would have
> said, "I agree with you. I agree with where we are coming from theologically. But
> the way that this wording is going to come across, people are going to hear
> something different than we are intending." And my point is that if they just had one
> Black person in the room, that fiasco and the follow-up would have never happened.

**The Role of Cultural Connectedness in
Racial Representation**

A second way that racial representation is demonstrated is through cultural

connection. A church is situated in the context of culture. A church develops and

cultivates a culture within the broader culture. The leaders of a church have the task of

not only serving from within a culture but serving in such a way as to connect with the

people of its culture. Each of the churches in this study was aware of their cultural

connectedness level and how racial representation played into it. Upon being asked what

role racial diversity plays in planning a worship service, each leader resoundingly said that it plays a big role. Louie quickly answered, "It plays a big part. We believe that it is God's vision that we would have every Sunday racial and ethnic representation on the platform. So, we strive for that generationally and ethnically. We haven't gotten there totally. Some Sundays we are better than other Sundays. But the reason racial representation is so important is that it gives hope to a divisive world."

To the extent that racial representation is important at Perimeter Community Church, White pastor Brady adds,

> Race plays into the planning all the way through every bit of it. For example, we try to be culturally sensitive to our Latino community population. Some are first-generation immigrants, and they can't speak or understand English very well. And so we the service translated. Additionally, there are times, even when we're designing the worship service, that we want to honor our Latino brothers and sisters by actually singing a song, portions of it in Spanish, not English. Also, sometimes we will have a certain reading that comes from a Black author or theologian, that helps make sense. Or when we project pictures up on the big screen, we don't want them to be just one homogeneous group of people. And so the sensitivity is always there when we are designing the experiences. Yeah, even when it comes to volunteerism, getting people plugged in ministries, we're sensitive to doing it in a way that's inclusive and that everybody gets a seat at the table.

Kent confirms this high value on racial representation. In a worship service debrief meeting, he recalls,

> In a recent meeting where our team was reviewing the worship services, one of the leaders challenged us that we really need to work harder at having racial representation. He said that we needed more Black people on stage. And he made a good point because our band was all White, our welcome person was White, the Scripture reader was White, and I am White.

The Challenges of Maintaining Racial Representation

As much as the leaders valued racial representation, it was not always easy, and they did not always agree. There exists the ideal and the reality. They all agreed in unison that a balanced racial representation would be best. Nevertheless, some acknowledged the pressures and circumstances of the real world. This tension showed, especially when there was no racial diversity of qualified people to serve. One can hear it

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in Kent's voice as he recounts the situation, "When the other staff member was repeatedly saying that we need more Black people on stage, I was thinking, 'Well shoot, that's all I can find. That's all the people I have who are willing and qualified to serve.' He just repeated that we have to find more Black people. So, there is a tension when practically speaking, I can only do that for which God has provided for us to do."

Because of how their church started with two churches merging, Urban Hope has a healthy balance of racial representation. However, even with many diverse leaders, they must be intentional to maintain a balance of racial representation. Speaking about how they maintain a presence of racial representation, Warren explains,

> We fight hard to never just have one ethnicity on the stage. So, for instance, if we've got my daughter, who is Black, playing bass guitar, and she's singing. And Jalen was playing the keyboard, we were going to have three Black vocalists. We have to address that, and make that right. We are intentional if we had a White guitarist and our other guitarist was also White. We weren't going to have three White folks singing. We just weren't going to do it. And we had enough options to do that differently. So not only what people see but also what we're seeing.

The challenge is to maintain this racial balance without letting it become artificial. Referring to the careful approach among leaders, Warren says,

> On our teams, we look at our community groups, and although we don't try to dictate who is a member which group, if we see a community group starting to slip exclusively in one ethnic direction or another, we'll ask a question, "Well, why is that? Is it because that group meets in a certain geographical location? Or is it because that group is forming a little bit of a click?" And so, to try to avoid that from happening, we intentionally hit reset on our community groups twice a year. And people that we know and trust, sometimes we send them places in order to enhance the diversity. "Hey, would you do us a favor? You know, would you join that group or this group during a season so we can continue to have a balanced and diverse expression in that group?" Yeah. And so far, it has worked, and it doesn't take long, after five years, and now it just takes little pushes here in there to do it.[14]

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[14] Warren also added how they have maintained racial representation in their prayer groups:

Intercessory prayer seems to be a very comfortable place for older Black people, and so we're not going to stop anybody of that type from joining the intercessory prayer team. But I will have a conversation with a young man and say, "You know what, man, I've seen you and just how you graciously love to pray for people you go after God own heart." So, in a situation like that, I might say to that young person, "Have you ever considered being a part of the intercessory prayer ministry?" It used to be an intentional effort. Are we being two Black or two White on this? But now it's becoming more natural.

Upon being asked if they ever become concerned in their intentionality to try to create something artificially, Warren adds,

> Yes, I feel that tension, but I feel very comfortable with the tension. As long as it continues to be a question, I am fine. I get very concerned, however, when it's no longer a question. Just because we want to keep the question alive does not mean that we are all about racial quotas, like a spiritual affirmative action. Yes, we place value on diversity, but we've tried to make sure that it never comes off as being higher than or even remotely equal to the gospel.[15]

This concept of creating diversity by artificially placing a Black person in leadership just for the White man to appear to value diversity is called tokenism. According to Warren, one way a church can demonstrate a genuine commitment to diversity and not just give in to tokenism is to place Black people in unexpected places of leadership. He explains,

> It has to be demonstrated in a commitment that is not typical. For instance, everybody expects to come to a church and see a really dynamic Black praise and worship leader. That seems like a typical post to put a Black guy. But if you have diversity in non-typical spaces, it captures attention. This is not just a token attempt. It communicates that you really value this person. You're not just sticking him here as a placeholder for you to prove that you value diversity.

Andy, who serves as Worship Pastor alongside Louie at Park Street, illustrates how racial representation is related to cultural realities. Although he shares in the commitment to racial representation, he admits to frustration in his context. Reflecting on how the complexity of culture manifests itself in worship and musical gathering, he confesses,

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[15] Warren shared a real story he had recently had to deal with. He said, "One of the dynamics that I'm speaking into right now with one of our Black congregants. This man said, "I just saw the new roster of people who are being submitted for members at the church." He asked, "Man, are no Black people joining the church?" And I said, "Well, you're Black, you tell me. Let's just talk this through." I said,

> There are White folks who love to be in a diverse environment. They come to Urban Hope Church and they see the diversity. And you know what their response is? They not only celebrate it, but they invite other people to join it. Well, guess what? When you, as a Black person come to Urban Hope, do you celebrate being in an environment of diversity? And then, is it your reflex to invite others? Because if the White people are the only ones inviting people, that's who you will continually see joining the church. So, are you inviting as heavily?" That is how I am pastoring and leading the Black members. Because no one was asking, "Is there something about our church that you would be ashamed to bring other Black folks here? And if so, what is it? Do you feel like we're becoming too White?"

It's difficult because the more you have a diverse congregation, the more complex the musical palette becomes. Because everybody's got their musical language. And not only now, but it could be Black culture 20 years ago, Black ten years ago, Black today, Black ten years from now. It's changing just within the Black culture alone. Whites the same! White people who say Southern Gospel, please do it all the time. White people who say please do something else all the time. Please do praise and worship all the time. Please do contemporary Christian music all the time. Just there's so many shades. So, what we try to do is just focus on what we do, and do it well, but we do try to visit various musical styles regularly.

In addition to frustration, there is also a point of tension that can happen in the process of balancing representation and quality. Reflecting on the balance between racial representation and competency of participants in a worship service, Andy adds,

Pastor Louie and I have some tension about this issue. Most of the time it happen when Louie says, "Hey Andy, we need more Black people on stage." And here's what I'll say, "If I've got Black people who can sing, I'll put them on stage. I'm not just going to put them on stage, and mute their microphone just so that we check the box of having Black people represented. To him, we just need Black people on stage. So, it's almost a quota. So he and I have to work through that. I know he loves me. I love him. But listen, we disagree on the subject. I've got to have people on stage that can sing. It's like putting a person to preach on stage just because they're Black. You've got to have some level of competency. It's more than putting a person in a slot.

Finally, maintaining a proper balance of racial representation can be especially difficult when the worship planning decision-makers are mono-ethnic. Illustrating the challenges of having racial representation in the worship service without having racial representation in the planning, Andy concedes,

Yea, sometimes we'll invite some of our Black team members on stage. In fact, a week ago, we had an African-American from our student ministry, one of our leaders came up and led a song. So, a desire to have racial representation effects how we program. We know that Louie is White. And I'm White. So we have to create diversity in other ways to try to make sure that everybody who's in the congregation sees themselves in some way represented on the stage. That's important. I can't change my color, so I have to do that differently. Louie can't change his color, so we have to accomplish it differently. So, we think about videos that we put in; elements that we put in; stylistic pieces. It's a work in progress. And I would say that the goalposts continue to move. What is a win this week may not be a win in the future. Things continue to shift and change.

The concept of racial representation is difficult to pin down, and much of the challenge in understanding its application has to do with the idea of motivation. If the motivation for racial representation is a genuine reflection of the leadership's values, then

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it is good and right. However, in the interviews with the leaders of the participating

churches, it was apparent that portraying racial representation can be tricky if it does not

come from a genuine heart for real diversity. Using Jesus's example to raise this issue of

genuineness, Andy explains,

> Jesus constantly told parables where the hero in the story is a Samaritan. What is he doing there? Is he trying to be a spur in the saddle of the faithful Jew? Possibly, possibly. It was a teaching of disruption to disrupt the mindset. The hero of the story of the Good Samaritan was, a Samaritan. You know, the woman at the well was, a Samaritan. In the story of the ten lepers who he comes to heel. Was there no one except for this foreigner who comes back to give God glory? Was Jesus just inserting these non-Jewish ethnic people merely to disrupt the mindset of the Jew? Maybe. But he also had an authentic heart for those people. I am unconvinced that an effort in that direction today will produce fruit without an authentic, relevant genuineness. And let me qualify what I mean. If a person believes that I'm doing this just to appeal to the Black culture, then there's a level of disingenuity, and I'm doing it just for me. I'm not doing it because it's something I'm passionate about. The charge is, "You don't really love Black people. You just want to attract Black people to your church, so that's why you're doing this thing." In fact, I've had people say, "You're just doing this to check the box."

To be certain, striving for racial representation is counter-cultural. However,

even with all the possibilities of being misunderstood, these leaders believe it is worth the

effort. The precedent literature supports racial representation from a pragmatic

perspective. In his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better

Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies,* Scott Page argued that expressing different

perspectives and ideas should improve performance, particularly in groups facing

complex tasks requiring innovation. Page acknowledged that the positive effects of

diversity were contingent on groups believing in the value of diversity but noted that

groups should believe in it because, logically, diversity is good for performance.[16] Rather

than a mere shallow and feeble attempt in the hopes for better performance, the leaders in

the case studies of this research demonstrated a belief in the substantive presence of racial

representation. The presence of real representation created trust and credibility and

helped maintain diversity among the church members.

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[16] Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20.

The fifth theme that emerged from the findings was that multi-racial leadership

teams in the church have an ongoing experience of meaningful collaboration. This theme

required showing up in each of the three case studies; the practice of meaningful

collaboration was a hallmark of each team. With clarity and passion, the participant's

responses were organized into three areas: past experience, mutual accountability, and

meaningful collaboration.

The Effect of Past Experience

Most participants were raised in mono-ethnic churches. In addition to this trait,

many leaders were brought up in churches with a top-down authoritarian leadership

model. Although this finding was indicative of both Black and White churches, the Black

leaders shared most emphatically about their past experiences with church leadership.

The input from the Black participants reflected some reasons the Black Church

consistently has this top-down structure. One of the reasons for this structure in the Black

Church was the weight of the Black pastor. Identifying closely with what he grew up in,

Warren spoke of this firsthand,

> In the Black church, the pastoral role is a big deal. And here's why. This is pure
> theory. It was one of the only things that we as Blacks could do as slaves. We could
> have church independently from White people's influence. As long as you were
> reading from the text that declares your liberation. And so because of family
> brokenness, and father absenteeism and all that kind of stuff, the Black pastor was a
> guy who spiritually had his act together, and in many cases, he was a great servant.
> He was often a good family man. He was the picture of everything that a man was
> supposed to be. He was, for lack of a better word, independently employed. So, he
> was everything that you could want. In the South, to be a pastor and a Black pastor
> was a big deal.[17]

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[17] From a historical perspective, Warren adds,

The Civil Rights movement was one of the most provocative roles that any Black man could occupy.
It wasn't owning a dry cleaner or car dealership. It was being a Pastor. Yeah, and that's where the
Civil Rights movement was born. Out of it was a central rallying point for the Black community. And
even post-Civil rights, being a Black Pastor was a big deal, because of the brokenness in the Black
family. You know, the Black Pastor was iconic. Yeah, because this is the kind of the same mojo that
Martin Luther King came out of. And Ralph David Abernathy, these places that have streets named

Referring to the status of the Black pastor, Barry also adds,

> I certainly do think that, if you go back to days of slavery, compared to White people, who were the slave owners, they didn't place as much weight on the preacher or the church service. And there is a contextual reason for the reverence for the pastor in the Black community. It was because, in that context, the one who was the pastor was generally the one who could read. And so he was positioned amongst the others as elevated, as a picture of success, as the ideal; everybody's trying to get to his status.

Leo, who serves on the leadership team at Park Street, described the phenomenon this way:

> In the Black church, the people put the Pastor on a pedestal. It is the culture in most African-American churches. For example, T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar. They do this thing where it's almost like when you go to a concert, and the person on stage never comes into the audience. He goes to the side of the stage. So what happens? The people want to come see him again. It's the mindset because the people put him up on a pedestal. So, like the Catholics put the Pope on pedestal, the Black church does the same to the pastor.

These past experiences not only made a mark on these leaders, but they also learned from their past experiences the dangers of having so much authority and influence residing in one person. This concept was illustrated when Charles recounted his experience of being in leadership at a previous church. He recalls,

> I was already going to the church for eight years prior. And I served in leadership from 2003 to 2019. I didn't see myself going anywhere else. Unfortunately, the church closed, because our Senior Pastor had multiple moral affairs. He was my mentor. It was hard because I had lived with them prior to getting married. So, I saw him as a father and a big brother, a spiritual mentor. All the above. I saw the church grow from 15 adults to over 5000 adult members. We had four services on Sunday. I learned a lot there. And the whole experience shaped me in a big way.

All these past experiences of the top-down church leadership model had a shaping effect on these participating leaders. They had seen the dangers up close and personal. Their lives had been directly affected by the failures of the leaders at the top. In some cases, their faith had been shaken and eventually strengthened by the events

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after him in Atlanta. So many of these personalities loom large, the people who sit on the board of the NAACP. These guys are all men of faith. And even if Christianity is not your cup of tea, the other big luminaries in Black community, like Malcolm X, he's a religious man. Right? And so religion and right sizing justice, they're riding in the car together. Yeah, and they're inseparable in Black mind.

surrounding the problems with the top-down model. These past experiences made them want to be part of a different model that would be less authoritarian and more collaborative. The alternative to the top-down leadership structure is the shared leadership model. This model is known for its emphasis on a plurality of leaders. Dave Harvey states, "The Bible rarely talks about stand-alone leaders. Instead, it speaks of plurality. When I use the term plurality, I'm referencing the scriptural evidence that New Testament churches were led by more than one leader. They were, in fact, led by leadership teams."[18] The leadership team approach characterized each of the participating churches. Shared leadership allowed for a greater presence of collaboration and teamwork.

The Importance of Mutual Accountability

The second aspect of meaningful collaboration is the importance of mutual accountability. George Yancey most recently developed the meaning of this term in his book *Beyond Racial Division*. Explaining the essence of this model, Yancey states,

> [The Mutual Accountability Model] stipulates that we work to have healthy interracial communications so that we can solve racial problems. In those communications we strive to listen to those in other racial groups and attempt to account for their interests. In this way we fashion solutions to racialized problems that address the needs of individuals across racial groups instead of promoting solutions that are accepted only by certain racial groups. By allowing those we disagree with to hold us "accountable" to their interests, we are forced to confront the ways we have fashioned solutions that conform to our own interests and desires.[19]

In contrast to the mutual accountability model that Yancey writes about, Warren recalls how the Black church is accustomed to falling in line with whatever the Pastor decides. He describes it as the Godfather effect.

> The Black pastor has a very godfather-type role. There's a very Don Corleone feel to the Black pastor role. So, if I am a Pastor in an exclusively Black context, there

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[18] Dave Harvey, *The Plurality Principle* (Cocoa Beach, FL: Crossway, 2021), 25. Kindle.

[19] Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 35.

are things that I would never have to negotiate or create a compelling reason for people to do something to mobilize. I could just literally say, "This is what we're doing." And people would respond, "All right."

However, in a multi-racial leadership model, it is vitally important to have a healthy presence of mutual collaboration. For collaboration to be present, mutual accountability must occur. Speaking of the importance of this, Barry says,

> Historically speaking, a Black person is more hesitant to add his opinion to the conversation because when a Black person enters the room, there is an expectation of assimilation, not true collaboration. A Black person on a multiethnic team will tend to wait, hold back, and not be as forthcoming and open about their view and their perspective because of the conditioning that has happened from being in the minority culture. So, in order to have real collaboration, you have to people who have a real security in who they are that, in being inside of a context where you are able to say for example, "We always sing that song, but I don't like it." Able to say that, knowing they are going to be the oddball, and wondering if that is because they are the minority.

The team members must be able to speak the truth in such a way as to allow those who see things differently to hold others accountable to their interests respectfully. Barry says, "Sometimes collaboration is squelched when a person shies away in an effort to appease because they don't want to hurt the other team member, or don't want to come across as racists."

Yancey believes that the key to this type of accountability is *active listening*, which he describes as "when we actively listen, we have a responsibility to rephrase what the other person is saying in such a way that they agree we have captured their ideas honestly.[20] Illustrating this principle of active listening, William shares,

> We lead by consensus. We have a little system that we call green, amber, red. And so when we're talking about something or an idea, we'll just check in with one another. "Are you a green, amber, or red on this issue or decision?" "Well, I'm green." "I'm green." Then we go. But other times, when I am green, and he is amber, I will say, "OK. Tell me more about what you're thinking." What I mean by consensus is not unanimity. We don't have to have full agreement on things. If we're not both fully green, it does not mean we don't move. We don't have to have unanimity, but we do need to have consensus, and we just talk all the time, yes, we have a meeting where we talk through issues. But in reality, we talk and listen to one another all the time.

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[20] Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 41.

The Value of Meaningful Collaboration

Listening to one another leads to meaningful collaboration. Collaborative teamwork, as compared to singular leadership, requires a close fellowship where each person is seeking to understand one another. These churches practiced this regularly and meaningfully.

> This is what collaborative conversation is about. It is about learning to work together to find solutions most of us can accept. It is developing a connection with others by building an overarching identity where it is not us versus them but just us working together. It is learning we cannot get everything. Indeed, any group that gets everything will sow seeds of resistance among other groups. This means the winning group must either find ways to oppress and take away the rights of those who resist or watch that resistance sabotage their efforts. Collaborative conversation means differentiating what we need from what we want in our demands so we can give up the latter to receive support for the former.[21]

Meaningful collaboration requires commitment where it is not us versus them but just us working toward a common goal. This collaborative work was on full display when the multi-racial leadership team of Perimeter Church decided they needed to publish a position statement indicating where they stood on racial issues. To make a point of the painstaking difficulty of this process, Brady recalls,

> We strongly agreed that we needed to write a statement of where the church stands culturally and biblically on some of the current racial issues. And so, we wrote a statement collectively called a "Statement on Systemic Racism and Injustice." It's about two or three pages long. And it's really a theological walk through the word of why we believe in the word of God and how it applies to race relations and justice. But it was hard. We painstakingly went through that as an elder leadership team. And then we took it to our staff team and wanted them to walk through, chew on it, talk through it, and wrestle with it. Because truth-telling is very challenging.

The difficulty was not only in the process of understanding one another but also in giving voice to the truth of what was happening all around us. Meaningful collaboration does not turn away from reality. Rather, collaborative work requires the courage and grace to go to difficult realities and talk about them. Not only did Perimeter discover the difficulty in talking about racial issues, it also experienced the challenge of working toward an agreement on what it all meant. Brady continues,

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[21] Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division,* 111-112.

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The most intense pain was coming to an agreement on the wording of the statement. We discovered that we all can come to an agreement on a verse in the Bible. But then, as we dissected the verse and tried to explain where we stand as a church in a cultural context, we collectively wrote those words together and had to agree on them. That was hard. It took us about four months of diligent collaboration. We thought it would be a lot easier and come a lot quicker, but it didn't. It was very challenging, and it was challenging because our White majority staff and elders thought it would be simple, until our Black brothers and sisters on our staff and our elders said, "Whoa, time out. Wait a minute. We need to really concentrate on these words because words are very important, and they can be offensive even though you don't mean them to be." So there was a lot of intercultural learning between White and Black just in writing that statement.

The key to this type of meaningful collaboration is simply to consider the interests of others, which is where the accountability element is critical. If multi-racial leadership teams want to find solutions that serve the interests of everyone, each member of the team must listen to everyone. They must learn to consider the interests and perspectives of each other and allow each other to articulate those interests and perspectives in their own words. Rather than the top-down dictator model of determining the best conclusions and rationalizing why those solutions are best for everyone, mutual accountability obligates each person on the team to gain the input of others so that their concerns are heard and incorporated into whatever path the team decides to take. When each person's concerns are factored into the decision, this inevitably leads to compromise, which is the next theme that emerged from the interview findings.

While George Yancey's writings add tremendous value and insight to the topic of meaningful and productive collaboration in the church, his material does not focus much at all on the dynamics of collaboration among multi-racial church leadership. This research found that significant and constructive collaboration among multi-racial leaders was a key element in the team's effectiveness.

Theme 6: A Genuine Willingness toward Methodological Compromise

The sixth theme that emerged from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have a genuine willingness toward methodological

compromise. This practice is not to be confused with theological compromise. These leaders shared a deep commitment to biblical truth, as we will see in theme ten. Nevertheless, they understood that to collaborate, compromise would be necessary. This value and practice manifested in the following three areas: background differences, team decision-making, and personal sacrifice.

Differences of Background

Coming from different cultural backgrounds means that group decisions frequently include some degree of compromise. Any team of shared leadership must deal with differences, but a multi-racial leadership team experiences a unique set of differences, thus requiring even greater compromise and sacrifice. Racial differences are not the only differences that influence team decisions. However, the research showed that race played a significant part in the differences. One of the most visible areas of those differences is the worship service itself. William explains, "In worship style, in the traditional Black worship experience, a celebratory note is more important, compared to in a White worship setting, one might find that a note of sobriety is more important, more reflective. And so, we're going to do both because both are valuable." Speaking of the value of the different backgrounds, William goes on to say,

> Almost five years since we started, we've created our own culture from the different backgrounds. Because both of us are speaking into and shaping the priorities, we're not bound by one person's tradition. The simplest way to say it is that most assumptions have to be articulated by a member of the team. "Why do you do it that way?" "Well, I guess we don't have to; let's do it this way instead." So I would just say some of that, some of those different backgrounds and different perspectives and different experiences allow us to be far more creative. So, there's certain things that we do that would be more common in a in a White evangelical church, and some things we do that would be more in a traditionally African American church. And they're both spiritually enriching experiences.

Diversity brings differences. When Barry first began preaching in a multi-colored context, he recalls the adjustment he had to make in the experience he had with the audience during a sermon. Reflecting on the change, he shares,

One of the things that I've had to learn from a preaching perspective is that silence is not a bad thing. From my past experience in the Black church, I was accustomed to feedback from the congregation during the sermon. It was a significant part of the sermon. People shouting and responding! So, in the multi-ethnic church, where there is a lot less feedback during the sermon, at first, I assumed that there was something wrong with my preaching. Are they asleep? Is something wrong? But I have learned that it is the opposite. It has meant more intense listening and learning and reflection. And so now, I know I can't lean to either one–the Black member or the White member– as an indication of effectiveness, and that speaks to the diversity of the audience.

Reflecting also on the different expectations between Blacks and Whites at Perimeter Church, Barry adds,

In a multi-colored context, the worship service is a certain amount of time. So the sermon message is going to be about 25 to 30 minutes long. Now, I come from a context in the Black church where in the first 25 minutes, the preacher is just getting started. That's just the introduction. But in the White church culture, there is a level of discipline that is required, and I have had to learn to stick to the allotted time, so that I don't lose anybody. There's just so many implications of what we call "bustin' the clock," of going over time. But then there's also the framework that is more present in the Black church of "If the Lord is speaking, what else do you have time for?" These are some of the differences between the two church cultures.

While these differences could be related more to children in the nursery or cultural attention spans, Barry is convinced from his experience that Black people accustomed to the Black preaching style have a genuine desire and expectation for the preaching to go on longer. As an example, he shares,

White people will say to me after a sermon, "That was a great message. I was so impacted by it." But I don't ever hear them saying, "You should keep going." But for our Black congregants. They will tell me, "I know there's more the Lord wants to say through you, Preacher." And the difference has nothing to do with spiritual maturity. I just know that there is something about the African American experience in relation to a preacher and a sermon message that, somehow or another, allows them or causes them to not want the preacher to stop. But the White experience never yields or translates to a desire to keep going.

Upon being pressed further, Barry expounds,

I think it's conditioning. I think it's historical conditioning. This is just my projection. Historically, in the African American community, and in the emergence of the Black church, and what that means, and what that represents, the church gathering was central to the African-American community in a way that it was not central to the White community. This was because there were so many other options available in the White community. But in the Black community–I am going way back to the days of slavery–there were literally things that Blacks could not do, that were not available to them. It wasn't even an option. And so on Sunday, the church

represented not just spiritual nourishment, but also entertainment, community, solidarity, and other things. And so the role of that worship gathering took on not only spiritual significance, but social, and emotional, and everything. The church worship service and sermon represented so much more in that Black community. And so there's certainly some historical conditioning that trickled down all the way to today.

Barry emphasized that all this past historical background did not make one right and the other wrong. He believes that the differences his team experiences in planning worship services today are due in part to historical conditioning. In multi-racial leadership teams in churches, differences in historical conditioning create different perspectives on the methodologies of the churches they lead. Moreover, these differences can either lead to conflict or methodological compromise. Illustrating the importance of compromise, Barry adds,

> The disagreement has never been experienced in a tense, combative way. It's more of an acknowledgment of differences. It is a concession that we've got a mixed audience in our congregation. This is what the Black people are accustomed to. This is what the White people are accustomed to. I have to say something to everybody. So, what does it mean? What does it look like to give everybody what is on God's heart in our context within the time frame we set aside? These are the different realities that we deal with in trying to serve the congregation.

The key to compromise is never forgetting that you are serving the congregation together. Rather than compromise being seen as a weakness, it is viewed as humble confidence. In our society, humility and confidence are not viewed as friends. However, these virtues are necessary to understand and maintain for a multi-racial team to remain healthy and effective. It is important to keep these in tension due to the dynamics that manifest on a Black/White multi-racial team. One area in which the dynamics of humility and confidence show up is in the process of team decision-making.

Team Decision-Making

Every team must make decisions, but in a multi-racial context, team decisions take on added layers of nuance and complexity. Describing it as extra work, Barry explains some difficulty in making decisions in a multi-racial church versus a mono-racial church.

Our racial diversity definitely plays into our worship service decisions. For example, last month during Black History Month, we wanted to sing a Negro Spiritual hymn just for exposure of the Black church culture. And so, we had to discuss the sensitivity of even using the term "Negro Spiritual" to introduce the song. And so, as a racially diverse staff team, we had to talk through that decision. Are we going to use this term, or are we not going to use this term? Because it might be triggering for some people. But, on the other hand, these are what these songs are called. So we decided to use the term, and to just make sure that we teach, that we explain that this term is not appropriate today, but that is what they were called back then. And so, as a team, we have this whole conversation about all the implications, all the dynamics, rather than one person just saying, "We're going to this." Multi-racial team decisions required more work. And to me, that explains why more churches don't do it. Because it's more work with every little thing. With every decision, it takes an additional layer of consideration.

Not only does multi-racial leadership take more time, but it also contains within the conversation a racial dynamic shaped by the race relations of our society's history. In shared leadership, inevitably, the issue of authority comes up. Speaking about the dynamic of authority structures in the context of multi-racial leadership, Barry gives the following insight:

In terms of authority, either being in authority or submitting to authority, there is certainly a difference between how the Black person views it, and how the White person sees it. In fact, I am not even sure that the term "authority" means the same thing to each race. I am speaking generally, but I think for my White brothers and sisters, they have a positive view of authority that it is generally good, but they also have a sense of personal autonomy, or freedom, or liberty– a sense of "I can do my own thing." On the other side, however, Black people a keen awareness and automatic mindset that authority can be misused and mishandled, but they also have an innate conditioning and disposition of reverence and submission to authority. And because of this complexity, everybody on the team can be right and be wrong at the same time. And so, we are always trying to bring balance to it all.

This complexity can cause paralysis amongst team members if there is no openness to compromise. Referring to the racial dynamic that comes with the majority and minority culture, Brady reflects,

I remember when I first came here four years ago, having those conversations felt like walking on eggshells. And I even said that when I first came here. I was thinking, "We have a diverse staff. It's becoming more diverse." But whenever we would have conversations about race or class, or culture in the church, we were really careful about how we said something because we didn't want to hurt anybody or offend, or say something stupid, and usually, the White majority culture felt that way the most.

Reflecting on the challenge of cultivating trust, Barry shares an example of this "walking on eggshells" discussion:

> When the Black person places a perspective or an opinion or thought on the table, it doesn't mean that we should automatically submit to it and go after it, just so we won't be seen as racist. The team can default to people pleasing, just because of the context that we live in. That's not what we're after. We're after Jesus pleasing, not people pleasing. To get there, the team members have to be bold and courageous and honest about how they see something. Once we get it all on the table, then we can sort through our decision or how we need to respond. And here's the deal: that type of decision-making is not an overnight thing. It has to be cultivated over time.

Another difference between a Black and White team member, especially in decision-making, is how they view compromise. According to Claude, a White man experiences compromise differently than a Black man. He explains,

> I am not even sure that compromise is always the right word here. One has to believe that they are on a level plane of leadership and influence in order for it to truly be a compromise. We can't forget that, historically speaking, the self-identity of Black leaders has been shaped by the reality that they have always had to compromise. But, in reality, at the end of the day, in order to have a true compromise, you have to have a seat at the table. It is not a fair request to ask a Black team member to compromise if he does not feel like he is a legitimate part of the leadership decision. The whole idea of compromise is a privilege because compromise means that your voice is being heard. For example, in the past, Black people were placed in the status of slaves; they didn't compromise anything. For them, it would have been a privilege to be in a position to compromise. But in reality, they weren't even considered. The same thing applies today in multi-racial leadership.

Personal Sacrifice

Compromise happens only when a person is willing to sacrifice his or her preferences. Yancey states that we all naturally tend to defend our beliefs and concerns. His warning against such arrogance and confirmation bias is relevant to our current study. He writes,

> We often think our beliefs are objective assessments of reality and do not recognize the ways they are biased to serve us. Once we recognize our biases, we can have a healthy degree of humility about our confidence. We can also recognize that we should learn from the perspective of others. This does not mean we throw away our previous beliefs, but we do not hold them with an unwarranted level of certainty. We look to our interactions with others as opportunities to add to our stock of

knowledge. There is a balance we must strike between holding on to our own beliefs but being open to having them changed when we encounter the ideas of others.[22]

Yancey is describing the nature of compromise. His comments illustrate the importance of having an attitude of serving others. This attitude requires a level of humility and a willingness to sacrifice. Certainly, an attitude of service toward others is the calling of every Christian. The unique contribution of this research, however, is that the attitudes that come with compromise and sacrifice are especially relevant and impactful when leading a church together on a multi-racial team.

Again, as mentioned above, this compromise does not include backing away from moral values, theological beliefs, or doctrinal convictions. It is a compromise of methodology, process, and strategy. To illustrate this distinction, Claude explains,

> Multi-ethnic church leaders can be aligned on a mission, a good mission, and a good vision. In church leadership, those things are easy to spin up. The place it is easier to get divided is strategy. We all are down with the vision. I think that if we weren't, then the people who are here wouldn't be here. But because of the different races and the different cultures on our team, sometimes we think differently about how to accomplish that vision. In other words, our racial differences and backgrounds have an effect on each person's perspective on how to accomplish the vision.

Claude points out that agreeing on a strategy is difficult for any team but especially difficult for a multi-racial team. He continues,

> Agreeing on a strategy is especially difficult when you're talking about a vision that literally has multi-ethnic implications contained in it. Our vision is to be a family of many generations, many cultures living the gospel of Jesus Christ and in real relationships. Well, if we have three Black people at three different ages and then we have three White people at three different ages, and then we throw different genders in the mix as well, then how are we going to come up with a strategy? It's difficult, but that is really where we're missing it. There's much to be desired in terms of strategy development, and the reason for this is that agreeing on strategy is probably the hardest work of it all. It's easy to agree on mission statement and say, "Let's go!" But to really be effective and unified, the team has to have that war room kind of meeting and prayer session and hearing from God. That meeting where we all come out and say, "Hey, we didn't agree on everything, but we did agree that we're all going to go about it this way."

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[22] Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 163.

Leaders on effective multi-racial teams must accept that they will not agree 100 percent on everything. Therefore, being a part of this type of team requires sacrifice. Kent states, "You have to be able to give up some things, to let go of the 'golden calves.' Don't let go of the unchangeable, foundational things, but other things like preferences should all be on the table." Practically speaking, Kent shares the rule they use when designing worship services. He explains,

> We believe that in a multi-ethnic church, the members should not be happy with more than 75 percent of how things are done. The reason we operate this way is because of the assumption that if a person is happy with more than 75 percent of what's going on, then there is a real possibility that we as leaders are completely catering to you and missing out on the preferences of the other members.

Kent's teammate Charles puts it this way,

> As a Black member of a multi-racial team, if I'm always happy with what's happening at our church, or I'm always thrilled about the time of worship, and the messages that we're hearing, then that probably means that I'm always getting my way Then something is not right. If everything is geared towards me, somebody else's needs are not being met. So, we need to consider the preferences of what I like, and what you like, so that no one group of people is always being catered to, and always getting their way. But it's not easy, because you have to be willing to make those sacrifices, and make those choices for the greater good and health of the church. As leaders, we have to stop emphasizing what I want, or the other person demanding what they want, and we have to ask, "What does the church need in order to be healthy?" Yesterday, one of my teammates said, "We're not trying to be a large church, we want to be a healthy church. We want our people to fully embrace the gospel. That means living it out where you are. Not everyone is for being a multiethnic church, because it's not always comfortable, and you don't always get your way. It requires sacrifice.

Each participant interviewed saw the necessity of compromise, and each one had experienced firsthand the sacrifice required to be a multi-ethnic and multi-colored church. They all agreed that although sacrifice is hard, learning to compromise is worth it. Writing about some of the broader benefits of compromise in multi-racial environments, Yancey states,

> In a polarized society, compromise is often seen as a dirty word. If we see ourselves as completely correct, then why give an inch? But if we consider that we may not be correct, we can be open to the possibility that our ideas will improve when we interact with others . . . . Having an attitude of compromise can also enable us to truly prioritize what is important to us. I get it. We want everything. That is a natural response we tend to take into discussions. But some things we want more than

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others . . . . That is okay. But understanding what is important for us and what our priorities are helps us know which battles to fight and how to fight them.[23]

Some team members will resist if other members insist on having everything. It is important for each team member to know their core needs, needs that must be satisfied for them to move forward. If each individual on the team recognizes what he can live with and what he can live without, it becomes a matter of trading off the nonessentials so both groups can gain and maintain their essentials. It does not always work out perfectly. However, the team can move forward even in disagreement when they are willing to sacrifice something they can live without.[24]

Multi-racial leadership teams need to have a disposition of sacrifice because of the presence of diverse backgrounds and preferences. Sacrifice is the act and process of deferring to your teammate's preference so the team can truly lead the church to be multi-cultural. Kent says that the process of deferring to the other cultural expression creates something in your heart that begins to love the beauty of the diversity more than your mono-ethnic preference.

Theme 7: The Clear Existence of Shared Core Beliefs

The seventh theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have the clear existence of shared core beliefs. Over time, the presence of shared core beliefs blends the values of each constituent part into a new

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[23] Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 165.

[24] Yancey calls this approach the Mutual Accountability Lifestyle:

This is a lifestyle where we make certain that all individuals involved in our ongoing racial conversations leave those conversations feeling they have been fairly treated. Where every group with an interest in a particular racialized subject has an opportunity to provide input into the solution and feel they gained something important in the final outcome. It is unrealistic to think every single person will feel this way. Some individuals will insist that any solution where they do not get everything is unfair. As humans we have a tremendous ability to rationalize receiving more than others and justifying self-serving beliefs. But if most individuals leave our encounters feeling it was a fair process and their core concerns have been addressed, then we have the potential to find sustainable solutions. Solutions that are sustainable because people from different racial and political groups have worked together to make certain the solution is viable.

Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 166.

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cultural norm. This creation of a new cultural presence takes time and involves such things that are seen as well as things that are beneath the surface. Edgar Shein illustrates the importance of understanding culture within an organization:

> Culture in general can be analyzed at several different levels, with the term "level" meaning the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to you as participant or observer. These levels range from the very tangible, overt manifestations that you can see and feel to the deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions that we are defining as the essence of culture or its DNA. In between these layers are various espoused beliefs, values, norms, and rules of behavior that members of the culture use as a way of depicting the culture to themselves and others.[25]

Given the diversity of tradition and culture present in multi-racial leadership teams, a team needs to have a shared set of beliefs and values to which they are committed. This section will be divided into the following three sections—Learning Together, Mission Consensus, and Kingdom Values—to illustrate the development of this shared practice.

Learning Together

The team members must experience true learning together for a team to have shared core beliefs. This action is important because each team member brings a different story to the table. Stories are an essential part of any organization's lived experience. They offer more than entertainment or moral instruction. They give comfort, reassurance, direction, and hope to people from all backgrounds. In their book *Reframing Organizations*, Bolman and Deal state, "Stories are deeply rooted in the human experience. Through a story, we can see into each other's souls and apprehend the organization's soul. The stories that individuals and organizations tell about themselves anchor identity and hope."[26] Bolman and Deal call these stories *myths*. Emphasizing the importance of stories in an organization, they write,

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[25] Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

[26] Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations* (New York: Wiley, 1991), 247-248. Kindle.

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Myths, operating at a mystical level, are the story behind the story. They explain, express, legitimize, and maintain solidarity and cohesion. They communicate unconscious wishes and conflicts, mediate contradictions, and offer a narrative anchoring the present in the past. All organizations rely on myths or sagas of varying strength and intensity. Myths can transform a place of work into a beloved, revered, hallowed institution and an all-encompassing way of life.[27]

This "all-encompassing way of life" results from having a set of shared core beliefs, and the only way for beliefs to be shared is for people to learn together. Regarding this all-important cohesion, Schein explains,

The degree to which a given group has a shared history of learning together determines the strength of their created culture. A group that has constant change of membership and has not had to learn to do anything together will not have a culture. But any group that has a shared task, more or less constant membership, and some common history of learning together will have its own subculture as well as being nested in the culture of the organizational unit it is in and in the macro cultures of the occupations of its members, the organization, and the nation.[28]

Learning together happens best in a face-to-face community. Though the conversations about race can be difficult, the value of learning about the other person is worth it. Referring to the challenge of working through the tensions of racial history, Kent explains,

When realities of injustice or even just stereotyping are brought into the conversation, it can become really tough. But listening is a way of learning. When I sit across the table from one of my Black teammates, and I ask, "Hey, is the news that is being reported real for you?" And he says, "Yea, that's real for me." That can feel very awkward, but if I am committed to building a bridge, then I say, "OK. Tell me about that. Let me learn from you and just listen, and not defend myself and my weirdness or whatever."

Teams who learn together develop a common understanding of circumstances and terminology. Speaking of the importance of learning and listening, Kent adds, "I think a White man can say words and a Black man can say the exact same words, and they are heard differently to different people based on their life experience, and their prejudgments and all the stuff that comes with being a human living in this society." Even though it was difficult, Kent knows the open and honest discussions were worth it. When

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[27] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 242-243.

[28] Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 29.

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the former lead pastor quit, the rest of the team needed help sorting through their leader's departure circumstances. Although the racial diversity on their team was not the cause of the tension, the conversations revealed racial perspectives that the team needed to learn. Kent recalls,

> When we first started talking through everything together, we were all committed to putting everything on the table. Our attitude was "Let's get this stuff out. Let's be vulnerable." It was just hard, and there was "wailing and gnashing of teeth." It was rough for a while. The more we talked, the more we realized how toxic and dysfunctional our environment was. But we came out of those meetings more united together. All of this helped us begin to worth through a lot of that stuff, and some of it was racial misunderstanding and lack of awareness.

Teams learn the most together when they are willing to understand each other's stories and share their mutual concerns and empathy. Kent continues to share the blessing that came out of the difficult conversations. Reflecting on how the struggle brings the team closer, Kent adds,

> There were moments in the meetings when there were doubts about our commitment to one another. Some team members responded in such a way to cause other team members to doubt if they really cared about how they were feeling. "I am sharing with you how these things are deeply affecting me, and you are just shrugging your shoulders." Team members were crying and weeping. And all this was related to race and race relations. We were trying to be united, but we weren't. And it was bad. Those were some of the hard conversations that a multi-racial team has to have. But when you are serving in a mono-racial cultural environment, you don't run up against those things because we all pretty much think the same way. In a multi-racial environment, however, the struggle has a forging effect on the team. When you forge something, there is heat and there is pressure. There is the pounding, and it's uncomfortable, but through it all, the team learns more about each other and becomes unified in a deeper way. When you struggle through something with a group of people, and you can make it to the others side, you're just closer.

The team bonds together as members learn together. Not only do they develop a consensus of who they are and what they are all about, but this consensus of identity and purpose also transcends their racial differences and keeps them on the mission.

Mission Consensus

A second aspect of sharing core beliefs is a mutual commitment to the same mission. Regardless of each team member's racial background, a clear and compelling

mission was the driving force behind everything they did. Though none of the churches were satisfied in accomplishing their work, they each had a vision that unified them, gave them direction and moved them forward. For example, Andy explains how they strive toward their vision together, even if they do not all agree on the degree to which it is possible.

> Our vision statement says, "We're becoming a family of many cultures, many generations, living the gospel of Jesus Christ in real relationships." Four components—that's the driver—one, many cultures, two, many generations, three, gospel, and four, real relationships. Those are the four poles. So, in everything we do as a church, those are the four parts, and that's always what we're becoming. The difficulty in the balance of that is on the one hand, what we want to be compared to what we actually are. Take, for example, the vision of the Revelation "seven verse nine" church. Church from every nation gathered around the Godhead. I am not fully convinced that it will be fully realized on this side of heaven, while my teammate is convinced it can happen here on earth now. The driver is that we should for that and toward that vision. Because our worldview is a biblical worldview. Will it happen on this earth? I don't know. But I do know this. We still strive for it and we shall. Just like we know that everybody won't accept Christ, but that doesn't change the fact that we're still driven to share the gospel. God works all of that out. We are just called to be faithful.

The gospel mission included a commitment to proclaim the gospel and engagement to make a difference in the community. Brady adds,

> We believe the church has the spiritual responsibility to lead the way and to be the example of the unity and oneness that Jesus prayed about. We believe that the church can really look like heaven on earth. If heaven is diverse, why on earth is the church not? And that should compel all of us. It's a biblical mandate for the church to seek the diversity of its neighborhood and community, and that means doing everything we can to create a more equitable society between all races and ethnicities. If the church will do that, then we believe society will follow the lead of the church, and the church can take its rightful position to be a change agent in the community. This means that the church has to advocate for power structures that don't hold people back from advancing. An aspect of the mission is to get involved with the economic and legislative structures in our community to change the laws. But not just laws and legislation. Hearts also need to change, and that's where the gospel comes in. Educational fairness needs to change, so the church needs to get involved in the education system. The power structures of economics need to change, so the church needs to be involved. The church has a huge responsibility to enact real change.

These churches believed that their mission was in word and deed. For real change to happen, the church must engage the community and shine light into the

darkness. Speaking of the importance of being intentional in community engagement,

Claude says,

> At some point, somebody with something to give has to move it. In order to be a light in a dark room, you actually have to be in a dark room. You can't just throw fireworks all day, where it only lights up the sky for a little bit, and then it's gone. If you're going to be a constant light in a dark place, you've got to go into it. Yes, you can send money all day long, but at the end of the day, people move into certain neighborhoods because they know that it's a good neighborhood. Why is it a good neighborhood? Because there's light there. If the church is not willing to put anything good in a neighborhood, in a place or in a culture, in a community, then it will stay in decay.

It is important to say that these multi-racial leadership teams understood that community

engagement included more than just cleaning up the outside. Claude continues,

> Changing laws is not enough. More money is not the answer. Building new buildings does not change a community. Yes, somebody has got to be a light to change bad laws. I think bad laws should be changed. I guess that's really what I'm getting at is I think there's a there's a lower ceiling for those kind of changes. If money was the answer, then a drug dealer may have a lot of money, but that doesn't mean he has anything good. Musicians send in a lot of money a lot of times for a lot of things, but if it was just a money problem, I think it would have already worked. In different places, we've done the money thing. But, you can send in money, but you can't send in love. You can't send in light without a real person going into the darkness. You can build a school building, but you can't purchase love for that school. If the church is not engaged in helping to bring about changing the values that are causing the problem, then we're just kind of dressing up the problem a little bit. In other words, money itself does not cause inequalities. And therefore, money itself will not fix it.

Finally, when a racially diverse leadership team is working together toward a common

mission, then egos are not a part of the conversation, and the mission moves forward.

Speaking of how important it is to be committed to the mission over a person's pride,

Warren states,

> There has to be a consensus on what the main thing is. And I know that sounds cliche, but a member of our church once said a very keen observation. He said, "With our team, there is no such thing as one of us winning and the other guy losing if Jesus doesn't win." So when it comes to leading together, you have to have a group of leaders who, though they have different ideas, and they may have different solutions, and they might have things that they think would represent the best-case scenario But at the end of the day, they must view the truest win as being the one that gives Jesus the most credit and the one who gives Jesus the most glory. I know it sounds cliche, but it's a value we have to regularly push.

Kingdom Values

        The connection between an organization's present story and its future direction is its shared values and beliefs. Illustrating this connection, Bolman and Deal explain, "Myths undergird an organization's values. Values characterize what an organization stands for, qualities worthy of esteem or commitment. Unlike goals, values are intangible and define a unique character that helps people find meaning and feel special about what they do."[29] Bolman and Deal articulate well the importance of an organization's values and beliefs. While much has been written generally on the subject of organizational culture, this present research validated the persuasive power of an organization's values and core beliefs and applied its findings to the multi-racial team environment.

        As an example of clearly stating the team's values on a certain issue, Barry explains their church's effort to bring clarity to the concerns of systemic racism. He recalls,

> One thing that we did was release a statement on systemic racism and injustice to help bring clarity to the confusion that was in society. These people are saying this; these people are saying that. We wrote a statement to indicate here is how we view these issues, and this is our position. We did not want to assume that our people knew what we were thinking, and so we decided to speak about it with clarity. It was a joint statement by the elders and staff. We published it on our website. And also, we ended up releasing a list of resources to help people learn more. It is a framework where if a person has this question, here are a couple of resources for you. If a person is thinking this, then here are a few resources for you. It was designed to help people move further in their understanding based on where they were at the time.

Theme 8: The Sustained Headwinds of Personal Disappointment

        The eighth theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have the sustained headwinds of personal disappointment. Leaders who are a part of a multi-racial environment know from experience the heartache and hardship that come with the territory. Racial diversity means diverse backgrounds, bringing different norms, values, and customs. Not only does the reality of different

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[29] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 243.

cultural perspectives make unity and oneness difficult, but the presence of human emotion can bring additional pressure.

As the precedent literature on this topic illustrates, dealing with racial tensions bring much disappointment and discouragement. In his book *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love,* John Perkins describes the tailwinds and the headwinds of facing these issues. He writes positively, "There is no institution on earth more equipped or more capable of bringing transformation to the cause of reconciliation than the Church."[30] But also acknowledging the difficulty, he states, "The problem of reconciliation in our country and in our churches is much too big to be wrestled to the ground by plans that begin in the minds of men. This is a God-sized problem. It is one that only the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can heal. It requires the quality of love that only our Savior can provide.[31] The testimonies of the church leaders in this current research project confirmed the realities of the challenges of racial reconciliation. These realities lead to disappointments and disillusionment, as we will see in the participants' stories. The common experience of disappointment showed up in three ways in the research—the reality of White flight, the grief of lost friendship, and the undercurrent of racial hostility.

The Reality of White Flight

Historically, White Flight is when Whites move away from a geographical region (like a neighborhood or town) because of the increased presence of Black persons moving into that area. This same phenomenon can happen when a White church becomes increasingly multi-colored. As the number of Black people increases in a church's membership, White persons can possibly leave the church, which occurred in two of the

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[30]John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 63.

[31] Perkins, *One Blood*, 9.

three participating churches. The leadership's interpretations of these departures vary, but the phenomenon of White Flight brought discouragement that each one had to persevere through. Illustrating this, Louie shares,

> Whatever you celebrate, that is what people are going to value. So, as we started to place more emphasis on our diversity, there were some members who could never catch the vision. Crap vision he is going to do it. So, it has been a long journey. The most disheartening of situations is when a member comes up and says, "We believe you are the right pastor. We believe your vision is the right vision. But we have been talking for years about going to the church down the street." And what I really think they are saying is that "when they got here twenty to thirty years ago, we were a Republican country club. But we're not hearing that anymore, so we are going to move on.

Sharing his perspective of their story, Andy adds,

> The difficult part of our story is that since we started becoming more racially diverse, we have had three to four hundred people leave our church. That's the reality. Yes, there is a positive side of our story, but there is also a negative side to it. And these people weren't just people attending on a Sunday. They were key leaders. And the difficult part of it was that the reason they left was racially motivated. Let me give you a quote by someone who left that captures the sentiment of many who left. "That's great that you guys are becoming more ethnically diverse. You keep doing that. That is wonderful, but we are going to go to church somewhere else."

This story repeated itself over and over. When a mono-ethnic church goes through a transition of becoming more multi-ethnic, the leadership of that church must endure sustained not only headwinds of disappointment, but also disillusionment. Andy continues,

> What made it especially hard was when a White person would leave because of the presence of Black people, but they would say they support diversity. They would say they support something but not become personally engaged. There was a sense in which they would give us their blessing, but there was also a detachment, and that detachment came entirely from the White community. I don't see this issue in Black community, but it definitely exists in the White community. As White people, we don't mind racial diversity, and we will even support it with our money as long as we don't have to be personally a part of it. From my perspective, that is the heart of the White issue that we must deal with. We're really good at writing checks because we're affluent. We have the money to give. And so, we bless it by giving, while at the same time we curse it by leaving. Yes, there has been a White Flight that has occurred over the past several years. We have lost a lot of people. There has been a price tag for moving in this direction. Yes, there is a positive picture of our story, and it's based on the people who have stayed with us. But there's always two sides to the story.

This attrition of White members can be discouraging. It requires a leadership team committed to the biblical vision of Revelation 7:9-10, which states, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in White robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" In this type of church, Andy states honestly, "As godly as this is and as worthy as the pursuit, whether or not our church ultimately becomes a 'Revelation 7:9' church is yet to be seen. My personal verdict is still out, even though I embrace it heartily. We may have to close our doors in less than ten years, and if we do, it will likely be because we didn't adapt to the diversity of our surrounding community."

Some leaders have stated that it is impossible to prepare for the discouragement that comes when White people leave the church for what seems to be racially motivated reasons. Speaking of what might be behind the White flight for some, Barry explains,

> To me, some of the unspoken rationale behind their decision to leave is a surrendering of control. In leadership in our church, there has been a majority culture control for many years, where the leaders who were in the majority were in control of the decisions according to their preferences of how things should be. And after a while, as the church was becoming more diverse, the resistance and the effort to preserve that control took its toll. And for some, they decided they couldn't do this any longer. So, there's a surrendering where they go somewhere else to serve.

One of the ways that the leaders dealt with attrition was to acknowledge that there is always a cost to telling the truth. Speaking more directly than others, Brady states,

> There's a cost to truth-telling. There's a cost to calling people out on their prejudice and sin issues. There's fallout even among brothers and sisters who love each other. Yeah, we lost some members, even a couple of staff, directly due to our stand on racism. We lost a couple of elders directly due to our stand on injustice. But it was more important that we stand on the truth than to keep everyone happy.

The Grief of Lost Friendship

    Another dimension of sustained headwinds of personal discouragement is the grief that comes with the territory of division and disunity. When the members of a church go through a church split or major disagreement, it is usually the leaders who take the brunt of the attacks. Leaders are called to carry the burden uniquely, even if they are not responsible for the division. As church members deal with increased diversity in different ways, leaders frequently hear about feelings of loss, hurt, and discouragement. Thinking back through the journey of the past several years, Kent recounts,

> There was a lot of tension that was not fun. Even though it was right to walk through it, it was still hard. I had difficulty seeing my brother in Christ and best friend be willingly ignorant right in front of me. He wasn't listening and didn't want to see. And it was heartbreaking for me. We lost people through the journey. Not everyone made it through the difficult time. But those of us who stuck it out and came out on the other side, it has been very rich and deep.

A similar aspect to the grief came as a surprise to Barry. Speaking about the ministry that he had to those who stayed with the church, he shares,

> It's been an uphill struggle. I will tell you one thing that I wasn't prepared for. Along with White flight came the unexpected dynamic of White people who remained at the church because they believed in the power and application of the gospel, and they were committed to the church and to seeing it in the way that the Lord desires. And listening to some of them and the pain of their grief that they experienced from their friends leaving. These people, these families were in small groups for years, and they had known them as the godliest people. They had learned so much from them. And then they leave. And for me, listening to the pain of all that has been difficult. White church members experience real grief when a White friend draws a line and leaves, and they are left dealing with being ostracized by their friend who left, while they are dealing with their own grief that their friend would act that way.

This comment is one of the realities that multi-racial leadership teams find themselves in constantly. In a moment of self-reflection and confession, Barry shares,

> At first, I responded with a simple explanation that their friends were simply just worshiping at a different location. They are still Christians. They are still your brothers and sisters in the Lord. This is not a salvation issue. They are just going to worship in a different context. But I have since realized that I could have been more compassionate, but it took me a while to see and understand the depth of their grief.

Racial Hostility

Because of these discouraging dynamics, leading in a diverse environment requires a certain expectation of the challenge. Not only is the division itself disheartening, but dealing with the actual racial hostility between members requires a careful balance of grace, truth, and wisdom. Illustrating this, Warren shares an example:

> Just recently, we had an ethnic conflict in our church. A few weeks ago, one of our missionaries, a young White guy about thirty years old, shared with the church about his missionary work. A couple of hours after he shared, I got a phone call from him. He said, "I have a real issue and I need your help because I don't know how to resolve it." So, he shows me a Facebook post, where one of the Black women in our church had posted that she had to walk out of church today because she had a hard time listening to a White man who claims to share the gospel but who supports slavery. Of course, that was not true, and so I had to step in and try to help this brother and sister in the Lord resolve their misunderstandings.

Helping church members of different racial perspectives resolve differences can be exhausting. It not only requires extra time and skill, but it takes a great amount of discernment and patience to help the two sides reconcile. In the above example, Warren explains why he was the one who ministered in this situation.

> As leaders, we are always trying to have this dance of how we serve both Blacks and Whites well. How do we serve our whole congregation that consists of both Black and Whites without compromising truth? When it comes to these Black-White issues, we are always having a regular dialogue about our different tensions around these issues and just kind of sharing our perspectives. So in this case, I'm the one who gets tasked with handling this conflict between a young Black woman who is feisty and this young White man, who is a missionary. Even though my White teammate may have truth to share, his presence as a White male stokes a flame because she would see him as another act of colonialism. But I stepped into the situation and let her vent for about twenty minutes. And then, when the air had come out of the balloon, she finally admitted that instead of seeking reconciliation, she was just trying to elicit a response. And then, I helped the White missionary understand that when he disagreed with how she felt, she received that as him trying to control her. I told him that you cannot tell a person how they should feel.

Dealing with these headwinds of discouragement comes with leading a multi-racial church. Nevertheless, as much as the headwinds are difficult, they also build strength. Illustrating how these conflicts can strengthen our unity, Warren concludes,

> As brothers serving together, so much of our theology and our sociology, and our perspectives have moved toward the other person. While we still have diversity, there is a sense in which we are so closely aligned that even though he is White and I am Black, we speak with one voice. It is almost like growing up in a multiracial

family. It's not about a Black perspective and a White perspective. We are one family sitting at the same table together. This is how our family thinks. Through much perseverance, our church is becoming more like a family.

Theme 9: The Moral Character of Relational Leadership

The ninth theme to emerge from the findings was that effective multi-racial leadership teams in the church have the moral character of relational leadership. Of course, the issue of moral character is an important factor in any organization. Regardless of the organizational leadership model or the organization's goals and objectives, the leadership's character always matters. While acknowledging the importance of ethics in any organization, this research revealed that the moral character of multi-racial leadership teams is especially significant. The essence of team leadership is relationship. Therefore, the case for a moral character is directly related to the relational nature of leadership teams, especially for multi-racial teams, due to the historical struggle of race relations between Blacks and Whites. Referring to the significance of friendship on a team, Warren shares,

> In real relationships, people go through ups and downs. What are the roses? What are the thorns? Walking alongside one another, we are there for one another. I may know a particular teammate a little bit more than I know another one, but we have a relationship just because of the time at the table, and time at the retreats we take, and time going fishing, and just the different times we spend together. We are intentional about making sure we do these types of things together, which brings about a deeper cultivation of knowing one another.

Dwight's teammate Leo emphasizes the same thing. He adds,

> A sign that real relationships are forming is when Black leaders and White leaders have each other over at their houses to eat and have dinner together. If we don't just fellowship on Sunday at church service, but we get together during the week, that promises real racial reconciliation. Relationship does not happen overnight or just at a church service on Sunday. Just like the separation of Black and White churches didn't happen overnight. It was a long road to get to where we are, and it will be a long road to reconciliation. But you have to start with real relationship.

Regarding relationships, the shared practice of moral character emerged from within the following three relationship categories—the presence of humility, the practice of love, and the ability to be authentic.

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Humility toward Others

The presence of humility is an essential component that must be present in a multi-racial team. This quality communicates to each team member that the team's effectiveness is more important than any team member's individual reputation. Humility also emphasizes relationships over tasks.

Humility will always manifest in the various ways team members treat one another and serve together. Illustrating the importance of having a heart of service, Warren shares,

> It is key that we as leaders be leaders who serve others, and not for an outward show or appearance, but from a genuine heart. This is evidence that we are being conformed into the image of Christ, and the more we are conformed to His image, the more united in Him we are. It's not about us. It's about Jesus and His glory. It's not about me being jealous of my teammate, or me wanting the credit. It's all about Jesus? A lot of church leaders want the members to worship him. They conduct themselves and lead their church in such a way that it is all about them. But our pastor is a servant leader. For example, when we schedule a service project, he shows up and says, "What do you need me to do?" I know a lot of pastors who wouldn't even show up. Or would have an attitude that says, "That's not what I do; that's what y'all do." But team leadership requires that we consider the needs of others before ourselves. It's all about Jesus at the end of the day.

Humility is voluntarily choosing the path of sacrifice. Warren illustrates this concept:

> This model of shared leadership will be destroyed if you have leaders who are not willing to give something up. Joining this leadership team was a sacrifice for both William and myself. Each one of us could pastor without each other and be OK. And so there was a giving up of some spiritual real estate, whether it be pulpit time or leadership autonomy, those types of things were just given up in order for us to get in the same room together and work together. There is always going to be some things about William that I don't prefer. Philosophically and stylistically, there are things that flow out of his ethnicity that I don't agree with. To me, they may seem to be wrong or broken, but my heart toward William is not to be the police, but to be the solution. I don't want to be the person who's an alarmist and always blaming White folks. When I feel that temptation coming, I feel a conviction that says, "Well, what would be your solution?"

When serving together on a Black/White leadership team, there is ample opportunity for pride to manifest itself. The history of oppression and subjugation means the past is always right around the corner, looking for an opportunity to reassert its hostility and division. However, these leaders indicated that the antidote to the past is to be humble like Jesus. Instead of letting the cultural differences define the team, Louie

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says that the life and example of Jesus become the new paradigm. Reflecting on the importance of humility on his team, Louie shares,

> There has to be a spirit of humility—preferring one another. How can we prefer one another? My teammates know that I would give my right arm for them. I'll step in the way of a bullet for them, and I have done that. And they would do the same for me. So, there's a real preferring of one another. There's never an attitude of how I can get the credit or attention. Because there is an added dynamic when you serve on a multi-racial team. When you add the history that we have of our race conflict, and you add the power dynamics that that were at play in that. In this environment, it's even more important for there to be a teachable spirit and humility all the way around.

Additionally, humility shows up in how teammates of different colors treat one another. Describing how his White teammate treats him as a Black pastor, Warren shares,

> One of the things that my teammate William does on a regular basis—and when he does this, it still catches me off guard because it is so counter to what I would expect—he will get up in front of a group of people and refer to me as his pastor. Now, he doesn't have to say that. Even though we are co-pastors and leading this church together, he is constantly elevating my role in his life publicly in front of the congregation. That's an incredible amount of humility. He labors very strongly to celebrate and invite me to the table as his equal partner in ministry. And I think he works for that, and I think that kind of humility has to be there.

In summary, the presence of humility on a multi-racial team reduces the risk of power plays and keeps egos and pride from causing division. This quality leads to another key factor in team relationships—the practice of love.

Love in Action

Love is the second manifestation of diverse leadership teams. In all the interviews, the quality of genuine love for one another continued to surface. The ethic of love was seen in the team members and how they led the congregation. Reflecting on what love looks like on a team, Warren says,

> Louie is just the most loving guy I've ever met in my life. period. His life reflects biblically what the church should look like. This is so important in a multi-ethnic church. A multi-colored church needs a pastor who not only preaches the word, but who lives it. And let me tell you, Louie is just absolutely over the top in loving people. I know a lot of pastors, but I've never seen anybody love people like Louie does—with his words and with his actions. Everybody is busy, but he makes time for people, and he's all about cultivating relationships. For example, he'll walk up to me and tell me his is praying for my grandson. He knows their names. He cares for

all the people on this team, even the cleaning staff. I've never seen a church leader do that before. He cares for the people who clean the toilets.

To love someone is to know someone. Referring to its importance in relationships, Warren continues,

> One of the ways we overcome division is we really seek to know one another. So, when we meet, our meeting time is not just meeting about tasks. We pray for one another's concerns. We write our situations down on the board and we pray for one another. And Bible says that love covers a multitude of sins. We are not perfect people. We all make mistakes. But to be able to love and care for one another in this way creates a bond of relationship that we all need, whether you are Black or White.

Finally, love also establishes trust when willing to have difficult conversations. Sometimes, the most loving thing a team member can do is to speak up when something is not right, even if it means confrontation. As an example, Claude shares,

> The thing that the church has to offer is really the opportunity to actually love like Christ loved. Love must be willing to confront anything that is not loving. Sometimes we are too nice to each other. We don't keep each other accountable enough. For example, if somebody came to my house and knocked on the door and my child opened up the door and was just totally rude to the person. I would have a word with my child and say that is not the way we treat our neighbor. What you do reflects on me, and how you treated that person is not our identity. We need to make that right. An in the church, we let stuff like that slide way too often. In the church, we shouldn't allow even a hint of that kind of stuff—hints of racism should not be tolerated. When we let that stuff in, it shows that we're really not loving one another.

Authenticity at Work

The final aspect of moral character is the ability to be authentic. This quality is especially relevant given the imposters who have tried to be a multi-racial team in appearance. Even some of the participants in the research elaborated on their journey toward authenticity. Barry reflects,

> The Lord wants authenticity. You can't just say stuff. You can't just pretend. It is essential that you are legitimate. At first, we were becoming more multi-ethnic, but it was really just on Sunday. On a Sunday morning, you could see lots of diverse people. But at the core, we were still not there yet. But even so, people were starting to affirm us for what we look like on Sunday. And that did not sit well with our leadership at the time. And so, we had to decide, either the Lord is calling us to be multi-ethnic or the Lord is not. But if He is, we're going to go the full way. We must be all in. And so, we just we buckled down, and have been all in ever since. And for me, there is just so much at stake in terms of the next generation and credibility in

their eyes. What does our witness look like to the next generation? Are we authentic, or are we fake?

Some leaders went so far as to say that unless you are a multi-colored leadership team, you cannot expect to be a multi-colored church. Upon being asked if a mono-ethnic team can lead a church to become multi-ethnic, Louie says,

> You can't. It's impossible! Because to lead a multi-ethnic church, your leadership has to be a true reflection of the congregation, with all its norms and values and diversity and struggle. Without looking like the community, you can't do it. For example, if a White leadership team has a church with one Black family, they are not multi-ethnic. If they think they are, it is just tokenism. That's fake. It's not real to use someone as a token to make the majority feel like they value diversity. If you are going to truly be a multi-ethnic church, there has to be real evidence of the leadership cultivating a multi-colored team to join together so that you can minister out of the reality of your diversity. Because you can't give away what you've not received.

In his book *Union with Christ*, Todd Billings states that in a world of poverty and injustice, the church should seek not simply to give "handouts" to meet the bare necessities of those in need but to display the hospitality that pursues relationships of mutual love wherever possible.[32] This research revealed that not only should the church pursue such relationships of mutual love, but it is vital that the leadership go beyond merely meeting the minimal necessities of their teammates. Since the church universal is made up of people from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, the leaders of the church must be a reflection of the diverse picture of the church seen in the Book of Revelation, where it states, "with [Christ's] blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9).

Contribution of Research to the Precedent Literature

From the perspective of real-life experiences, this study is unique in that it focuses on (1) Black/White race relations, (2) church leadership models, and (3) multi-

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[32] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 117.

racial team dynamics. This study found only one academic article related to the research goals and objectives.[33] Although much has been written on the three corresponding topics of race relations, church leadership, and multi-racial leadership, little research has been done on the convergence of each of these three areas. In addition, little empirical research has been conducted to describe current Black/White multi-racial leadership teams or categorize shared practices as effective. This study contributes to the existing literature base by providing mixed-method, multi-case research that categorizes the shared practices of Black-White multi-racial team leadership.

This study provides three thorough case study descriptions of exemplary multi-racial leadership models currently employed by multi-racial churches. The list of shared practices among the case studies and the practice recommendations provide churches with ideas for future multi-racial leadership teams.

This research found that not only is there a huge need for a more open and honest discussion on race in the church, but that the open and honest discussion must begin with the leadership. This research added to the discussion by emphasizing that the blessing not only comes with plurality of leadership, but also with diversity of leadership. It confirmed that no one person has sufficient gifting, insight, or perspective to fulfill all that is needed in the governing and teaching of the local church.

The research confirmed that effective multi-racial church leadership regularly and naturally engaged in race conversations. For these church leadership teams, race discussions were not mere opportunities to give the appearance of openness and hospitality. Rather than a mere shallow and feeble attempt in the hopes for better performance, the leaders in the case studies of this research demonstrated a belief in the substantive presence of racial representation. The presence of real representation created trust and credibility and helped maintain diversity among the church members.

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[33] Okuwobi, "'Keep Race on the Table,'" 20.

This research also found that more than just an increase in conversation and collaboration among Christians, significant and constructive collaboration among multi-racial leaders was a key element in the church's health and diversity. The unique contribution of this research is that the attitudes that come with compromise and sacrifice are not only right and good among all Christians, but especially relevant and impactful when leading a church together on a multi-racial team. While much has been written generally about organizational culture, this present research validated the persuasive power of an organization's values and core beliefs and applied its findings to the multi-racial team environment.

The testimonies of the church leaders in this current research project confirmed the realities of the challenges of racial reconciliation. These realities lead to disappointments and disillusionment, as we will see in the participants' stories. This research revealed that not only should the church pursue such relationships of mutual love, but it is vital that the leadership go beyond merely meeting the minimal necessities of their teammates.

Limitations of Generalizations

The findings of this project can only be generalized to the specific participants of the study and their respective congregations. Consequently, the application of this research will likely have some degree of transferability with other multi-racial leadership teams and congregations, particularly those in the Southeast region of the United States. However, the research findings may also benefit multi-racial leadership teams from other parts of the United States.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results of the case study sampling for this research can only be generalized to the three corresponding churches. However, the results of this study provide perspectives and practices that may be useful to churches seeking to implement a multi-

racial team leadership model. More research is needed on multi-racial team leadership. Future researchers in multi-racial leadership development can use the research organizational structure. Using the framework of this study, other research projects could include the following: (1) Using a similar mixed methods approach, research could be performed on multi-racial teams in different geographical areas, including outside of the United States; (2) research could be done on racial diversity other than Blacks and Whites; (3) the research design could be applied to racially diverse organizations other than churches (i.e. military, medical, business); (4) each of the shared practices could be analyzed with more depth and applied to the Black/White leadership dynamic; and (5) the effect of the multi-racial team leadership model on the health of multi-ethnic and multi-racial churches could be studied with greater depth.

Personal Reflections

When I began this research three years ago, I had no idea what I would learn from the journey. I took the first step with an open mind and heart to what God would show me. To that end, I let the precedent literature provide for me a framework for my analysis. I let the participants' stories provide the foundation for my findings. I surrendered to the Holy Spirit to confirm His truth along the way.

My journey began with the broad topic of church leadership, and with the help of my supervisor and collogues, the specific subject of my research gradually came into focus. Along the way, there were discoveries that confirmed my convictions, disappointments that brought me grief, and surprises that gave me hope.

The interviews with each participant were revealing. I learned that every person has a different story. Some of the stories were inspiring, like one pastor's decision to leave a high-paying job to enter full-time ministry to the poor. Other stories were heart-breaking, like hearing about how often one of the Black participants is ignored in public because of his skin color. There were moments of disappointment when certain White

participants clearly didn't feel comfortable talking about race or racism, or simply didn't see it as a problem. On the other hand, I was grateful for all those who were so open and honest about their experiences, even when sharing them was uncomfortable.

One of the biggest surprises was how much the Black participants were ready to have the conversation. I see more clearly now the value in giving them a voice. I also was surprised at how much unity and closeness was present on the teams. The trust and genuine love for one another was refreshing and encouraging. Their ability to persevere in the face of disappointment was inspiring. Through their experiences working together, these Black and White pastoral leaders demonstrated that overcoming the historical narrative of hostility and division is possible. Speaking of the power of the gospel to overcome division, I will never forget when William said,

> There is a way forward because there is a power that allows a White person and a Black person, assuming the relationship is otherwise healthy, to reverse the curse in a real sense. When sin entered the world, the first thing it did was to drive people apart. This, of course, is the narrative of America. Black people and White people can't worship together or live together, especially on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. The power to change this comes from believing God's story over the story of man, over the racial narrative of America.

Conclusion

Christ is building His church into a beautiful multi-colored people who belong to Him. The picture of the church described in the Book of Revelation is a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and nation (Rev 7:9). Therefore, today's church should strive to display gospel-created unity to influence its surrounding communities. For this reason, the leadership of churches should reflect the community in which it finds itself. Even as the church works as agents of salt and light to advance truth and justice, it must never forget its distinct mission spread the good news of Jesus to all people. Though we cannot undo every form of evil in this world, local churches should be centers of true hope. Though the church cannot end the sins of hatred, ungodly division, and ethnocentrism, it can and should work hard to be like heaven and look like heaven. May

the lessons learned from this research help the Church be a truer reflection of the multi-colored humanity that God intends.

APPENDIX 1

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to examine and identify
ministerial perceptions and practices in multi-racial leadership teams in churches and
determine significant factors that contribute to their successes and failures. This research
is being conducted by John Ivey Harris, Jr for purposes of thesis research. In this
research, you will be asked
to answer questions related your participation on a multi-racial leadership team in your
local church. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no
time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses.
Participation in this study is
totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

In regard to your completion of the quantitative survey questions and by your
involvement in the personal interview, by checking the appropriate box below, you are
giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

[ ] I agree to participate
[ ] I do not agree to participate

Consent to Audio and/or Video Recording

The interview portion is open-ended in nature. The researcher desires for you to share
openly
and honestly. Additionally, the researcher may ask follow-up questions, as he deems
necessary. The estimated time for the interview will be one and a half hours. If the
interview is not complete in one and a half hours, you will have the option of continuing
the interview or rescheduling a follow-up interview. An audio or video recording will
assist the researcher in the data collection process. The interview will then be transcribed,
summarized, and analyzed. A
review of the findings of this interview will be presented to you for validation and
agreement. The recordings will be kept private and destroyed upon completion of the
research project.

[ ] I consent to audio/video recording of this interview.
[ ] I do not consent to audio/video recording of this interview.

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Background Information

Name: _____

Birthdate: _____

Race: _____

Marital Status: _____

Children (if applicable):

_____

Birthplace:

_____

Places you have lived:

_____

_____

Places you have worked (include position or responsibility):

_____

_____

Highest level of education (Degree and Institution):

_____

_____

APPENDIX 3

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Please carefully read each question and the descriptions on each question that includes a scale.

1. Name of Local Church:

   _____

2. How long has the church been in existence?

   _____ Less than 2 years

   _____ 2-10 Years

   _____ 10-30 Years

   _____ 30+ years

3. How many pastors currently comprise the leadership team? _____

4. What is the number of each race of the leadership team?

   Black _____

   White _____

   Other _____

5. The demographic of our church membership is racially diverse:

Highly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Highly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○

6. What do you estimate is the percentage breakdown of each racial group in your church?

Black _____

White _____

Other _____

7. The demographic of the geographical area of our church (neighborhood) is racially diverse:

Highly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Highly Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○

8. What do you estimate is the percentage breakdown of each racial group in the geographical area of church?

Black _____

White _____

Other _____

9. The primary socio-economic level of our church members is:

Poor	Lower Class	Lower/Middle Class	Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class	Upper Class
○	○	○	○	○	○

10. The primary socio-economic level of the geographical area of our church

   (neighborhood) is:

Poor	Lower Class	Lower/Middle Class	Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class	Upper Class
○	○	○	○	○	○

11. I consider my own socio-economic level to be:

Poor	Lower Class	Lower/Middle Class	Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class	Upper Class
○	○	○	○	○	○

12. Over the past three years, what has been the average attendance at a worship service? _____

13. In the past three years, the racial diversity of our church membership has:

_____ Become more diverse

_____ Become less diverse

_____ Remained the same

14. How important is it to you for your church to be led by a multi-racial leadership team?

No opinion	Not Important	Minimally Important	Somewhat Important	Multi-racial Important	Essential
○	○	○	○	○	○

15. How would you describe your experience of serving on a multi-racial leadership team?

Nearly Impossible	Frequent Struggles	Somewhat Difficult	Challenging but doable	Somewhat Rewarding	Fulfilling And Fruitful
○	○	○	○	○	○

16. Does racism still exist in the United States?

None	Not Much	Probably Not	Maybe a little	Some	Yes A lot!
○	○	○	○	○	○

17. Does racism exist in your church?

None	Not Much	Probably Not	Maybe a little	Some	Yes A lot!
○	○	○	○	○	○

18. Number the following identity descriptions in order of priority that you feel most closely represents your identity (1-Closest). Think of how you actually and mostly see yourself and your personal identity. Put a mark through the ones that don't represent you.

_____ Father
_____ White man
_____ Democrat
_____ Husband
_____ Christian
_____ Black man
_____ Pastor
_____ American
_____ Republican

19. Consider the factors that influence and shape a person's views on race (concept of race, race relations, racial importance, race identities, racial history). Number the following factors in order of which one's influence and shape your views the most (1-Most). Put a mark through the ones that have no influence on you.

_____ Culture
_____ History
_____ Experiences of Injustice

_____ Bible
_____ Politics
_____ Events
_____ Books (authors, ideologies, theories)

APPENDIX 4

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Qualitative Research Question

What are the common ministerial perceptions and practices of pastors in churches with multi-racial Black/White team leadership?

Childhood

1. During high school, was the neighborhood where you lived racially diverse?

    Probing Question: If yes, which racial or ethnic groups (e.g., blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos) were represented? What was the approximate proportion of each group?

2. During high school, was the school you attended racially diverse?

    Probing Question: If yes, which racial or ethnic groups (e.g., blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos) were represented? What was the approximate proportion of each group?

3. Did you grow up attending and participating in a church?

    Probing Question: What type of church did you grow up attending? (denomination, worship style, size, diverse.)

4. Describe the leadership style and structure of the church in which you grew up.

Identity

1. What circumstances brought you to the church you currently attend?

Probing Question: What circumstances brought you to your current position? (If different from question above.)

2. Describe your current position and responsibilities at the church.

    Probing Question: How long have you served in your current role and position?

3. In terms of compensation, is your position on leadership team:

    _____ Full-time pay

    _____ Part-time pay

    _____ Volunteer

4. When you think about who you are, what comes to mind first?

5. What does it mean to be (Black/White)?

Race Relations

1. On a statistical average, financial inequalities exist between Black and White people. Why do you think this is?

    Probing Question: Do you think this can be solved? If so, how?

2. How would you describe multi-racial relations in your church?

    Probing Question: What environments, if any, have you created in your church to allow and encourage multi-racial interaction about race relations?

3. What, if anything, should the church do about racial inequality?

Worship Service Form and Style

1. What is the average length of a typical worship service at your church?

2. What are the typical components that are included in your worship service?

3. To what degree do you think your worship service reflects White culture? In what ways?

4. To what degree do you think your worship service reflects Black culture? In what ways?

   Probing Question: What factors contribute to the shaping of the worship service experience? Who decides what components and persons participate in the worship service?

Leadership

1. How would you describe *leadership*?

   Probing Question: How would you describe the leadership structure of your church?

2. What effect has your multi-racial team leadership model had on the congregation?

   Probing Question: Were you a part of the transition to this model? If so, how would you describe the transition?

3. What words would you use to describe the multi-racial team on which you serve?

Probing Question: How would you describe the journey of being a multi-racial leadership team? What have been some milestones, successes, setbacks, and disappointments?

4. What factors affect the quality of your experience in serving on a multi-racial leadership team? What factors make it difficult? What factors make it enjoyable and rewarding?

Probing Question: What role, if any, do racial differences play in the following challenges of church leadership? (Decision-making, church unity, ministry priorities, conflict management, music preferences, financial discussions, supervision, evaluation, accountability, communication, authority, leading change)

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ABSTRACT

MULTI-RACIAL TEAM LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH:
A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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If the church in the United States is ever going to make progress in becoming more racially diverse, it must be led by racially diverse leadership. But racially diverse leadership teams are rare, and many of the few that exist struggle because of cultural pressure, personal agendas, or leadership incompetence. As introduced in chapter 1, this thesis focuses on both the challenges and the opportunities at the convergence of race, church, and leadership. This multi-case study aimed to identify patterns and practices in Black/White shared leadership teams in churches and determined significant factors contributing to their successes and failures.

In chapter 2, the precedent literature is reviewed in the three broad areas of race, church, and leadership. A summary of each primary discipline is provided to begin the literature overview, highlighting a few significant areas where it relates to the thesis. Although much has been written separately on these three important disciplines, there is currently little empirical research that deals with Black/White dynamics among the leaders in the local church.

Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures used during this research study, including the research purpose, questions, design overview, population, sample, delimitations, limitations of generalizations, methods and instrumentation, research assumptions, and report findings. Case studies were conducted of three churches led by racially diverse leadership teams. Each case study included personal interviews with

pastoral leadership to determine the ministerial practices and patterns of effective shared leadership. Cross-case analysis revealed common traits and marks among the case study leadership team dynamics.

Chapter 4 outlines the compilation methodology of the data, details the participant information, summarizes the research findings, and evaluates the research methodology. The study used a mixed methods approach to the research, employing a quantitative survey followed by in-depth interviews to explore the ministry perceptions and practices of pastors serving together on a multi-racial leadership team. Eleven church leaders from three different churches were interviewed in person, allowing for confidential conversations that were easily recordable for transcription.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and analysis of the above research findings. It describes the conclusions of the cross-case analysis findings of the three participating churches. These conclusions and applications are organized into nine shared practices across the three participating churches. To assist churches that desire to have racially diverse leadership or to improve its current leadership effectiveness, this study includes a list of recommendations for practice for other churches that desire to implement a multi-racial team leadership model.

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