THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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To my wife, Danielle, and our children,

Desmond Jaice and Myles Kristopher

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

PREFACE

With every day the Lord has blessed me with, I become more thankful for the opportunity to serve him in all areas of my life. Whether it be the local church, academia, nonprofit, home life, or personal relationships, God you've shown me grace beyond measure. Lord, thank you. You have shown me your enduring and steadfast love. Without You, there is no me: no lessons learned, no passion, and no purpose.

When describing both rounds of my doctoral journey, I am often at a loss for words. I continue to have a melting pot of emotions that have both moved me forward and paralyzed me. I am grateful for the educational journeys that preceded this at Southeast Missouri State University, Fontbonne University, and Missouri Baptist University. Without these experiences, I would not have "fallen in love" with education. To all of the African American pastors who this work somehow represents or reflects, thank you for your continued service in Christ. I know it can be hard and I pray that you've been heard by man, but I am confident that you've been heard by the Lord (1 John 5:14).

To my Southern Seminary (and extended) family, thank you. While I am grateful for all who have poured valuable biblical and moral truths into me, I must highlight the guidance and support of Dr. Kevin Jones, Dr. Justin Irving, Dr. Gregg Allison, Dr. Jarvis Williams, and Dr. Michael Wilder. Each of you have challenged and encouraged me immensely through your scholarship. To Dr. Timothy Paul Jones, thank you for lighting the spark in this research and reigniting the pilot for its advancement. For the late Rev. Dr. T. Vaughn Walker, I express deep appreciation for my introduction to Southern Seminary. Dr. Walker was open, honest, and an inspiration for me from the very beginning. I would not have been at Southern Seminary without Rev. Dr. Walker.

To the chair of my EdD committee, Dr. Shane Parker, thank you for walking this journey with me. I remember our very first interaction at Preview Day in fall 2016 and your charge of encouragement. Thank you for working through this topic with me even in the months and years after our initial thesis concluded. Dr. John David Trentham, who graciously agreed to advise my PhD studies, deserves an abundance of thankfulness and praise. Dr. Trentham's scholarship provided an avenue for me to explore the possibilities of this research for the advancement of the gospel. I was inspired during his classes and by his leadership at SBTS and with the Society of Professors in Christian Education. I've also been inspired by his resilience, after experiencing a life changing event, and humbled by his willingness to work alongside me on this project. His work, academically and personally, has made this research possible.

To my 2017 SBTS EdD cohort family, completing this as an extension of our time together has been both challenging and inspirational. You are family. Thank you for continuing to be supportive and encouraging. To True Fellowship Church, I am so grateful for my personal place to love, learn, and laugh.

When thinking of my family, which rests at the core of my being, I reflect upon and am thankful for the memories of those who are rooting for me from heaven: my grandfathers (Roy L. Brown, Wavil Ginger, and Frank McCall Sr.), grandmother (Ernestine McCall-Brooks), godmother (Ernestine Harper), sister (Chantiya Patrice), and uncle (Desmond Ginger). To my grandmother (Nancy Brown), aunt (Felicia Clayton-Haney), sibling-cousins (Delicia and Dorian Clayton), nieces (Makenzye Patrice and Ashland Mariah), and nephew (Kobi Benjamin), thank you for always being there and supporting me. To my in-loves, Arnette and Nathan, and my stepfather, Lawrence, I am grateful for your words of advice and thoughts of love.

I cannot express enough gratitude to my parents, Frank Jr. and CeCe. You have been my foundation and my anchors. From being rededicated to the Lord twenty minutes after my birth until now, my parents have been an endless source of encouragement, love, and prayer. Thank you both for making me your greatest investment, introducing me to Christ, and supporting my ministry. Also, thank you for "the little things": babysitting, listening, providing advice and feedback, and so much more. You are the best!

Thank you Danielle, my beloved wife and best friend. Danielle and I met fourteen years ago on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University where she literally became my sweetheart. She's been a constant encourager, truthful in speech, a source of wisdom, and quite frankly, my peace. Danielle and I literally started and finished our EdD journeys one week apart. After two EdD graduations, she encouraged me to return to Southern Seminary and complete the PhD. Being married to a PhD student, without having your own doctoral work, but having a newborn was new experience that carried significant challenges: late nights and early mornings. Still, her selflessness shined bright and allowed me to move forward in my purpose. She continues to show herself faithful and her dedication to our marriage and our family is an immeasurable gift from the Lord that has kept me moving forward. Without her continued encouragement, I could not have continued with my theological education and completed this dissertation. She has been alongside me throughout this entire journey. There is no one else I'd rather have as my tag-team partner. God has truly blessed me with you. "The point of it all is I love you." Danielle, my love, thank you.

Finally, to my sons, Desmond and (soon to arrive) Myles: Although you're young, I pray that you've seen this labor of love and sacrifice and are proud of your father. The thought of you watching your father complete this journey and graduate has been motivation in itself. You've changed my life for the greater. Your presence alone makes me want to be better than I ever thought I could be. Thank you for bringing me so much joy.

Jaison K. D. McCall

St. Louis, Missouri

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere . . . . Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial *outside agitator* idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider.[1]

"A witness to the shooting overheard one trooper ask, 'Who got him?' Another responded 'I got him.' This was James Bonard Fowler," Ryan M. Jones reports.[2] In April 2005, former Alabama State Trooper James Bonard Fowler recounted the night of February 18, 1965, when he shot civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson.[3] Eight days later Jackson died; forty years later, Fowler gave an interview detailing the occurrences of that night. Two years following the interview, Fowler was indicted for the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson, pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter, and served five months in prison.[4] As a response to this killing, Martin Luther King Jr. "called for pastors to march against this injustice."[5] Four days after Jimmie's funeral, the march from Selma

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[1] Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," in *I Have A Dream: Writing and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 88.

[2] Ryan M. Jones, "Who Mourns for Jimmie Lee Jackson?," *Civil Rights Museum* (blog), accessed October 28, 2018, https://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/news/posts/who-mourns-for-jimmie-lee-jackson.

[3] See Jones, "Who Mourns for Jimmie Lee Jackson?" On February 18, 1965, Jimmie Lee Jackson participated in a voter registration protest with his mother and grandfather after a meeting at a local church. After going into a local café, Jimmie's mother was attacked by state troopers. As Jimmie tried to rescue his mother, James Bonard Fowler shot him.

[4] Jones, "Who Mourns for Jimmie Lee Jackson?" From Fowler's prison release until his death in 2015, he resided in Geneva County, Alabama.

[5] Mark Whitlock, "When a Pastor Shows up at a Black Lives Matter Protest," Center for Religion and Civic Culture, March 5, 2018, https://crcc.usc.edu/when-a-pastor-shows-up-at-a-black-lives-matter-protest/.

to Montgomery began, but ended in violence in what is now known as "Bloody Sunday."[6]

So, what does the gospel have to do with justice, particularly social justice?[7] Within Christian circles, a divide exists between those who support and those who oppose social justice efforts. While the aim is not to reduce the gospel to an individual aspect, the goal should be to bring attention to aspects of the gospel that have been neglected and dismissed.[8] Police violence is not a new phenomenon, particularly for people of color. However, there tends to be disagreement on how the church should respond to these social ills of the past and present.

Some Christian leaders have tagged social justice as a distraction from the gospel. "There are not different flavors of justice. There is only *true* justice, defined by God Himself and always in accord with His character," MacArthur states.[9] While true, what happens when *true* justice is not carried out in a way that is representative of everyone in a given community? Black lives matter. All lives matter. The dueling chants of two factual statements can be heard and seen throughout many modern outlets. African American Christians have to wrestle with the consciousness of who they are as Christians in light of cultural context. Additionally, they must reconcile whether their experiences

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[6] Bloody Sunday occurred on March 7, 1965, when the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, took place for fairness in voter registration for persons of color. State troopers met the group of marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. After the protestors refused to break up the demonstration, they were tear gassed, clubbed, and trampled by horses. Media outlets deemed this occurrence "Bloody Sunday."

[7] Jemar Tisby, "Battle Lines Form over Social Justice: Is It Gospel or Heresy?," Religion News, September 6, 2018, https://religionnews.com/2018/09/06/battle-lines-form-over-social-justice-is-it-gospel-or-heresy/. I define *social justice* in the terminology section below; however, *social justice* is a term that has been widely discussed and debated. For the purposes of this study, social justice is understood as both the goal and process of Christian ministry (see Prov 28:5; Matt 28:19–20; 22:37–39). Moreover, the gospel, Word, and Christ's rule is what will ultimately bring final justice.

[8] Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 43.

[9] John MacArthur, "The Injustice of Social Justice," *Grace to You* (blog), September 7, 2018, http://www.gty.org/library/blog/B180907.

that contribute to making them who they are have hindered or helped them in understanding the will of God for their lives.[10]

The words of Martin Luther King Jr., as penned in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," reign true today as they did then:

> But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning.[11]

While social justice and liberation serve as modern day focal points in the African American community, its church's relevance has been questioned. The consequent answer to be shared from the platform, which is the Black church,[12] must come in the form of true biblical leadership starting from its pastors. Reggie Williams argues, "The mere label Christian does not indicate that one is, or intends to be, virtuous, or concerned about the wellbeing of others. What matters is our understanding of what it means to follow the way of Jesus."[13]

Research Problem

A 2015 study highlighted that 62 percent of adults disagree that Christian churches are part of the problem when it comes to racism. However, among those who strongly agreed with the assertion, there was double the amount of black agreeance than white.[14] Ligon Duncan recently wrote that "racial tensions in our churches and our nation

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[10] Anthony J. Carter, *Black and Reformed: Seeing God's Sovereignty in the African-American Christian Experience*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2016), 23.

[11] King, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," 93.

[12] For the purposes of this study, the terms *Black church* will be used interchangeably with *African American church*. Also, *Black Christian* will be used interchangeably with *African American Christian*.

[13] Reggie L. Williams, "Christ-Centered Concreteness: The Christian Activism of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr.," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 3 (September 2014): 186.

[14] Barna Group, "Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America," Barna Group Research: Culture and Media, last modified May 5, 2016, https://www.barna.com/research/black-lives-matter-and-

would be in a significantly better state if the Reformed community in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had simply rightly applied the second great commandment."[15] While the church rightly focuses on loving the Lord God with all its heart, soul, and mind, it has fallen short of the command "to love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt 22:36–40).[16] Jemar Tisby highlights that throughout American history, there has been some form of Christian complicity in race relations offering that

> 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 in so doing created and maintained a status quo of injustice.[17]

In effect, the American church has done a poor job of fully aligning "confessional and convictional beliefs," particularly when it comes to matters of race.[18]

The general problem is that while the church has a mandate to love its neighbor, division over issues like social justice and racism have resulted in division amongst the body of Christ and mandate fulfillment. It is imperative that all be viewed through the lens of *imago Dei*. Christ charged the church to be true leaders who make disciples, love and obey God, and ultimately bear fruit. The confessional and convictional alignment must be identified by the fruit produced from the work as there must be more than good intentions for positive change and mission fulfillment to occur.[19] The question

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racial-tension-in-america/.

[15] Ligon Duncan, introduction to *Woke Church*, 16.

[16] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

[17] Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 6.

[18] Steve Wilkins and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22–24. Confessional beliefs are defined as ideas that remain only on an intellectual or intentional level; convictional beliefs are the beliefs reflected in action. Wilkins and Sanford point out that Christians find it much easier to talk a good game (confessional) than to act upon it (convictional).

[19] Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other* (Grand

of what type of person the church produces, from pew to pulpit, remains relevant and it cannot be overlooked that leadership is essential to this venture.[20]

Studies have examined the independent effects of the Black church on a variety of attitudes and behaviors.[21] Consequently, research proposes that the congregants of the Black church are heavily affected by the institution as a whole. Historically, the Black church has had a significant role throughout the entire African American experience. Not only has the Black church played a central role in the Civil Rights movement, it has also played more of an expansive role than evangelical congregations.[22] Carter G. Woodson says that "a definitive history of the Negro Church . . . would leave practically no phase of history of the Negro in America untouched."[23]

Ultimately, Christian leadership is essential for the health of the church moving forward.[24] While church leadership is vital in the fulfillment of the Great Commission and Great Commandment, this is even more so the case in the African American community. In the Black church, the pastor is an important interpreter of the complete Black experience.[25] W. E. B. Du Bois argues that the Black preacher is "the most unique

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Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 203–4.

[20] Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 101.

[21] See Christopher Ellison and Darren Sherkat, "The Politics of Black Religious Social Change," *Social Change* 70 (1991): 431–54; David A. Gay and John Lynxwiler, "The Impact of Race on Denominational Variations in Social Attitudes: The Issue and Its Dimensions," *Sociological Spectrum* 30, no. 1 (2010): 110–27.

[22] Mary Hui, "Pew Poll Finds Black Pastors More Likely to Speak Out," *SW Times*, August 20, 2016, http://www.swtimes.com/entertainmentlife/20160820/pew-poll-finds-black-pastors-more-likely-to-speak-out.

[23] Carter G. Woodson, "The Negro Church, an All-Comprehending Institution," *Negro History Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (October 1939): 7.

[24] Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 152–53.

[25] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 157.

personality developed by the Negro on American soil, a man who found his function as the healer of the sick and the interpreter of the unknown."[26] The pastor essentially interprets the life of African Americans in light of God's revelation in Christ and provides for, teaches, and inspires the moral undercurrents needed for everyday living, as well as the theological ideals and cultural wisdom needed for survival and sanity.[27]

In 1990's *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya wrote that "the future of the Black church in the twenty-first century will depend as much on how it responds to the poor in the midst as to the externals of racism, the abstractions of ecumenism, or the competitive threat of a resurgent Islam."[28] Ultimately, the Black experience supports the notion that cultural influence affects Christian leadership.[29] Sinclair B. Ferguson asserts that all true preaching is preaching to the heart; to the center of the individual's being and character.[30] This preaching is inclusive of transparency before God, love for the people that the preacher ministers to, and an opening of the truth.[31]

Current Status of Research Problem

While there is a plethora of literature available on the individual components of the research problem, limited resources are available that address its overall complexity. In years past, the Black church held true to their lives being under sovereign

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[26] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Seattle: Amazon Classics, 2017), 82, Kindle.

[27] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 157.

[28] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 404.

[29] Volker Kessler, "Pitfalls in 'Biblical' Leadership," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (March 2013): 1.

[30] Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* (East Peoria, IL: Versa Press, 2017), 718.

[31] Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers*, 719–20.

control of God and being indebted to humility in faith.[32] However, presently, it seems as if there is a revisiting of Malcolm X's declaration of "all of us are black first and everything else second."[33] A recent Barna study states,

> The public outrage over the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray and others has brought to light the often-unheeded reality of racial tension here in the United States. The nation witnessed the pain, grief, and indignation among African Americans as protests began in cities like Ferguson and Baltimore and spread across the country sparking the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. But this movement has met with a mixed response, reflecting a deeper divide on how Americans view the problem of race in this country.[34]

The pastor's responsibility to teach theological truth serves as an extremely influential method of leadership.[35] What, therefore, is the response from African American pastors, who are both African American and Christian pastors?[36] How does one respond when image bearers in the local community have not been treated as the *imago Dei* and eventually sanctioned to death? Regardless of this truth, how, specifically, are African American pastors to respond to a lived reality where they are identified by race prior to ministry assignment? In reference to the lived experience of people of color in the United States, seven in ten Americans agree that a social disadvantage due to race exists.[37] Does the lived experience of race and faith affect the ministry of Black pastors?

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[32] Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 63–99. Anyabwile highlights different African American historical figures and their beliefs about God. From the abolition era to the postmodern era, the author brings attention to the God of suffering, universal intelligence, the Negro's God, the Black God, and the reviving of old heresies. Persons such as Marcus Garvey, Henry McNeal Turner, and T. D. Jakes are referenced.

[33] Malcolm X, "God's Angry Men," *Westchester Observer*, May 1958.

[34] Barna Group, "Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension."

[35] Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 47.

[36] This dual identity reference (African American and Christian pastor) is adapted from W. E. B. Du Bois's double consciousness, originally American and Negro. See Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

[37] Barna Group, "Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension."

The specific problem is that there has been no in-depth phenomenological accounts of African American pastors, their lived experiences, and their resulting leadership impact post social justice prompts.[38] In modern times, a massive hole exists in finding literature documenting scriptural truths needed for transparency regarding the love and openness exchange between the African American pastor and his congregants in their day to day living.[39] With this being the case, it is essential that the intersection of race and faith among this particular group be in its proper place for the propelling of the Black church and racial reconciliation efforts. According to Brandon Showalter, one black pastor "behooves American churches to not only confess with their mouths the truths and historic creeds of their faith, but use every tool of their tradition to confront the legacy of prejudice practically. Churches that refuse to live this out are not as Reformed or theologically orthodox as they think."[40] For the African American pastor, this is inclusive of accessing, reflecting, and sharing their truth for the betterment of their congregations and community at large. It must serve to be culturally based but not culturally bound.[41]

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how living in an intersecting social existence across the lines of race and faith impacts the lives and leadership of African American pastors. Essentially, the drive of this research

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[38] These social justice prompts are inclusive of, but not limited to, the loss of Black life at the hands of law enforcement personnel, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the influx of social activism, avid protests, and the presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

[39] See 2 Cor 3–5; Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers*, 719–20.

[40] Brandon Showalter, "Black Pastor Explains How the Reformation Addressed Social Injustice, Exploitation," *Christian Post*, September 28, 2017, https://www.christianpost.com/news/black-pastor-explains-how-the-reformation-addressed-social-injustice-exploitation.html.

[41] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 54.

was to highlight the intersectionality phenomenon and its effects of Black Christian pastors. Using a phenomenological approach, African American pastors were interviewed regarding their experiences in Christian leadership in light of race and faith.

Delimitations

The research was delimited in multiple ways. First, it was delimited to African American senior pastors at predominant African American churches. Second, this study was delimited to senior pastors who have served in the capacity for a minimum of ten years. Third, this research was delimited by location via racially-charged events that have taken place during the twenty-first century. Fourth, this research was delimited to senior pastors who were not only pastoring in these communities but were present and actively serving in ministry when those events took place.

These delimitations do not imply that pastors who do not serve in these geographic locations are inept to contribute to the study per their lived experiences, nor does it suggest that these pastors do not share similar experiences. These delimitations served to establish consistency within the research, abated variances within the population sample, and helped establish best practices due to the experiences incurred as a result of the effects of racially charged events.

Terminology

For the purpose of this study the following 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.

Biblical leadership. Biblical leadership is, as Don N. Howell Jr., puts it, "taking the initiative to influence people to grow in holiness and to passionately promote

the extension of God's kingdom in the world."[42] Additionally, biblical leadership encompasses the leader's character, motives, and agenda.

Black church. The Black church, also referred to as the African American Church, is the "varied ecclesial groupings of Christians of African descent, inside and outside black and white denominations, imbued with the memory of a suffering Jesus and informed by the legacy of slavery and segregation in America."[43]

Black practical theology. Black practical theology "demands a reflexive understanding of preaching practices in the contexts of the Black faith community and Black life in dialogue with theological studies and the human sciences. The transformation of Western Christianity in the evolution of the Black church is best described as the transformation of Christianity through Black homiletics, hermeneutics, and communal care held together in Black preaching praxis."[44]

Context. Context is "the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood."[45]

Culture. Culture can be defined as "a group's total way of life, through language and education passed from generation to generation."[46] It encompasses ideas, values, knowledge, language, customs, social relationships, institutions of a group of people that are transferred from generation to generation.[47]

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[42] Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3.

[43] Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 9.

[44] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 248.

[45] Oxford Dictionaries, s.v. "Context, " accessed September 20, 2018, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/context.

[46] Fredrick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 43.

[47] Ware, *African American Theology*.

Discipleship. "Discipleship involves both becoming a disciple and being a disciple. At times the focus is on the entrance into the process (evangelism), but most often the focus is on the growing in the process (maturity); it includes both teaching and life transformation. Therefore, it is best to think of discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ."[48] Furthermore, discipleship is considered to be a result of biblical leadership.

Discipleship practices. Discipleship practices are the strategies and activities employed by churches in attempt to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:16–20). For the purposes of this study, discipleship practices will be inclusive of Christian education arms including teaching.

Doctrine. Doctrine is instruction that provides directions for both theoretical and practical understanding for doing faith; doctrine is what the entire Bible and what Jesus is saying today about particular topics.[49] The goal of doctrine is to help people understand the story of which they are a part.[50]

Double consciousness. Double consciousness is a term coined by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1903 which highlights the contesting identities of "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" as double consciousness.[51] Double consciousness can also be found in the African American Christian where one can be a part of and apart from their faith simultaneously. Therefore, the warring identities of Black and Christian can be prevalent in the Black Christian.

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[48] James G. Samra, "A Biblical View of Discipleship," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160, no. 638 (2003): 220.

[49] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastors Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), Kindle; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1240.

[50] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, 133.

[51] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 4.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is a specifically defined legal term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw,[52] as the idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities. "Intersectionality emphasizes that identity development in one area cannot be viewed as occurring outside of, or separate from, the developmental processes of other social identities within individuals."[53] Intersectionality holds that in order to see the totality of a person or an issue, it is essential to unite the interconnected parts. For the purposes of this study, intersectionality is engaged in its original form, not at the development of the term or concept.[54]

Lived experience. Lived experience is personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people.[55] Lived experience, as understood in qualitative research, is a representation and understanding of human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge.[56]

Lived religion. Lived religion is the way in which religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced, and expressed in the context of one's daily life.[57] Furthermore, lived religion aids in the identifying of the actual experience of religion versus that of traditional standard and practices of such. This type of religion is reliant on people

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[52] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

[53] Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III, eds., introduction to *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3.

[54] See Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–67.

[55] Oxford Reference, s.v. "Lived Experience," accessed September 21, 2018, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100109997.

[56] Robin Boylorn, "Lived Experience," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 490.

[57] Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

building their religious worlds together through the sharing of experiences and commonalities.

Particularlity. Particularity is the condition of being an individual.[58] God specifically designs and creates each human being to be a particular embodied individual with individual and/or shared experiences and makeup.

Social justice. Social justice is understood as both the goal and process of Christian ministry.[59] Though often distorted, social justice is a biblical concept that encompasses living rightly before God as a corporate community and doing what is right toward fellow image bearers.[60] It encompasses the intentional helping of specific groups of people including the alienated, mistreated, and those encountering injustices. While often equated with poverty and oppression, social justice also tackles feats such as hunger relief, sex trafficking, sexism, racism, and more.[61]

Social location. Social location refers to the whole of human experiences that shape a person's overall perspective on life. These human experiences not only include a person's physical location in age, gender, race, and community, but also the moral, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual atmosphere they live in, their social class, marital status, political convictions, language, nationality, history of the community to which they belong, etc.[62] Social location contributes heavily to various questions that are asked:

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[58] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 59.

[59] See Prov 28:5; Matt 28:19–20; 22:37–39. Ultimately, Christ's rule is what will bring final justice. Thomas R. Schreiner notes, "Revelation 21–22 teaches that paradise will be regained and more, for the new Eden in which humans will partake of the tree of life will never pass away." Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 316.

[60] Carl Ellis, "Biblical Righteousness Is a Four-Paned Window," Gospel Coalition, August 22, 2018, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/biblical-righteousness-four-paned-window/. See Gal 6:2; Jas 1:27.

[61] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 179–80.

[62] Boubakar Sanou, "Exegeting the Bible and Social Location of the Gospel Recipients: A

"Who am I? What is my place in the world? What is the history and experience at which I am the center?"[63]

Woke. Woke is a term that has been used to describe the awareness and activism in areas of social and racial justice. While popular, this term has been used to push forward a myriad of agendas with Christianity not notably acknowledged among them. From a Christian perspective, being woke is "to be able to understand how cultural, socioeconomic, philosophical, and historical realities inform our responsibility as believers in Jesus Christ."[64] Ultimately, being woke is to be aware, accountable, truthful, and active.

Methodological Overview

Due to the goal of understanding the phenomenon of intersection of race and faith among African American pastors, a criterion was developed in order to identify potential participants. These participants, as a part of a purposive sample, needed to have served as a senior pastor for a minimum of ten years. Also, they were able to authenticate their tenure in ministry in a qualifying geographic footprint during the time of the happenings of racially charged events. Moreover, they needed to be an African American pastor serving a predominately African American congregation.

The data for this qualitative study was collected via in-depth personal interviews. The interviews took place face-to-face if possible, or with the use of video technology if necessary. Instrumentation included broad open-ended questions. These uniformed main questions were followed by additional open-ended probing questions

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Case for Worldview Transformation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 57, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 372; Frederick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 62.

[63] Ware, *African American Theology*, 62; Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 53.

[64] Mason, *Woke Church*, 25.

based upon respondents' answers to the main questions in an effort to capture the holistic experience of each participant. Data collection primarily consisted of audio recordings of each interview. At each interview, participants were asked to share any additional material (i.e., sermons, blog posts, etc.) applicable to their experience of leadership and/or discipleship, specifically as a Black pastor. Interviews primarily took place at appropriate church campuses. A journal was maintained throughout the research to detail processes, background information, and additional related details.

After data was collected, the process of data analysis began. Through this process, I performed a line by line examination of the interview transcripts to recognize significant themes. These themes were then coded, prior to being interpreted. In sum, the methodology culminated with data that illustrates the lived experience of African American pastors, and has been used to articulate the lived realities as an introduction to this peculiar phenomenon.

Research Questions

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, two questions were developed.

1. How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?
2. In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?

Instrumentation

This section outlines instrumentation for the dissertation.[65] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell detail how interviews, research diaries, and documents are

[65] All of the research instruments used in this dissertation were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the dissertation research.

effective instruments for gathering phenomenological data.[66] The process of data collection and analysis took place in three stages: (1) preliminary procedures; (2) interview schedule; and (3) data organization. In the preliminary procedures, an expert panel was used to further sharpen the research questions and protocol. The interviews were broken into an initial and follow-up session with each participant. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, open-ended questions were developed to capture and assess the lived experiences of African American pastors. Furthermore, a research journal and pilot interviews were utilized. In addition to participant interviews, data collection occured via participant submission of applicable content (sermons, journal, blog/social media posts, Bible Study and Sunday school curriculum, etc.). Data organization and analysis incorporated the highlighting of "significant statements, sentences, and quotes that provide an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon."[67] Additionally, I used coding strategies to assist with the interpretation of data.

Conclusion

This chapter points to a well-established problem for those who may be concerned with the priority (or lack thereof) of the influence that lived complexities of race and faith have on biblical leadership and discipleship practices among African American pastors. A comprehensive study on this subject does not presently exist.[68] Still,

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[66] John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 185–87. Also see Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 56–78.

[67] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 82.

[68] While there is no known existing study on this subject, a number of texts have been devoted to the study of the African American Christian experience; these provided inspiration and direction for this study. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya's *The Black Church in the African American Experience* stands as a staple in African American Christian scholarship, as numerous African American pastors are interviewed across denominations concerning their experiences and attitudes, which ultimately influence the Black experience in religion.

this research serves as an attempt to address the stated problem. In conducting this study, I sought to assist Christians, specifically church leaders, across all races and ethnicities by identifying and illustrating best practices to address cultural competency, intersectional truth, discipleship practices, and biblical leadership within the African American church context. This study includes a review of existing literature and consultation with experienced experts in the related fields of study.

Chapter 2 examines the existing literature that addresses or has implications related to the research problem. Chapter 3 is an initial summative exercise in applying the principle of inverse consistency to Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. Chapter 4 delineates the research design and methodology of the study. The population, samples, delimitations, limitations, instrumentation, and procedures for the study are communicated, in addition to answering why a phenomenological study approach was selected. An analysis of data and a discussion of findings is presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE, PART 1

This chapter presents a review of the literature that is pertinent to this study. Limited research exists that directly pertains to the specific scope of this dissertation; nevertheless, I have arranged content according to relative subject. As a result, the existing literature base is examined and evaluated within each subject area. This review produced the basis for the study and assisted in the analysis of the research findings.

The following is outlined under the foundation of lived experience, race, and faith. After presenting foundational literature, a narrower focus is applied by engaging literature surrounding African Americans and African American pastors specifically. Lastly, leadership specifically related to African American pastors is reflected in the literature. Succinctly, this chapter presents a funnel from macro to micro in an effort to address the literature gap.

The Lived Experience of Race and Faith

The impact of the American history of race and religion results in nothing short of complex interpretations.[1] A 2017 Barna Group report, in partnership with Pepperdine University, highlights the state of pastors in how they are navigating life and leadership during present day complex times.[2] David Kinnaman proposes that the church does not

[1] Mark A. Noll, *God and Race in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 178–79.

[2] Barna Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2017).

necessarily need stronger leaders, but more resilient ones.[3] He further asserts that in today's times, Christian pastors are facing a hard swim upstream living in counter cultural times where laity are just as likely to be insulted and ignored as they are revered and admired.[4] Abundantly true in the African American Christian community, Black pastors must address multiple components to their existence as both black and Christian.[5]

James W. McClendon Jr.'s "biography as theology" notion further shows how life stories or lived experiences can remake the way in which theology is observed.[6] Christianity is commonly regarded as a leading force in the American culture. On the other hand, Blackness has been described by some of the most dehumanizing labels conceivable by Christians and non-Christian alike.[7]

Jesus was a Jewish man of the working class. Christ's center of consciousness as a Jew nonidentically repeats itself through the consciousness of the church and its members throughout time and cultural location. This repetition is impossible separately from Jesus's humanity which is inseparable from his Jewishness. This certainly leads to a Christology that illustrates the significance of His existence as a Jew against the backdrop that trains for the thinking and performance of our existence racially and intersectionally.[8]

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[3] David Kinnaman, introduction to *The State of Pastors*, 9.

[4] Kinnaman, "Resilience in Complexity," in *The State of Pastors*, 155.

[5] See Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991).

[6] James W. McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

[7] Matthew J. Hall, "Historical Causes of the Stain of Racism in the Southern Baptist Convention," in *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*, ed. Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017), 12.

[8] J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 170.

Moving from biblical times into the history of the United States, race continues to play a significant role in the fabric of society. J. Deotis Roberts asserts that racism is America's *national sin*.[9] Mark Noll reminds that "the United States pays a heavy price, and it pays daily, for its history of injustice to African American citizens. African Americans who wait for redress, who do not take into their own hands the challenge of shaping the future, compound this larger difficulty."[10] Regardless, African Americans still possess "the spiritual undergirding of a people with a unique and unprecedented social experience."[11] Still, as Max Anders puts it, "perhaps the greatest challenge facing the church in America today is the shallowization of the church."[12]

As the precedent literature is delineated, a dearth in the literature becomes relatively apparent. A mass number of studies look at the phenomenon of pastors and leadership, lived experience or race and faith interdependently, but none look at the phenomenon of the intersection of these aspects for African American pastors. Specifically, what truths and reflections exist among African American pastors as they face race and faith daily? What is the difference between how African Americans pastor and pastors of other races and ethnicities? There should be an abundance of insight and best practices to address these perceptions and realities found in the African American pastoral lived experience. With this in mind, the following sections further the discussion

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[9] J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 43.

[10] Noll, *God and Race*, 175.

[11] Samuel D. Procter, "The Substance of Things Hoped For: The Faith Epic of African Americans," in *What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?*, ed. Forrest E. Harris Sr., James T. Roberson, and Larry D. George (Nashville: Townsend Press, 1995), 1. Proctor also notes, "From 20 slaves who disembarked at Jamestown to 30,000,000 African American citizens in 1992, from physical bondage for 244 years to positions of trust and responsibility in the highest levels of government, religion, education, business, industry, sports, arts-entertainment, medicine, and jurisprudence, there is a record of endurance, forbearance, and spiritual discipline that is unparalleled."

[12] Max Anders, *Brave New Discipleship: Cultivating Scripture-Driven Christians in a Culture-Driven World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 2.

by examining the conceptual and empirical underpinnings of the lived experience, lived religion, race, and faith.

Lived Experience

The lived experience of social groups is common throughout literature. Groups such as pastors, teachers, African Americans, immigrants, and many more have had studies conducted using their lived experiences. One example is found in the work of James Lang and David Bochman, who studied the lived experience of distorted spirituality using phenomenological methodology in which sixteen individuals who were raised in strict, *graceless* households were interviewed in an effort to understand how to appropriately nurture children and youth in the faith.[13] Roberts argues, "We are impacted by the situation in which we live. Not only is our cultural context an index to self-understanding, but the more intimate relations in family life have their imprint upon our lives—who we are and who we become."[14] Max Van Manen equates lived experience to the phenomenology stating that it is the "source for questioning the meaning of life as we live it and the nature of responsibility of personal actions and decisions."[15] Furthermore he indicates that lived experience derives from the meaning of trial, proof, experiment, and experience.[16]

Wilhelm Dilthey first offered an explication of lived experience by describing it as self-given awareness that encompasses the consciousness of life as we live it.[17]

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[13] See James A. Lang and David J. Bochman, "The Lived Experience of Distorted Spirituality: A Phenomenological Study," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 14, no. 2 (2016): 56–83.

[14] Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King*, 9.

[15] Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 13.

[16] Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 39.

[17] See William Dilthey, *Introduction to Human Sciences* (Toronto: Scholarly Book Services, 1987).

However, Gregg Allison suggests that particularities influence one's lived experience and not all particularites are indeed self-given.[18] Edmund Husserl offers that all knowledge begins with experience although it does not all come from experience.[19] According to Van Manen, "Lived experience forms the starting point for inquiry, reflection, and interpretation."[20] Van Manen further indicates, in his 1997 effort, that the study of lived experience aims to provide concrete insight to the phenomena of people's lives.[21] In *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*, Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat state that "when people are first attracted to another worldview it is usually because of the lived lives, the praxis, of the community that holds it. The truth of the worldview must be embodied if it is to be known."[22] Essentially, life as one lives it is composed of examining as a source of research and reflection as it serves as the lived reality of a person before a reflective view is taken of it.[23]

Double consciousness. Double consciousness is a term coined by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1903's *The Souls of Black Folk*, as the contesting identities of "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.[24] The double consciousness problem of the past, present, and future lies in

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[18] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 61–62.

[19] See Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 109.

[20] Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 40.

[21] Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[22] Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 128.

[23] See Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Research*; Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[24] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Seattle: Amazon Classics, 2017), 4, Kindle.

how to reconcile the patriotism and sacrifice of the nation with the lived experience that has challenged humanity and exposes the many isms of our time.[25] This widely studied concept has been used to highlight differing social justice issues throughout literature since its inception. Nonetheless, the study of double consciousness is deficient in the faith-based spectrum, specifically in relation to African American Christians of today.

Thomas Hoyt Jr. articulates how African Americans are accustomed to functioning in a state of duality:

> Black suffering bears and has borne a double burden. On the one hand, black suffering shares the suffering that is common to all human beings, sickness, broken homes, tragedies of death, accidents, wars, etc. On the other hand, that suffering has been compounded by slavery, discrimination, and racism. This sociological grid of blacks provides a solidarity that transcends even membership in the Christian religion.[26]

Cone highlights this identity crisis held by Black Americans, and the ultimate need of belonging to a community and consciousness, saying, "You have to be *black*, with a knowledge of the history of this country, to know what America means to black persons. You also have to know what it means to be a nonperson, a nothing, a person with no past, to know what black power is all about."[27] The feeling of two-ness is dependent, in part, on the essentialist notions of Americanness and blackness, which Americanness is regularly associated with whiteness.[28] In essence, Blacks can feel a part of and apart from American society.[29]

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[25] Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 127.

[26] Thomas Hoyt Jr., "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition," in *Stony the Road We Trod: An African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 25.

[27] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 20th ann. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 12.

[28] Andrea C. Abrams, *God and Blackness: Race, Gender, and Identity in a Middle Class Afrocentric Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 175.

[29] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 174.

Double consciousness is dependent upon their being a dominant entity and an oppressed or relegated entity. In the United States, the dominant entity is associated with whiteness and blackness is typically associated with the latter.[30] Christianity is typically seen as the dominant religious entity in the United States, however African American Christianity (or theology) via the Black church is often a relegated commodity outside of the African American community.[31] Du Bois states that the remedy for double consciousness among African Americans was not dependent upon the Africanization of America or the whitening of the souls of black folk but instead the attainment of a "true African Americanness—or, in other words, the forging of a place of cultural belonging and sociopolitical integration for black people in the United States."[32] From a Christian perspective, African Americans can feel both a part of and apart from dominant Christianity. Eric Mason argues that in order to combat the double consciousness of being both Black and American, a third aspect of consciousness must be inserted and held above the others: Christ Consciousness.[33]

Intersectionality. Intersectionality can be defined as the idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities. The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, in an attempt to have African American women considered as a unique class, not African American or women individually.[34]

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[30] See Abrams, *God and Blackness*; Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*; Sernett, *African American Religious History*; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*.

[31] See Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*; Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*.

[32] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 174–75.

[33] Eric Mason states, "Being truly woke is rooted in Christ Consciousness. This is the anchor. This is the common ground. At our core, without being conscious in Christ, our souls are still in bondage and can only see things from the natural, fleshly appearance. Our Christ Consciousness gives the double consciousness depth and character. Our Christ Consciousness elevates our awareness to our responsibility to care for and love our brothers—even those who don't look like us." Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 27.

[34] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality clarifies how specific aspects of one's identity can make them invisible. This theory works to fight against doctrine that would erase distinct experiences and objections that are resultantly deemed as groundless by the dominant culture.[35]

Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe highlights how "intersectionality emphasizes that identity development in one area cannot be viewed as occurring outside of, or separate from, the developmental processes of other social identities within individuals."[36] Intersectionality is not about multiple identities, it is about how structuring makes certain identities vulnerable. In order to see the whole of a person or an issue, it is essential to unite the interconnected parts. Intersectionality, in its truest form, aids in understanding multiple spaces. In essence, "intersectionality holds domains as both separate and inextricably fused. One's racial development, therefore, cannot be truly understood apart from" their other significant social identities.[37] Walter Earl Fluker argues that intersection is a psychological, social, and spiritual place that is both personal and private, where dreams, ideals, and hopes are frequently disappointed, defeated, and demolished.[38]

Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* no. 1 (1989): 139–67. *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* is one of the foundational illustrations of the intersectionality theory via Crenshaw. In *DeGraffenreid*, five Black women sued General Motors, alleging discrimination against Black women. The court ruled in favor of General Motors as they did not accept Black women as a unique class and instead found that General Motors hired Black men and White women, which would rule out race and gender discrimination.

[35] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 146.

[36] Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III, eds., introduction to *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 3.

[37] Kristen A. Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race: The Emergence of Racial Identity as a Critical Element in Psychological, Sociological, and Ecological Perspectives on Human Development," in Wijeyesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development*, 24.

[38] Walter Earl Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 1–10.

Nancy Ramsay highlights some obvious concern surrounding intersectionality due to subjects such as identity politics where some have argued that "identity politics trumps all."[39] The fear of preferential treatment and the minimalization of some dominant groups as a result for the maximization of others has been met with vigor and reproach. The aim of intersectionality is not to rank inequalities or oppression levels, because these approaches would not accurately portray the separate identities.[40] Furthermore, from a Christian worldview, identity politics can become its own ideology where systematic sin is prevalent. Mason urges that the gospel mandate does not allow or call for reductionism which focuses on a single part to the dismay of others.[41] Still, it has even been argued that the more intersections one has, the louder one's voice should be. However, this is not the true essence of intersectionality but rather *identity politics*.

Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana indicate that although individual and group identities are complex and shaped by a combination of multiple characteristics, some statuses are more valued than others based on one's culture.[42] Therefore, in the case of African American pastors, the intersection of both race and faith must be considered when classifying and comprehending these leaders. Separating blackness, as a racial identity, and Christian, as a religious identity, creates a divide that cannot be repaired without the identities of race and faith being "integrated in a way that reflects the complexity of the lived experience."[43]

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[39] Tom Bartlett, "The Intersectionality War!" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 26, 2017.

[40] Nancy J. Ramsay, "Intersectionality: A Model for Addressing the Complexity of Oppression and Privilege," *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no. 4 (204): 455.

[41] Mason, *Woke Church*, 43.

[42] Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, "Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens," in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice*, ed. Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 6–7.

[43] Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race," 24.

In discussing what intersection means for leaders, Fluker states that "leaders of the future will need to reimagine creative ways of constructing responses at intersections where worlds collide."[44] An intersectional analysis can provide an essential lens for reframing and the formation of new knowledge due to it asserting new ways of studying experiences of oppressed and excluded groups.[45] The African Americanness and the responsibilities of the pastorate should be examined through the lens of intersectionality in order to get a complete picture of the lived experience of African American pastors. As Fluker declares, "Standing at the intersection where worlds collide is, at best, hazardous duty."[46]

Race

John W. Creswell details critical race theory as having multiple goals, inclusive of presenting stories of discrimination and identifying race as fluid and continually shaped by politics and informed by lived experiences.[47] Kristen Renn explains, "The history of racial identification and racial identity in the United States began with the European colonization of North America and continues in the twenty-first century."[48] Race is deeply tied to the American and Christian experience.[49] Fredrick Ware shares that "race, not to be restricted to the tensions between white and black, is a social construct that we have inherited for stating identity. It is a symbol for reflection on culture and

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[44] Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 10.

[45] Dill and Zambrana, *Emerging Intersections*, 5.

[46] Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 7.

[47] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 31–32.

[48] Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race," 11.

[49] Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6, Kindle.

reality."[50] Furthermore, race, as a social construct for identification and belonging, continues to impact the structure of human life and relationships throughout the world.[51] Formerly viewed as a scientific concept, race is now viewed socially. Renn contends, "The very fact that race is a social construction renders it a centrally important social concept for individual, interpersonal, group, and intergroup identities, understandings, and communication."[52]

Blackness and racism. To be black in America references specifically one's skin tone or appropriation to the African American community. Andrea C. Abrams defines *blackness* as the quality or state of being black.[53] However, blackness within itself "symbolizes contrast, not just in terms of physical appearance but also in terms of social, cultural, and ethnic difference."[54] Dwight N. Hopkins explains that the affirmation of blackness is critical as a means of grasping the theological significance of Black culture and Black racial identity.[55] On the other hand, Anthony G. Reddie states, "To be Black is to have one's experiences, history and ongoing reality ignored, disparaged and ridiculed."[56] He further recounts an incident on the school yard where he experienced

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[50] Fredrick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 112.

[51] Ware, *African American Theology*, 49.

[52] Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race," 14.

[53] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 77.

[54] Ware, *African American Theology*, 111. "That blackness is a social construct means that it is not merely *skin deep*. Blackness is not a simple matter of skin color, hair texture, and other physical features. It has something to do with these physical properties, but it is not limited to these attributes. Persons use race to create an identity for themselves and in so doing establish some form of community between them" (113).

[55] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 262.

[56] Anthony G. Reddie, *Working against the Grain: Re-Imagining Black Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 139, Kindle.

bullying by white students, and in reflection states, "My Black skin immediately marked me out as different and that difference was perceived as a threat."[57]

J. Kameron Carter details that consciousness acts as the cultural core of blackness.[58] Blackness and black culture serve interchangeably to address the context to the black experience. Abrams tells that "black culture can be defined as the specific subculture of the people of African origin," and "supposes the transmission of specific cultural patterns or principles from one generation to the next, within certain social groups."[59]

James Cone states that "the focus on blackness does not mean that *only* blacks suffer as victims in a racist society, but that blackness is an ontological symbol and a visible reality which best describes what oppression means in America."[60] Those operating in racism operate in darkness and have been blinded by it (1 John 2:11). Because racism is a sin, there is no sin that people of any race cannot commit. No individual race has a monopoly on racism. Therefore, African Americans can practice racism. Racial reconciliation cannot take place until all parties take responsibility to improve race relations.[61] W. Dwight McKissic Sr. argues that "racism is not reserved for one color or culture of people. The sin of racism is an equal opportunity employer."[62]

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[57] Reddie, *Working against the Grain*, 38.

[58] Carter, *Race*, 137.

[59] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 82.

[60] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 20th ann. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 7.

[61] W. Dwight McKissic Sr., "Epilogue 1 Why the Stain of Racism Remains in the Southern Baptist Convention: An African-American Pastor's Perspective," in Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism*, 131–35.

[62] David A. Anderson, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 18.

One prominent element of race and blackness throughout the lived experiences of African Americans is racism. According to Roberts, George Kelsey, who served as one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s professors, once described racism as a religion and a form of idolatry within itself.[63]

> Racism as a faith is a form of idolatry, for it elevates a human fact to the level of the ultimate. The god of racism is the race, the ultimate center of value . . . For the racist, race is the final point of reference for decision and action, the foundation upon which he organizes his private life, public institutions and public policy, and even his religious institutions . . . When the racist is also a Christian, which is often the case in America, he is frequently a polytheist.[64]

Throughout American history racism has had a prominent role in the national narrative. Jarvis J. Williams provides appeals for eradicating racism that can apply to "anyone who has ears to hear," including the need to be quick to listen and slow to speak on race when one lacks experience or comprehension of the concerns, and the need to understand that the kingdom of God does not revolve around whiteness or blackness or brownness.[65] Then again, "if the ear won't listen, tell it to the eye."[66]

Biblical race. Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al. argue, "The meaning of Blackness became transformed within the Christian Church during the second century, after the biblical texts were written down."[67] J. Daniel Hays reminds that Adam and Eve were not Hebrews, Egyptians or Canaanites and that the first humans were non-raced. As a result, he states that it is unfitting for the White church to view themselves as White and the

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[63] Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King*, 44.

[64] George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 24.

[65] Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain*, 45–49.

[66] See "German Soldiers React to Footage of Concentration Camps, 1945," Rare Historical Photos.com, https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/german-soldiers-forced-watch-footage-concentration-camps-1945/.

[67] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 58.

Black to view themselves as Black. Referencing the first family, he asserts that non-ethnicity and non-nationality serves as the foundation for humankind.[68]

Abrams is one of many black scholars who address biblical perspectives and people of color. She states "black liberation theologians maintain that biblical analysis and interpretation have been largely Eurocentric in that the academic field has been dominated by European Americans and that they have not adequately included the perspectives of people of color."[69] American Christianity has played a role in minimizing the contributions of persons of color in biblical narratives, academia and more. Albert Raboteau argues that American Christians have turned Christianity into a clan religion.[70] Abrams references the debates that surround the ethnic and racial makeup of biblical characters and what relevance, if any, those identities have to modern racial and ethnic groups.[71]

The negative attitudes towards people of color are mostly postbiblical. Cornel West identifies the origins of race as follows: "The very category of *race*—denoting primarily skin color—was first employed as a means of classifying human bodies by Francois Bernier, a French physician, in 1684. The first authoritative racial division of humankind is found in the influential *Natural System* (1735) of the preeminent naturalist Carolus Linnaeus."[72]

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[68] J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 47–51.

[69] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 76.

[70] Albert Raboteau, quoted in Carter, *Race*, 145.

[71] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 77.

[72] Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 100.

Social justice. There really is not a universally accepted definition for the term *social justice*.[73] As a result, everyone does not mean the same thing when using the term, so it should be defined with its usage. Nevertheless, when discussing social justice, it is essential to highlight what the Bible says about justice. Leviticus 19:9–18 points to loving your neighbor as yourself. This Scripture details how one should love others with one's possessions, words, actions, judgments, and attitudes.[74] Ken Wytsma posits that justice becomes easy to ignore throughout the lived experiences of others if the center of one's faith doesn't speak to it.[75] There are many Scriptures that directly reference the importance of and commitment to the practice of justice.[76]

J. Todd Billings unfortunately reports that many do not have a firm grasp on how justice work relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that the call to justice is often viewed as an add-on to the gospel that results in spiritual extra credit.[77] He further asserts that the goal of union with Christ and social justice is not to provide a theological "blank check" to any particular social class, but to demonstrate neighborly love towards mutual fellowship in the presence of the Lord.[78] Furthermore, justice requires action not merely dialogue.[79] However, one thing to be reminded of with justice of any kind, is that works, including works of social justice, are not the good news in its totality. The good news is

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[73] Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 179.

[74] DeYoung and Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?*, 142–47.

[75] Ken Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 102.

[76] See Exod 23:6; Deut 16:20; Lev 19:15; 1 Sam 8:3; 2 Sam 8:15; 1 Chr 18:14; 2 Chr 9:8; 1 Kgs 10:9; Esth 1:13; Job 36:6; Ps 33:5; Prov 29:4; Hos 12:6; Amos 5:24; Mic 7:9; Zeph 3:5.

[77] J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 97.

[78] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 106.

[79] Mason, *Woke Church*, 132.

received as the gift of new life by the Spirit.[80] Wytsma further advances that while "most pastors and Christian leaders will readily embrace the ethical implications of justice today, they quickly become defensive if the justice conversation is allowed anywhere near our understanding of the gospel."[81] Regardless, the call of Christianity is to be culturally based but not culturally bound.[82]

Hopkins is one of many African American scholars who are of that thought that life experiences prove that racial unity is dependent upon a justice goal.[83] In *Woke Church*, Eric Mason addresses social justice issues head on. He states that "legislation doesn't change hearts. Only the gospel does."[84] Race and social justice can be discussed and preached, but the gospel must be presented for true heart change.[85] Additionally, Mason calls forth "to ignore justice is to ignore God. Justice is not God (we don't worship justice), but His justice is one of His key attributes. This means that God's justice has practical connection to our everyday lives. We have the ability to experience it. We see God's justice personified in Jesus."[86]

Faith

The lived experience of faith is contingent upon the Bible mandates of the Great Commandment and Great Commission (see Matt 22:36–40, 28:18–20). However,

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[80] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 107–8.

[81] Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality*, 103.

[82] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 54.

[83] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Heart and Head: Black Theology, Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 10.

[84] Mason, *Woke Church*, 51.

[85] Mason, *Woke Church*, 119.

[86] Mason, *Woke Church*, 54.

Dwight Hopkins recounted lived faith in his 2002 effort, *Heart and Head: Black Theology, Past, Present, and Future* stating:

> "From 1619 to 1865, the period of slavery in the United States, religious whites used Christianity to justify the dehumanization of black folk in chattel and to bolster antiblack racism . . . based on their memory of West African ways of being equal creatures before their High God, Africans and African Americans reinterpreted Christianity as the champion of the oppressed sectors of society. In the Bible, they found a thread of liberation of enslaved Hebrew people and connected this narrative with the Jesus parables, which emphasized the healing and liberation of the outcast and of people forced into material poverty."[87]

Lived religion. Robert Orsi tells that lived religion points to religion as it is experienced daily.[88] Lived religion serves as a stark difference to popular religion which is the people's religion that has some form of social recognition.[89] Meredith McGuire further indicates that lived religion distinguishes "the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined belief and practices."[90] Religion-as-lived focuses on religious practices more so than ideas or beliefs, however practical coherence is still required for an individual to make sense of their everyday life.[91] Ultimately, this concept refers to the individual yet it is not purely subjective as people create their religious worlds together, many times sharing detailed experiences of that intersubjective truth.[92]

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[87] Hopkins, *Heart and Head*, 7.

[88] Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8–9, quoted in Charles Marsh, Peter Slade, and Sarah Azaransky, eds., *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[89] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 45–49.

[90] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 12.

[91] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 15.

[92] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 12.

According to Marsh, "Lived theology emerges from the movements, transactions, and exchanges of the Spirit of God in human experience."[93] It is imperative that lived theology piecemeals theory where it fits, considering it beneficial only when it illuminates social reality.[94] He further states, "lived theology pushes even further beyond familiar disciplinary partnerships—theology and social theory, theology and ethnography, theology and anthropology—by making space for life narratives, testimonials, observed experience, and biography in the theological enterprise."[95] Bevans questions "when theology is conceived in terms of expressing one's present experience in terms of one's faith, the question arises whether ordinary people, people who are in touch with everyday life, who suffer under the burden of anxiety and oppression and understand the joys of work and married love, are not the real theologians—with the trained professionals serving in an auxiliary role."[96]

Many times, the concepts used for describing and analyzing an individual's religions fail to comprehend how multifaceted, diverse, and flexible are the values, beliefs, and practices that make up an individual's own faith.[97] Black religion is lived. Any kind of religion is something that is expressed in lived experience.[98] Williams reminds, "Faith unites all Christians in Christ regardless of their race."[99] Hays concurs:

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[93] Charles Marsh, introduction to Marsh, Slade, and Azaransky, *Lived Theology*, 11.

[94] Marsh, introduction to *Lived Theology*, 8.

[95] Marsh, introduction to *Lived Theology*, 7–8.

[96] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 18.

[97] McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 5.

[98] Ware, *African American Theology*, 51.

[99] Jarvis J. Williams, *One New Man: The Cross and Racial Reconciliation in Pauline Theology* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), loc. 374, Kindle.

"God's plan is not just that the gospel will go to all peoples, but that all peoples will be brought together through the gospel to form one people in Christ."[100]

Imago Dei. Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The Christian doctrine of imago Dei teaches that every human bears the image of God and possesses intrinsic value and fundamental, unassailable dignity.[101] Milliard Erickson reports that the true human is not found in human society but rather the pre-fall being that came from God; it is necessary to look at the original state of humans in order to fully access what it means to be human.[102] He later channels Karl Barth in stating that one learns about humanity not by studying humans but by studying Christ.[103] Our neighbors are to be considered in light of the *imago Dei*. "From the lack of diverse racial representation in superheroes stories to Christian movies to homeschooling curriculum, there is a pressing gospel need to demonstrate the dignity of each individual," Mason argues.[104]

In reference to the *imago Dei*, Soong-Chan Rah writes that "racism declares, explicitly or implicitly, that the full expression of this image is found only in certain races . . . . The racialization of the *imago Dei* is a human attempt to elevate human standards above and in place of God."[105] Williams and Jones contend, "The separation of

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[100] Hays, *From Every People*, 157.

[101] Bruce Riley Ashford, "Bearing Witness to a Whole-Life, Pro-Life Ethic," in *For God So Loved the World: A Blueprint for Kingdom Diversity*, ed. Walter R. Strickland II and Dayton Hartman (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 64–65.

[102] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 458–60.

[103] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 464.

[104] Mason, *Woke Church*, 145.

[105] Soong-Chan Rah, "The Sin of Racism: Racialization of the Image of God," in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 206–7.

humans into ranks of superiority and inferiority differentiated by skin color is a direct assault on the doctrine of creation and an insult to the imago Dei, the image of God in which every human is made. Racial superiority is also directly subversive of the gospel of Christ, effectively denying the full power of his substitutionary atonement and undermining the faithful preaching of the gospel to all persons and to all nations."[106] An action step that Christians should engage in to bring healing and justice into the forefront is to make *imago Dei* "a part of the foundational biblical and gospel education for all believers. Just as the Jerusalem Council clarified issues that were to be foundational Christian practices for Gentiles, so the Western church needs the valuing of people as created in the image of God as a key part of its teaching," says Mason.[107] Separatism of humans into ranks of superiority and inferiority differentiated by skin color is "an insult to the imago Dei" Williams and Jones argue.[108] For humanity to be the image of God, argues Ince, "it must embody beautiful community – unity in diversity, diversity in unity."[109]

In *Union with Christ*, Billings calls it a contradiction to "celebrate communion with Christ while ignoring the wounded bodies in our midst."[110] Further articulating, "while there is still a legitimate distinction between communion in the body of Christ and the love of neighbor in society, we cannot act as if one is optional."[111] Tony Evans recounted a perspective contradiction in the *imago Dei*:

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[106] Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain*, 4.

[107] Mason, *Woke Church*, 36.

[108] Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain*, 4.

[109] Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 54.

[110] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 116.

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

> On one side, I was being told that I was created in the image of God and therefore had value. On a pragmatic basis, however, it appeared to me that the benefits of possessing that divine image were reserved for white people because it seemed that they were the real benefactors of God's kingdom on earth.[112]

Even so, Ware addresses the *imago Dei* in a fashion that does not allow any identity to topple that of Christian, saying, "Black or any other racial of ethnic designation is not the same as the image of God. Rather, it is the image of God that brings dignity and value to each person regardless of their social identification."[113] Erickson proclaims that it is the image of God that makes humans human.[114]

The Lived Experience of African American Pastors

This section specifically considers the lived experience of African American pastors.[115] Ware shares that "the concept of God at the center of African American Christian faith is God as *Waymaker*. As Waymaker, God creates (out of nothing) or makes (from existing things) ways, that is, opportunities for persons to survive and thrive."[116] God being seen as a Waymaker is essential to the African American Christian faith. It is a gateway to putting one's trust fully in God and allowing Him to further guide in one's spiritual walk and daily life. This is an indispensable part of the community and reflective of the African American context.[117] However, the meaning of community can

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[112] Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 184, Kindle.

[113] Ware, *African American Theology*, 111.

[114] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 459.

[115] It is important to note that the sequence of the following section does not imply order of importance or hierarchy.

[116] Ware, *African American Theology*, 138.

[117] See Allison, *Embodied*, 64. Here, Allison defines context as "the interrelated conditions or settings in which human beings live, act, and understand their experiences." This is a common understasning amongst the community due to shared experience(s) and shared history as Blacks in the United States.

fluctuate. Although faith is an integral component of black life, community equates to the standing of African Americans which parallels the overall belief system. Among African Americans, community means black solidarity or black unity.[118] This sense of community, historically, is valued over individualism.

Historically, African Americans had their community and individualism stripped away from them hundreds of years ago. Roberts argues, "Even though legalized slavery ended in 1865, blacks still live in its shadow. The influence of slavery is intergenerational; it is transmitted through the various institutions of society."[119] Raphael Warnock illuminates the result of racism and Christianity specifically, in *The Divided Mind of the Black Church* when he states that "the tragedy and depth of racism ensures the relevance of such a designation for black congregations and caucuses of various configurations who, consciously and unconsciously, live within the conflicting intersectionality of being black and Christian in America."[120]

All things considered, the African American pastor is then put in between a rock and a hard place. L. H. Whelchel shares that the black pastor has historically played a major role throughout the entirety of the African American experience. "Sometimes heroes, occasionally sell-outs, always figures of prominence in the community," Black pastors have contributed to American history and have aided in the inclusiveness of American Christianity.[121] Floyd-Thomas et al. details the African American pastor as "a critical interpreter of the Black experience. The pastor interprets the life of Black people in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and thereby provides for, teaches, and inspires

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[118] Ware, *African American Theology*, 159.

[119] Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King*, 43.

[120] Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 9.

[121] L. H. Whelchel, *The History and Heritage of African American Churches: A Way Out of No Way* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2011), 237.

the moral dynamics needed for everyday living, as well as the theological ideals and cultural wisdom needed for commonsense survival and sanity."[122] Evans tells of the usage of the Bible by the Black preacher to meet that objective:

> The Bible became the authoritative sourcebook for the preacher and his congregation's developing understanding of God. However, the Bible was not used as a means of developing an esoteric epistemology. When the black preacher opened his Bible, it was more for the interpretation of recent experience than for detailed exegetical analysis. The different preaching styles between the black and white preacher resulted from their different goals: The black preacher looked to the Bible for an ethical view of life that met the personal needs of the members of his community; the white preacher looked for an epistemological system of thought.[123]

E. Franklin Frazier highlights the Black preacher as someone who, too, was on the plantation during slavery but had some education regarding the Bible.[124] One notable Black preacher, Martin Luther King Jr., highlighted the importance of leadership and social organization coming from the Black church and its Black pastor. Essentially, history tells that the Black pastor has never been removed from his blackness; therefore, the African American experience and the Black church experience intersected with being the spiritual leader are essential to the overall makeup of the Black pastor.

African American Experience

Mason declares that "most African Americans have had at least two life-altering experiences that are burned into their memory—the moment they realized they were black and the moment they realized that was a problem."[125] This declaration still applies to Black pastors as they are first identified by race before ministry assignment. Nevertheless, Black people, like all others, can find historical, cultural, and racial identity

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[122] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 157.

[123] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 168.

[124] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 23.

[125] Mason, *Woke Church*, 27.

in Christ as He can relate to all people in all situations.[126] Foster and Smith detail the Black experience as "the life and world of any and all people of color who must or will identify themselves as being of African descent. It is the ever-present reality of knowing and feeling and living as a non-white in a white-oriented and white-controlled society. It is the Black group experience, historic and present, of being oppressed, deprived, excluded, alienated and rejected."[127]

Literature points towards a number of crossings concerning the African American community. Homer Ashby Jr. focuses in on the issues of cultural identity, connectedness and vision as being connected. "The cultural identity of black people in the future will be in large part determined by their connectedness to one another and their sense of vision for the future."[128] Furthermore, Floyd-Thomas et al. emphasize that African American virtue ethics claim that thinking and doing are inherently connected to the essence of existence in that African Americans are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God.[129]

The Lived Experience of Pastors

"Before he or she is a church leader, a pastor is a human being. And nothing about being a pastor precludes church leaders from the full human experience—good, bad, and ugly."[130] First Samuel 13:14 says, **"**The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people." Bill Hull notes that church change begins

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[126] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 121.

[127] Charles R. Foster and Fred Smith, *Black Religious Experience: Conversations on Double Consciousness and the Work of Grant Shockley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 31; Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 3.

[128] Homer U. Ashby Jr., *Our Home Is over Jordan: A Black Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 71.

[129] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 129; See Ps 139:14; Gen 1:27.

[130] Barna Group, *The State of Pastors*, 10.

in the souls of pastors.[131] In one of his sermons concerning the rigors of pastoral leadership, Augustine preaches, "It is unthinkable that good shepherds could be lacking now. Far be it from us that they should be lacking—far be it from God's mercy not to produce them and establish them! Of course, if there are good sheep, there are also good shepherds, because good shepherds are made out of good sheep."[132]

Thabiti Anyabwile declares that the church's strength and health depends on restoring a biblical model of pastoral ministry and biblical expectations to the church.[133] He identifies that some traditional and contemporary models seen throughout Black churches today include pastors who acts as spiritual leader, community organizer, social worker, and counselor and entrepreneurs and motivational speakers respectively.[134] While noble tasks, Anyabwile highlights negative outcomes as a result of these efforts because they do not reveal biblical rationale. Instead, Scripture highlights that pastoral ministry requires certain qualifications surrounding character and maturity (see 1 Tim 3:1–7). Paul's letters to Timothy further indicates that the responsibilities of pastors surround prayer, preaching and teaching, discipling other teachers, and shepherding the sheep (see 1 Tim 2, 4; 2 Tim 2, 4).

Dale P. Andrews describes how "early generations of black preachers started predominantly in apprenticeship positions under more mature preachers. This tradition prevails today. God was held certainly as the primary teacher. But the call to ministry and the gifts of preaching were developed in apprenticed positions or on-the-job training."[135]

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[131] Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 201.

[132] Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom From the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 5; see Augustine, *Sermon* 46.30.

[133] Thabiti Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church: A Call to Reclaim a Sacred Institution* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 99.

[134] Anyabwile, *Reviving the Black Church*, 100–103.

[135] Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and*

Mason reports that the pastor-teacher is responsible for leading the church towards the utilization of the mind of Christ and must be fully aware and active in the issues of race and injustice in the country.[136] William A. Jones declares that the role of the pastor-theologian is to tell the truth about God as well as the human condition.[137] The role of pastor "includes creating an environment of concern and care, enabling worshippers to sing and pray, keeping the needs of people and the community in mind, and using Scripture and proclamation in ways that contribute to the ability of those in crisis to have courage and strength sufficient to move through emotional and interpersonal challenges."[138] Furthermore, James H. Harris lists a requirement for all pastors: "It is essential that the pastor/theologian be conversant with the pain of those whom he or she is called to serve."[139]

Pastors are to become students of what people in the congregation and community are thinking as well as those who influence them, which ultimately prompts leaders to go beyond the bounds of the church.[140] Similar to Cone's assertion of saved souls and saved bodies, Evans contends that not only is the African American pastor responsible to the theological and spiritual aspects of life, he also addresses the political

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African American Folk Religion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 21.

[136] Mason, *Woke Church*, 25.

[137] William A. Jones, "The Theologian as Pastor," in Harris, Roberson, and George, *What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?*, 103.

[138] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 197.

[139] James H. Harris, "The Theologian as Pastor: Preaching Liberation," in Harris, Roberson, and George, *What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?*, 91.

[139] Jones, "The Theologian as Pastor," 103.

[140] Mason, *Woke Church*, 111.

and social.[141] Furthermore, the pastor serves to inform the congregation of their role as resources and advocates in the community outside of the worship context.[142]

Preaching. Preaching is the center of the Black church, its worship experience, and urban revolution and change. James Harris states that preaching from the Black pulpit must address the needs of the parishioners while also addressing social and political questions and life and death. Therefore, it is one of the most important functions of the pastor who also serves as primary theologian.[143] "Pastoral preaching is the ministry of care that has developed within the larger context of corporate care with its traditions of spiritual and communal values," Floyd-Thomas et al state.[144] Historically, the black preacher would present and interpret biblical stories into the experiences of black people translating a black hermeneutic that spoke directly towards the application to African American life.[145] Often viewed as the primary means of communication of pastor to congregants, preaching in African American churches often takes the form of prophetic preaching. Prophetic preaching is the faith consciousness that asserts itself unwaveringly on social justice whether it is interpersonal, political, economic, or cultural by boldly calling all people through the Word of God to His original intention for all things.[146] Mason argues, "Prophetic preaching must: contain the gospel, be centered on Jesus, be clear on the issues, be biblically informed, be rhetorically contending, provide visionary

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[141] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 169.

[142] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 197.

[143] Harris, "The Theologian as Pastor," 91; Christopher W. Brooks, *Urban Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 106, Kindle.

[144] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 205.

[145] Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 16–23.

[146] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 205–6; Mason, *Woke Church*, 117.

hope, and offer clear statements of action."[147] Prophetic preaching requires one to be biblically drenched and knowledgeable culturally.[148]

African American Pastor: An Intersection

The African American pastor serves as the link between past and present, old and new. Tony Evans shares that this assignment of linkage can be traced back to the cultural transformation experienced by African Americans: the transition from African freedom to American slavery; the transition from American slavery to American freedom during Reconstruction; the transition from the South to the North during and following World War I; and the transition from segregation to integration during the civil rights movement.[149] The African American pastor possesses a minimum of three "identities": African American, Christian, and pastor. Historically, the African American pastor has played a vital role in the narrative of African Americans since the blacks were brought to the United States. However, in recent times, it can appear as if the worries of W. E. B. Du Bois have sprouted into manifestation. Du Bois held fears about "grand narratives, overly general accounts about the lives of black Americans, his apprehensions (often muted) about Western science's claims to universality, and his attempt to offer a local and particular interpretation of the meaning of African American religious communities" according to Curtis Evans.[150] Du Bois wrote, "I wanted to explain the difficulties of race and the ways in which these difficulties caused political and economic troubles."[151]

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[147] Mason, *Woke Church*, 34–35.

[148] Mason, *Woke Church*, 117.

[149] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 169.

[150] Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141.

[151] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 54.

This serves as a true issue for the Black church as well as the African American community. Seeing that the Black pastor is indeed part of both entities (and essentially a leader in both), it must be understood that the Black pastor functions in a dual role. According to George Barna and Harry Jackson, Black preachers are socially bilingual.[152] Furthermore, Barna states that 63 percent of African American considered Black pastors (of Black churches) as the most important leaders in the African American community.[153] Though illustrated that some argue as to the importance of the Black church and its leader, Du Bois once noted that what is true of the Negro in one area of the country is not necessarily true for another in a different area.[154] Du Bois's methodology assumed that African Americans were part of the human race and were capable of improvement and culture, which ultimately set him apart from many of the white interpreters of the black culture.[155] As a result, this pervasive problem serves as an opportunity for Black pastors to access their effectiveness as agents of the gospel.

Historically, the American church has "legitimated ecclesial separation based on race and class."[156] This ecclesial separation fundamentally created "The Black church" as patrons created sanctuaries and safe spaces to fit their ideals and needs. Sense of Belonging was and is important when looking for a "church home" or community. Sernett states, "Religious belonging is an elemental bond of group identity. Communities define themselves around a set of religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals."[157] While the

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[152] George Barna and Harry Jackson Jr., *High Impact African-American Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 46–66. By serving as socially bilingual, African American pastors have to function in two spheres and serve two, sometimes overlapping, communities: faith and race.

[153] Barna and Jackson, *High Impact African-American Churches*, 46–66.

[154] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 150.

[155] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*.

[156] Billings, *Union with Christ*, 98.

[157] Sernett, *African American Religious History*, 3.

black church cultivated a community of care, American culture remains unmoved by the unreconciled strivings prevalent in African American double consciousness, which is a direct result of Western individualism.[158] James Harris articulates that Black America must walk the fine line of double consciousness in their faith; viewing their faith and spiritual walk from the eyes of their White brethren and their own while retreating to their own churches and safe spaces. Black America does not look like the culturally and racially homogeneous church.[159] The Black church in most cases caters to patrons who identify as one of their own. According to Jeffrey Tribble, in the "twenty-first century, the black church is being transformed by internal and external forces. As in the past, the social crises in the black community place special burdens on the black church"; and in turn, the Black pastor.[160]

The Black church. Cone articulates that the way of life for the black community is survival, which leads to the Black theology being a theology of liberation.[161] Harris notes, "Managing the church in today's hostile social environment, which perpetuates inequality and injustice, requires a commitment to liberation grounded in the belief that God's divine plan does not include the subjugation of blacks."[162] The father of black liberation theology, James Cone articulated that all of his works were motivated by a central question of how to reconcile the gospel message of liberation with the reality of black oppression.[163] The "gospel message of liberation" is a concept that

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[158] Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 56.

[159] James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 89.

[160] Jeffrey L. Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 8.

[161] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1, 12–16.

[162] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 71.

[163] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), loc.

brings about conflict and discomfort in many circles and churches not connected to the Black church or other oppressed groups. "Blacks tend to share a perspective on the Bible that celebrates God's liberating action in history. Traditionally, this liberation has centered on salvation from the power of sin and evil, but there has always been a parallel emphasis for blacks on salvation from the evil concretized in racial exclusivity and the dehumanization of the poor," Hoyt explains.[164] Renowned Black theologians like J. Deotis Roberts and James Cone articulate a black liberation where those who oppose or are indifferent to the liberation of Blacks from oppression as proponents of the *God of racism*.[165] "Slavery, segregation, and systemic racism in America have excluded black people from equal opportunities in society and human fulfillment," Andrews argues.[166] As a result, the Black church has historically served as a main support system for black America.

A 2010 article in the *Huffington Post* "The Black Church Is Dead" argues that the Black church is no longer at the center of the black community.[167] Eddie Glaude, a PhD presently teaching at Princeton University, argues that the conservative bent of the [black] pastor and church is rarely discussed aiding in the disappearance of the black church "as central to black life and as a repository for the social and moral conscience of the nation."[168] A response to Glaude's work, a panel discussion at Columbia University, focused on pluralism, gender inclusion, and the prophetic role of the Black church. From

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215, Kindle.

[164] Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for Black Church Tradition," 29–30.

[165] William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 71–78.

[166] Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 30.

[167] Eddie Glaude Jr., "The Black Church Is Dead," *Huffington Post*, last modified August 23, 2012, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/eddie-glaude-jr-phd/the-black-church-is-dead_b_473815.html.

[168] Glaude, "The Black Church Is Dead."

this gathering, it was identified that the Black church struggles with purpose and aim and the relationship between the priestly and prophetic will continue to serve as an issue in the Black community.[169] This assertion does not stray away from Cone's comments on the state of the Black church years prior. In an appearance at Tavis Smiley's "The State of Black America," Cone argued that the Black church has lost a good understanding of its mission of both saving souls and saving bodies.[170] Raphael Warnock doubles down by asserting a fundamental error occurs when considering what it means to be saved is to act as if the spiritual and the physical are unrelated or secondary to God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ.[171]

In 1917, James Weldon Johnson, field secretary for the NAACP called on the Black church to become an instrument for bettering the conditions of the race.[172] Additionally, he stated that the race needs union to advance and achieve its goal and that the church's solidification "would constitute a force within the race that could not be defeated."[173] Curtis Evans consequentially asserts that white interpretations of black religion rarely involve the specificity that attention to Black churches for Black leaders who are concerned for the issues within their own communities.[174] The Black church provided leadership and location for the African American community. Leaders like

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[169] See https://ircpl.columbia.edu/2010/10/21/is-the-black-church-dead-3/ for transcript.

[170] James Cone, "The State of the Black Church," Black Theology Project, April 28, 2018, video of conference presentation, https://btpbase.org/james-cone-state-of-the-black-church/. The *saving bodies* portion of this assertion is something of much debate in spheres then and now, as it connects directly with Cone's black liberation theology. However, from this statement, Cone argues that the mission of, specifically, the Black church is indeed twofold: souls and bodies.

[171] Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 95.

[172] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 177.

[173] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*; James Weldon Johnson, "The Power of the Negro Church," in *Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson: The New York Age Editorials (1914–1923)*, vol. 1, ed. Sondra Kathyrn Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 146–47.

[174] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 9.

Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and John Lewis were developed in the church. These same churches also served as meeting and gathering places for the community at large. In addition to leadership and location, "the church supplied the most important element of all, the principle of love—the means of forgiving one's enemies," Carter notes.[175] Historically, black leaders within the Black church wanted to find ways to unite Black communities in a collective fashion to take on the problem of racial oppression in the United States.[176]

Ashby sheds light on some of the inconsistencies or troubles of black faith leaders and its corresponding effect on the Black community: "African American pastoral leaders have not always modeled the fidelity that the church preaches and teaches" and this has aided the criticism of the Black church and the African American community.[177] James Harris shares how the Black church historically has balanced its Christ-centered worship and theology with a pursuit for social and political reform in the community.[178] According to Evans,

> Within the context of the suffering and economic hardship of the Great Depression, the social science race relations experts, black and white, became the principle 'voices' of black Americans. They conduced detailed studies of every aspect of the Negro problem. Black family life, churches, economics, and a host of other issues were examined in an attempt to get to the roots of the pressing problems in the black community. Increasing pressure on the black churches to 'perform' and do something about the economic and social plight of blacks was one primary result of these developments.[179]

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[175] Anthony J. Carter, *Black and Reformed: Seeing God's Sovereignty in the African-American Christian Experience*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2016), 59–60.

[176] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 9.

[177] Ashby, *Our Home Is over Jordan*, 123.

[178] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 32.

[179] Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion*, 237.

There is some disagreement surrounding whether the cultural past of African Americans presently influence their behaviors and will alter their status in American life.[180]

Though Cone is credited with presenting the concept of black liberation theology, a number of black leaders pre-empted and have continued that thought highlighting the importance of saving bodies.[181] The worth of people has been at the forefront of the Black church from its inception, which in turn makes the chants of Black Lives Matter more common to many Black church congregants.[182] Andrews states, "In the midst of racial injustice, black churches seek to fulfill the communal, psychological, educational, economic, and political needs of black people."[183] The Black church must reconcile Christian freedom, which is not a racial issue, with the fact of prejudice, oppression, and injustice still prevailing today, even through some who identify as Christians.[184]

Racial tension and reconciliation. In the foreword of Eric Mason's *Woke Church*, Ligon Duncan suggests that "racial tensions in our churches and our nation would be in a significantly better state if the Reformed community in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had simply rightly applied the second great commandment."[185] Today's racial tension events are not isolated. Throughout history a number of events have occurred throughout the nation including, but not limited to, Atlanta race riots of 1906, East St. Louis race riots of 1917, Chicago race riots of 1919,

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[180] Evans, 262.

[181] Additional leaders include, but are not limited to, Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., J. Deotis Roberts, and Dwight Hopkins.

[182] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 115.

[183] Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 30.

[184] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 23.

[185] Duncan, foreword to *Woke Church*, 16.

Washington DC riots of 1919, Knoxville, Tennessee, race riots of 1919, the destruction of Black Wallstreet in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Rosewood massacre of 1923, and more.[186] The occurrence of these events have left an everlasting mark on history and are issues of importance, specifically within the African American community. The impact of the aforementioned ultimately differed. However, it forced congregants to become community. This allowed the creation of the spheres of this community that influence their experience.

God, community, family, and person serve as the four constitutive spheres of African American people that arise out of problems identified in their daily experiences and inform their moral thought.[187] Daily experiences could be the experience of success or suffering within the confines of society. Hoyt says, "Among blacks there is a commonality of suffering, and throughout their history in America this has led to a corporate caring for the whole of the community and not a mere personal concern for salvation."[188] Renowned African American scholar J. Deotis Roberts highlights continually how many African Americans do not agree with or accept the notion that their suffering as a people has some greater purpose.[189] Subsequently, Fredrick Ware asserts that redemptive suffering and theodicy—the task of reconciling the empirical reality of black people suffering to belief in a benevolent and powerful God—is a concern for black leaders.[190] Ware concludes that faith in God is crucial for African

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[186] Mason, *Woke Church*, 84–87. Furthermore, there have been a number of racially motivated events that have occurred in the twenty-first century which have tested race relations in the United States. These events or incidents include, but are not limited to, the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown Jr., and Sandra Gray, and the race-related protests in Charlottesville, Virginia.

[187] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 127.

[188] Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for Black Church Tradition," 29.

[189] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 23.

[190] Ware, *African American Theology*, 136.

American believers and their effort to understand, endure, and overcome suffering of past, present, and future.[191]

Mason argues,

> The Civil Rights era created a greater schism than already existed because it highlighted the differences in how the black church and the white church responded to the issue of racism. White evangelicalism's lack of involvement in the movement as a whole hurt our long-term relationships with one another. Even to this day, the black church has never forgotten the brash disconnect of Christian conservativism's silence or verbal support of segregation.[192]

With the Black church unable to forget the disconnect between it and its White brethren, it has been difficult for the African American community to mend this particular relationship. African Americans are often taught in their communities to be aware of cultural issues especially those pertaining to race relations, constructing a pre-determined disposition within them. This disposition remains part of the African American consciousness well into adulthood.

Ephesians 2:14–22 points towards unity as a theological issue and not simply a social one. Ince argues that as God's people,

> when we are mutually glorfying, speaking, and acting in ways that enhance the reputations of one another, striving to bring praise and honor to others, exhibiting a mutual deference, a willingness to serve one another, and submit to one another—especially across lines of difference—we are imaging God's beauty.[193]

Irrespective of efforts towards true racial reconciliation, Harris asserts that "historically, evangelistic fervor by preachers and laypersons, blacks and whites, has not altered the social structure in a manner that favors the poor and oppressed."[194] Williams's and Jones's *Removing the Stain of Racism* highlights the stain of racism specifically

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[191] Ware, *African American Theology*, 138.

[192] Mason, *Woke Church*, 89.

[193] Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 55.

[194] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 3.

referencing the Southern Baptist Convention. However, this stain continues to permeate the church as a whole, the one new man in Christ in Ephesians 2:11–22 and the new song of all tongues and nations in Revelation 5:9.[195] Ultimately, the division in the American church is rooted in disconnection from one another.[196]

In a recent Barna Research survey, 56 percent of self-identified evangelicals agree that persons of color are often at a social disadvantage which is 11 points lower than the national average. However, 95 percent of evangelicals believe that church plays a critical role in racial reconciliation, which is 22 points higher than the national average.[197] Per this research, the individuals who are most needed to address reconciliation do not believe the issues exists as much as other Americans. Mason indicates that some exude fear in the face of racial reconciliation and multiethnic churches, if it comes at the expense of the sacrifice of the empowerment of African Americans.[198] T. Vaughn Walker concludes that there must be a resistance towards the temptation to minimize, deny, or even ignore the reality that a stain of racism still permeates the culture and the Christian landscape.[199]

Wokeness. Being or staying "woke" has pervaded modern thinking, specifically among the African American community. "Being woke" and "staying woke" signify the conscious state of someone in the African American community, thus symbolizing the amount of awareness and knowledge an individual draws from their

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[195] Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain*, xxv.

[196] Mason, *Woke Church*, 24.

[197] Barna Group, "Black Lives Matter and Racial Tension in America," Barna Group Research: Culture and Media, May 5, 2016, https://barna.org/research/culture-media/research-release/black-lives-matter-and-racial-tension-in-america.

[198] Mason, *Woke Church*, 100–101.

[199] T. Vaughn Walker, "Postscript: Southern Baptists Can Remove the Stain of Racism From the Southern Baptist Convention," in Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism*, 146.

community. Mason says, "Being woke has to do with seeing all of the issues and being able to connect cultural, socio-economic, philosophical, historical, and ethical dots."[200] This knowledge provides a gateway to understanding the societal norms for African American culture, where culture is continually social and concerned with the conservation and realization of values.[201] To be woke is to be aware, acknowledge truth, be accountable, and to be active. Therefore, to be truly *woke*, the people of god must reclaim their biblical identity as such.[202]

In some arguments against black theology or the expression of the African American Christian experience, Blacks are directly or indirectly encouraged to minimize their cultural competence to avoid addressing Black pain and suffering. Essentially arguing Christ against a culture, He created or allowed.[203] "Being woke" signifies one is in tune with the injustices and true meaning of the culture and its origins. Furthermore, it acknowledges the presence of racism and its effect on the African American community. It passes down the pain of pasts transgressions against them as well. "One generation's pain and fears are passed on to the next . . . and the next and the next. There is a thread that links all of us inexorably to the past. It doesn't mean that we must repeat the sins of racism and bigotry of the past, but it does mean that they impact us in some way."[204] The pain is a constant reminder of an unspoken truth playing out across America, racism still exists.

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[200] Mason, *Woke Church*, 25.

[201] D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 12.

[202] Mason, *Woke Church*, 32, 34.

[203] Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 223.

[204] Mason, *Woke Church*, 77.

Mason illustrates the picture of racial tension in modern America as racial tension is seemingly on the rise within the United States. Every week, another incident involving racial tension comes across the headlines and dominates the news feeds.[205] These constant happenings create negative and hostile feelings toward persons that do not identify with the African American community or do not share the same views. These happenings are starting to become the norm and could begin to desensitize the rest of society to the ills of particular communities. However, it leads one to question, does the Bible address the oppression of the African American community. It leads to one to question how "biblically woke" the followers of God are. Mason tells that being biblically woke means to hold the majority culture accountable for the racial injustice that permeates society; but it also means to do so in Christian love and with expectation of redemptive results. Doing otherwise would be to the dismay of God.[206]

The Lived Experience of the African American Pastor's Impact on Leadership

In the foreword to Timothy Paul Jones and Michael Wilder's *The God Who Goes before You*, R. Albert Mohler Jr. states, "Christian leaders are called to convictional leadership, and that means leadership defined by beliefs that are transformed into corporate action."[207] Instead of focusing on personal feelings or needs spiritually and the religious practices that order them, some challenges such as the causes and effects of double consciousness insist that one pauses and contemplates what one claims to believe and how one acts.[208]

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[205] Mason, *Woke Church*, 77.

[206] Mason, *Woke Church*, 112.

[207] R. Albert Mohler, Jr., foreword to *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership*, by Timothy Paul Jones and Michael Wilder (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), loc. 213, Kindle.

[208] Hopkins, *Heart and Head*, 7–19.

Bruce A. Ware affirms that any theology of leadership must begin with the recognition of that church that is spoken of is the church of Jesus Christ.[209] Christ has ultimate headship of the church and therefore, everything must begin with Him.[210] Thus, pastors and congregants are under the authority of Christ.[211] Don Howell Jr. states that Christian pastors "must align their practice of leadership with these most essential priorities on the expressed heart of God."[212] Andrew M. Davis defines Christian leadership as "the God-given ability through the Holy Spirit to influence people by word and example to achieve God's purposes as revealed in the Scriptures."[213] Walter Earl Fluker states that the defining concepts of ethical leadership are character, civility, and community.[214]

Cornel West says "if your success is defined as being well adjusted to injustice and well adapted to indifference, then we don't want successful leaders. We want great leaders who love the people enough and respect the people enough to be unbought, unbound, unafraid, and unintimidated to tell the truth."[215] Tony Evans asserts that "without question the black preacher in America has been the most visible, vocal,

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[209] Bruce A. Ware, "Putting It All Together: A Theology of Church Leadership," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel Ministry, 2014), 285.

[210] See 1 Pet 5:1–4; Matt 16:18; Eph 1:20–23.

[211] Ware, "Putting It All Together," 288.

[212] Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 3.

[213] Andrew M. Davis, "Leading the Church in Today's World: What It Means Practically to Shepherd God's Flock," in Merkle and Schreiner, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 312.

[214] Fluker, *Ethical Leadership*, 10.

[215] Crystal Blanton, "Inspiration, Reflection and Justice: Spirituality through the Voices of Our Leaders," *Daughters of Eve* (blog), February 5, 2013, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/daughtersofeve/2013/02/inspiration-reflection-and-justice-spirituality-through-the-voices-of-our-leaders/.

influential, and strategic leader black America has ever had."[216] Furthermore, he argues that in present times, the African American pastor has taken a diminished role in the African American community partly because of the fact that the spiritual has become secondary to the social and political in today's times.[217] Charles Shelby Rooks once stated that "the black minister is expected by the Black church and the Black community to provide leadership, energy, and wisdom in the struggle to change the oppressive economic, social, and political burdens of black life in America."[218]

Andrew Harris reminds that "God has entrusted a weighty responsibility on his under-shepherds, but his sovereign power is sufficient for them to be faithful and fruitful in that responsibility. The shepherding of Christ's sheep requires skill and passion, insight and dedication."[219] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck assert that "the Christian life is not about trying daily, but dying daily."[220] J. Oswald Sanders concurs: "True greatness, true leadership, is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve you. True service is never without cost."[221] "Spiritual Leadership" includes a massive list of responsibilities including service, discipline, guidance, initiative and more.[222]

Tribble tells that "when a pastor, his or her church members, and community leaders choose to transform the church in response to changes in the world around it, they

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[216] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 163.

[217] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 179.

[218] Harris, *Pastoral Theology*, 71.

[219] Davis, "Leading the Church in Today's World," 334.

[220] Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 6.

[221] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 14.

[222] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 151–57.

will fashion a range of adaptive strategies."[223] However, it is imperative to be mindful of the surrounding influences on the congregation and community. Charles Taylor positions that "people are already likely to accept or reject reasons for belief before they even hear them because the greater story is already conditioning them to accept or reject *proofs* of God's existence and the truth of Christianity."[224] Anders addresses the role of media in today's society versus that of the past. In this discussion, he proclaims that "we become what we behold."[225] Then, what is it that the African American community beholds and ultimately becomes when news and media outlets report continually on the unjust deaths of African Americans versus that of non-Black killers taken into custody with care and concern?[226]

Matthew D. Kim asserts that even in preaching ministry, "we are either perpetuating prejudice with our silence or making progress toward peace, healing, and reconciliation in our churches."[227] Reconciliation makes Christians one, but it does not make Christians the same.[228] Mason emphasizes that cultural and community issues must be addressed, with Jesus at the center, exegetically, expositionally, theologically, historically, critically, lovingly, humbly, and passionately.[229] Pastoral leadership consists

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[223] Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership*, 88.

[224] Trevin K. Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 132–33.

[225] Anders, *Brave New Discipleship*, 12.

[226] "Officers Got Charleston Church Shooting [Suspect (*sic*)] Burger King after His Arrest," Fox 8 News Cleveland, last modified June 23, 2015, https://fox8.com/2015/06/23/officers-took-charleston-church-shooting-suspect-to-burger-king-on-his-way-to-jail/.

[227] Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 95.

[228] Chris Williamson, *One but Not the Same: God's Diverse Kingdom Come through Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2009), xxiv.

[229] Mason, *Woke Church*, 122.

of articulating that God is still speaking as He "works for salvation in the midst of human context, its cultures, its events, its suffering, its joys."[230] The Christian's confessional beliefs and convictional beliefs should be in alignment with one another.[231] This alignment is identified by the fruit produced from the work as there must be more than good intentions for positive change and mission fulfillment to occur.[232]

Leadership aligns God's people with God's mission.[233] The center of leadership development must be the church.[234] It is the responsibility of the pastor to lead in accordance to the Word of God. "The world is impacted and improved by the leaders the Church develops and deploys," Geiger and Peck argue.[235] Bevans addresses the relationship between contextualization and theology: "Theology that is contextual realizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression."[236] Kevin L. Smith articulates that "pastors have influence in at least two areas: their public preaching ministries and their leadership undergirded by the personal example of their lives."[237] Christopher A. Beeley argues that one of the most trustworthy

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[230] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 15.

[231] Steve Wilkins and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22–24. Confessional beliefs are defined as ideas that remain only on an intellectual or intentional level; convictional beliefs are the beliefs that are reflected in action. Wilkins and Sanford point out that Christians find it much easier to talk a good game (confessional) than to act upon it (convictional).

[232] Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 203–4.

[233] Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 3.

[234] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 1–3.

[235] Geiger and Peck, *Designed to Lead*, 3.

[236] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 4.

[237] Kevin L. Smith, "Play the Men: Preaching and Pastoral Steps Towards Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention," in Williams and Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism*, 75.

practices of a good church leader is their willingness to confess personal weakness and God's glory.[238] Furthermore, the pastor must demonstrate that prejudice and racism does not characterize his individual life.[239]

Sanders notes, "Spiritual leadership is not a calling we choose to pursue; it is a calling we choose to answer. We don't decide to become leaders; we decide to respond and keep responding to God's call in our lives."[240] Howell purposes that the godly leader aspires to decisively influence the character and life direction of others.[241] Brooks proposes that "good pastors realize that part of their job is to assist people in discovering their gifts and their role in God's redemptive plan for the community and to equip them to walk out their calling."[242] Paul illustrates that the leadership functions to train up the members of the local church to grow and mature in the service of Christ (see Eph 4:11–13). Two primary ways of doing so are found in discipleship and teaching.

Discipleship. In Sanders's *Spiritual Discipleship* he puts forth that "John R. Mott believed that leaders must multiply themselves by growing younger leaders, giving them full play and adequate outlet for their abilities."[243] In pastoral leadership, this translates to disciples making disciples. Kevin Vanhoozer defines a disciple as "one who seeks to speak, act, and live in ways that bear witness to the truth, goodness, and beauty of Jesus Christ."[244] Gary Bredfeldt suggests that the word disciple means student or

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[238] Beeley, *Leading God's People*, 126.

[239] Smith, "Play the Men," 74.

[240] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 205.

[241] Howell, *Servants of the Servant*, 3.

[242] Brooks, *Urban Apologetics*, 148.

[243] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 179.

[244] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 20.

learner.[245] Francis Chan shares that "it's impossible to be a disciple or follower of someone and not end up like that person."[246] Max Anders asserts that "the goal of discipleship—giving someone the assistance needed to be conformed into the character image of Christ—will never change.[247] Jonathan K. Dodson emphasizes that we (Christians) are disciples before anything else, indicating that a disciple is an identity while everything else is a role.[248] The identity of disciple indicates that a person is a lifelong learner who is involved in the educational purpose and mission of Christ intending to gain fresh knowledge, insight, faith maturity, and spiritual growth.[249]

Hull tells that the calling of every pastor is to be a disciple who makes disciples.[250] This requires the pastor to be active as discipleship is rational, relational, and missional, viewing oneself as a learner, part of the family of Christ, and a missionary.[251] As evidence notably per The Great Commission, the gospel ultimately integrates evangelism and discipleship.[252] Wax argues that the Commission shouldn't be reduced however, stating,

> The proclamation of the gospel of Christ's lordship in heaven should be matched by the demonstration of Christ's lordship on earth. To reduce the Great Commission to evangelism or the Great Commandment to mere social involvement runs the risk of putting asunder what Jesus intended to stay together. Neighbor love without evangelism is not really love at all, while evangelism without love for neighbor fails

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[245] Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 26.

[246] Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2012), 16.

[247] Anders, *Brave New Discipleship*, 5.

[248] Jonathan K. Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 29.

[249] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 153.

[250] Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship*, 218.

[251] Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 28–31.

[252] See Matt 28:19–20; Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 40–41.

> to incorporate the full-orbed view of discipleship portrayed throughout Matthew's Gospel.[253]

As Wax asserts, discipleship is a "type of spiritual formation and obedience that takes into account the contemporary setting in which one finds oneself."[254]

Wax identifies discipleship as being balanced, modeled, and worldview oriented.[255] Tim Keller asserts that contextualization includes "giving people the Bible's answers, which they may not at all want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, in language and forms they can comprehend, and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them."[256] It is essential to make the gospel comprehensible to those of a particular culture.

A pastor must follow Jesus as his people follows him. The relationship with Jesus and the relationship with the people is double in nature. The pastor is a disciple in his relationship with Jesus and is a discipler in the relationship with the people.[257] Pastors and congregants are "both gospel agents and gospel recipients."[258] All in all, the goal of discipleship is Christlikeness.[259]

Teaching. Floyd-Thomas et al. contribute that pastors "are far more than managers of ministry; pastors are the primary teachers of the congregation."[260] In fact, Jones and Wilder highlight that a pastor's leadership is "most strikingly demonstrated

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[253] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 56.

[254] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 3.

[255] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 6–11.

[256] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

[257] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 10.

[258] Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality*, 116.

[259] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 7.

[260] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 158.

through his teaching ministry— not only in public proclamation but also in personal mentoring and discipleship."[261] Bredfeldt's *Great Leader, Great Teacher* argues that "God's most common means of leading His people is through those who teach His people."[262] He states that "teachers shape, challenge, and change people, and in doing so, they lead. Great teachers are leaders, and conversely, great leaders must be teachers."[263] In essence, in order to be a great pastor, one must be a great teacher.

Andrews addresses the history of the Black church and teaching by stating that "Black churches concentrated great effort in nurturing the black person, teaching coping skills, self-worth, and social justice. To this day, the Black Church intends to empower the individual to value oneself while living in a society that does not."[264] Teachers are essential in this effort because they have great influence, bring about great change, and can invoke the greatest levels of follower development.[265] In reference to the African American experience, truth is essential in teaching as truth telling is both teaching and leadership.[266]

The most foundational facet of biblical leadership is the teaching of the Word of God as the life-changing power of God.[267] Derek Tidball identifies four major elements that surface in Mark's account of Jesus's ministry in an oppressed culture; it was a liberating, teaching, strategic, and cruciform ministry.[268] This further compliments

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[261] Jones and Wilder, *The God Who Goes before You*, loc. 3457.

[262] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 9.

[263] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 13.

[264] Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 24.

[265] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 19.

[266] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 24.

[267] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 15.

[268] Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership*

author and educator Parker Palmer's statement that teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life.[269] In describing the disciples who followed Jesus, Tidball asserts that "they prepared by teaching people about Jesus and liberating them, as he had done, from the bondage of Satan."[270] This is the same call of pastors today.

Conclusion

In sum, an accumulating body of theoretical and empirical literature describes a framework for the phenomenon of lived experience of African American pastors to be explored. While studies like Barna's *The State of Pastors* specifically investigate pastors, the contextual differences of African American pastors must be noted. According to Stephen Bevans, "Christianity, if it is to be faithful to its deepest roots and to its most basic insight, must continue God's incarnation in Jesus by becoming contextual."[271] With the racialized events that have occurred in the United States over time, it is paramount to look into the impact of the slave religion and its leaders during the present time.

Foster and Smith propose that for the church to be a united Christian community, it is necessary to accept, promote, and celebrate our differences without making a group or class of people feel inferior or that their concerns are not valid.[272] As a result, the handling of such a charge from the church and its leaders aid in overall understanding and living out of the charge. As Jesus tells followers to love neighbors as well as self, William Lane articulates,

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(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 40–44.

[269] Bredfeldt, *Great Leader, Great Teacher*, 47; Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 17.

[270] Tidball, *Ministry by the Book*, 53.

[271] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 12.

[272] Foster and Smith, *Black Religious Experience*, 72.

> Jesus responds to the question about the *first* commandment with reference to the first and second because they are inseparable. A whole-hearted love for God necessarily finds its expression in a selfless concern for another man which decides and acts in a manner consistent with itself.[273]

In essence, the study of self calls for pastors to see their congregants, communities, and themselves as *imago Dei*. It is the aim of this research to gather the true perceptions and lived realities of those who have been challenges to be aware, acknowledge, accountable, and active amongst their race and faith while serving as leaders of the community's greatest asset/influencer.

[273] William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 432.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: PART 2

This chapter engages Kimberlé Crenshaw's model of intersectionality that was proposed in her "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," in order to address the following inquiry: What aspects of intersectionality, if any, are useful and usable for Christians and which aspects should be reinterpreted, or even set aside.[1]

Introduction

While an entire dissertation can be written to analyze this theory, this chapter serves as an initial summative exercise in applying the principle of inverse consistency to Crenshaw's theory. This chapter interacts with Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality according to a four-part analysis.[2] First, this exercise envisions redemptive maturity by developing a vision for human development unto Christlikeness. Secondly, this exercise purposes to gain a comprehensive understanding of Crenshaw's theory with intellectual honesty and precision. Next, the exercise assesses Crenshaw's model by employing reflective discernment. This is done by implementing charitable and critical perspectives to identify beneficial aspects of her conclusions and erroneous and unhelpful aspects, respectively. Finally, the exercise takes an appropriative perspective to identify suitable means of accepting, adopting, and applying aspects of the theory.

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[1] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

[2] See John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1 and 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 458–94; see especially pt. 2 (pp. 476–94).

Envisioning Redemptive Maturity

Though topics such as race and gender may seem to have societal affirmations and consequences, biblical affirmations exist that assist in analyzing said topics from a Christian perspective. Gregg Allison's work on human embodiment[3] helps provide a scaffold for a scriptural view of these concepts.[4] Similar to Allison, the aim of this exercise is not to promote the important or unimportant features of embodiment over each another, like the two could be entirely separated. Instead, this exercise concentrates specifically on the race and gender components of the intersectionality theory.

Psalm 139:13–16 demonstrates Gods work in creating each person according to their specific design:

> For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began. (CSB)

Essentially, God is involved in every aspect of who humanity is which makes each human unique. Furthermore, God made every nationality, ethnicity, family, context, and story for each of his image bearers (see Acts 17:26; Gen 1:26–27).

Biblical and Theological Affirmations

The starting point for all biblical and theological affirmations can be found in the Genesis account of creation. Humanity was created in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27). While Scripture indicates that God created both male and female, other attributes were attributed to humanity that remain reflective of *imago Dei*.

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[3] *Human embodiment* and *intersectionality* are used interchangeably in this section. Although later in the chapter the author differentiates between the two, the usage in this section is to highlight the key components of race and sex as well as potential additions to those features in appropriate application.

[4] See Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021; Allison, "Four Theses on Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 157–80.

Accordingly, the *imago Dei* must be more thoroughly addressed to cultivate a clear lens of community amongst humanity and its differences. In developing a doctrinal vision, human flourishing takes its own form if refreshing the lived complexities and experiences of human beings as an attribute of the *imago Dei*. Every person is created in the image of God with full dignity, gifts, and talents for the purpose of God's glory. Michael Wilburn notes, "The image of God must include two considerations: (1) an understanding of the image of God rooted in the biblical text, and (2) an understanding of the image of God expressed in the leadership context."[5] Grudem describes *imago Dei* in this way: "the fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God."[6] Hence, humans are to look like God and represent God. Even though man sins, the *imago Dei* survives. "While fallen humans share the accidental characteristic of sinning, this characteristic does not completely vanish the imago Dei,"[7] which John Calvin refers to as participation in God. So, the lived complexities are to be reflective ultimately of Christ and beauty can be defined in it. From a biblical standpoint, creation in the image of God signifies that all people, regardless of their dueling realities, should be afforded respect, dignity, and opportunity (see Gen 1:26–27).

Scripture paints a picture of the *imago Dei*. "Image of God" appears three times in Genesis (1:26–27; 5:2; 9:6) and is related to humans in the New Testament (1 Cor 11:7). James 3:9 explains that "with it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God." All humans are to be contemplated considering the *imago Dei*. Therefore, one's treatment of others demonstrates one's

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[5] Michael Wilburn, "Anthropological Telos and Leadership Goals in Theological Anthropology," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 16, no. 1 (2017): 101.

[6] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 442.

[7] J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 44.

treatment of God. Therefore, human complexities are reflective of the imago Dei as outlined in Genesis 1:26–27.

Scripture confirms that unjust violence against image bearers of God is condemned as sin. Furthermore, God knew that certain groups of people would need a *greater protection* than others—widows, orphans, the poor, the prisoner—and he orders their care (Heb 13:1–3). Nevertheless, God warns against the sin of partiality (Jas 2:6).

Though the term *intersection* is not found in the Bible, the idea of intersection is located throughout Scripture, exemplifying the kingdom's inclusion of the complexity of human identity. Jeremiah 1:5 demonstrates that God already knew all the social identities that would make the individual. While God knew of all social identities, he is not the author of those that function in sin. Ephesians 1:3–14 explains the new identity given to a person when they are in Christ. As Ephesians 1 teaches, humanity has been blessed with every spiritual blessing: chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, given abundant grace, and unconditionally loved. This identity is reflective of how God sees humanity, not through social identities.[8] Still, he is not stunned by human complexities, and has selected a purpose for specific identity.

There are examples throughout Scripture of diverse intricacies. One example is in Joel 2, where the outpouring of the Spirit considers son, daughters, old, young, rich, poor, rulers, and servants (vv. 28–32). Additionally, Scripture identifies the intersectional lives of biblical characters—Paul, full of challenges and contradictions as a Jewish man and Christian convert with Roman citizenship; the Samaritan woman; the hemorrhaging woman; the Canaanite women; the Ethiopian eunuch; Peter; Cornelius; and Jesus, a Jewish man of the working class living under a colonial power.[9]

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[8] Most social identities are descriptors, not identities. For example, in Gen 1, God made both genders, which is relative to identity. However, diversity in sexual preference is not tied to his image and likeness according to the same text.

[9] See chap. 2 of this dissertation to engage with Jesus as a man of the working class.

Engaging social sciences. Furthermore, the focal point for engaging the social sciences must be tied to human flourishing and ultimately contend for "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Here, doctrine must be the driving force informing interpretation. Trentham argues, "Doctrine involves the full force and implication of God's revealed truth upon the Christian's personal identity, knowledge and purpose."[10] Furthermore the aim is not to affirm or deconstruct the social science literature but to gain insight that enriches redemptive vision.

Reading "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"

The background and content of Crenshaw's theory in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" are addressed in this section.

Background of "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"

Kimberlé Crenshaw is an American civil rights leader and a leading scholar of critical race theory, Black feminist legal theory, and race, racism, and the law. She currently serves as the Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor of Law at Columbia Law School as well as a Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of California, Los Angeles.[11] Crenshaw's work was essential to the groundwork of both critical race theory and intersectionality, a term she coined to depict dual racial and gender prejudice, specifically. Regularly, Crenshaw writes for *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *Ms.* while additionally providing commentary for media outlets, including MSNBC and NPR, and hosting the podcast Intersectionality Matters! In addition to being a sought-after

[10] Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 489.

[11] Columbia Law School, "Kimberlé W. Crenshaw," last modified January 1, 2022, https://www.law.columbia.edu/faculty/kimberle-w-crenshaw/.

speaker on said topics, Crenshaw has authored seven books including the forthcoming *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw*.[12]

While Crenshaw originally published "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex in 1989," the notions of overlapping and converging identities and social institutions had been part of Black feminist thought since the days of Anna Julia Cooper and Ida B. Wells.

> As early as 1851, Sojourner Truth raised issues of intersections of race and gender in her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech in which she highlighted the interplay of race and gender in contemporary designations of womanhood. Anna Julia Cooper's 1892 A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South anticipated intersectionality, recognizing the links between her race and her gender. Also, in the 1890s, Ida B. Wells connected issues of race and gender in her anti-lynching work. Feminist activist Frances Beal's 1969 essay, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," critiqued sexism within the Black Power movement and racism within white feminism. The 1977 Combahee River Collective's statement added heterosexism to the mix of interlocking systems of oppression. The Collective noted that they found it "difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in [their] lives they are most often experienced simultaneously.[13]

Still, Crenshaw gave a name to this concept that explains how Black women's experiences of the ways overlapping identities (in this case gender and race) uniquely shape their experiences as "Black women" within social institutions, such as work and law.[14] Still, at the time of its initial publication, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" broke new ground in antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. With an aim of answering the question of why viewing antidiscrimination theory and praxis from a single-axis framework is problematic, Crenshaw blazed the trail for Black women's intersectional struggles.

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[12] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings* (New York: The New Press, forthcoming 2022).

[13] Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), chap. 1, "An Introduction to Intersectionality," para. 7, Kindle. See Audre Lorde, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 234.

[14] Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, chap. 1, "An Introduction to Intersectionality," para. 1.

Demarginalizing Arguments

In arguing "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," Crenshaw intended to tackle the consequence of treating race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis.[15] First, it is important to highlight that this construct is found within antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. Crenshaw purposes to "center Black women in order to contrast the multidimensionality of Black women's experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts" their experiences.[16] Essentially it is argued that in race and sex discrimination cases, discrimination is often viewed in terms of sex or class privileged African Americans and race and class privileged women respectively. Consequently, the functioning concepts of race and sex become substantiated in lived experiences that only represent a subgroup of a more multifarious group.[17]

Crenshaw argues that single-axis frameworks for comprehension contributes to the marginalization of Black women by providing a distorted analysis of racism and sexism. This is in direct relationship with conceptions of race and sex becoming "grounded in experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon."[18] Crenshaw details how Black women are sometimes omitted from both feminist theory and antiracist policy dialogue as a result of both being centered on a discrete set of experiences that habitually do not reflect the interaction of race and gender correctly. She purposes that these problems of exclusion cannot be solved by merely including Black women within a previously established analytical structure.[19] She contends, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and

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[15] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139.

[16] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139.

[17] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[18] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[19] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."[20] Essentially, for policy decisions, a Black woman's experience is different from "women's experience" or "the Black experience."

Crenshaw later examines and interprets the experiences of Black women by examining court cases of Black female plaintiffs.[21] Furthermore, she asserts that the "way courts interpret the claims made by Black women is itself part of Black women's experience and, consequently, a cursory review of cases involving Black female plaintiffs is quite revealing."[22] While many cases exist, and the term intersectionality has become ever-present with the social justice movement, its roots in the *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* court case is essential to provide a true consideration of its multidimensional exploration and use.

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[20] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[21] Crenshaw identifies and positions three separate Title VII (Civil Rights Act of 1964) cases: *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* (1976), *Moore v. Hughes Helicopter, Inc*. (1983) and *Payne v. Travenol* (1982). *DeGraffenreid* is discussed above. Moore demonstrates one way in which courts do not understand the Black women plaintiffs' claims by refusing to certify Black females as class representatives in race and sex discrimination actions. In *Moore*, the plaintiffs argued that race and sex discrimination was used in restricting promotions to upper-level positions and supervisory jobs. The plaintiffs introduced statistical evidence showing disparity between men and women as well as Black and white men in supervisory roles. The court refused to certify Moore as the class representative in the suit for sex discrimination on behalf of all women because she identified as being discriminated against as a Black woman, not a woman singularly. Essentially, because she identified as a Black woman she could not represent all women. Crenshaw argues that in *Moore*, the court's ruling supported the thought that discrimination against a white female is the standard for sex discrimination claims and claims that differ from the standard present a hybrid claim. As a result of the court refusing to allow *Moore* to represent all women and all blacks, the plaintiff to present her case with statistical evidence of discrimination against Black women alone which left a scarce statistical sample that could not legally demonstrate discrimination under the then used disparate impact theory. In *Payne*, the plaintiffs attempted, as Black women, to represent all blacks within the company as statistics demonstrated disparities between black and white workers and further disparities between Black men and Black women. The court ruled that the sex disparities between Black men and Black women created conflicting interests that Black women could not possibly represent Black men adequately. Resultingly, although finding general race discrimination, the court refused to provide remedy to Black men for fear of the conflicting interests not being properly addressed. Crenshaw argues that *Payne* provides an example of the Black women's dilemma to choose between risking their ability to represent Black men or state a claim denying their womanhood in an effort to include them.

[22] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 141.

DeGraffenreid v. General Motors. In *DeGraffenreid*, five Black women sued General Motors, alleging discrimination against Black women in hiring and firing practices.[23] The court ruled in favor of General Motors as they did not accept Black women as a special class to be protected from discrimination. The court ruled that the plaintiffs did not bring the suit on behalf of women or Blacks individually and were not allowed to combine the remedies of women and Blacks to create a super remedy.[24] Instead, the court found that General Motors hired Black men and white women, which would rule out both race and gender discrimination. The court then suggested that the plaintiffs consolidate their case with another case alleging racial discrimination against the same defeat in which the plaintiffs declined stated that "consolidation would defeat the purpose of their suit since theirs was not purely a race claim, but an action brought specifically on behalf of Black women alleging race and sex discrimination."[25] Crenshaw then emphasizes that Black women are protected only to the point that their experiences correspond with those of either white women or Black men.[26]

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is a direct response to the courts' refusal to acknowledge the possibility of compound discrimination against Black women.[27] In *Moore*, "the court held that a Black woman could not use statistics reflecting overall sex disparity in supervisory and upper-level labor jobs because she had not claimed

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[23] In the case, evidence was provided demonstrating that General Motors did not hire Black women prior to 1964 and that all Black women hired after 1970 lost their jobs in a seniority-based layoff during a period of recession.

[24] *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors Assembly Division, Etc.*, 313 F Supp 142 (E D Mo. 1976), in Justia, accessed January 28, 2022, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/413/142/1660699/. The court proclaims that the suit must be examined to see if it identifies a cause of action for race discrimination or sex discrimination but not a combination of both.

[25] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 142.

[26] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 142.

[27] See *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors Assembly Division*.

discrimination as a woman, but only as a Black woman."[28] Courts, like the one in *Payne*, "have held that Black women cannot represent an entire class of Blacks due to presumed class conflicts in cases where sex additionally disadvantaged Black women."[29]

Summary. In sum, Crenshaw contends that Black women can experience discrimination in ways that are both comparable to and dissimilar from those experienced by Black men and white women; however, they may also experience the combined effects of practices that discriminate on the basis of race and sex.[30] Intersectionality challenges single issue analyses. When addressing the plight of African Americans, Crenshaw asserts that a more comprehensive appreciation of the problems in the Black community will reveal that gender subordination contributes greatly to the deprived conditions of many African Americans.[31] Furthermore, the praxis of feminism and black liberation politics "should be centered on the life chances and life situations of people who should be cared about without regard to the source of their difficulties."[32] Urgently, Crenshaw concludes, "it seems that placing those who concurrently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action."[33]

Evaluation of Crenshaw's Model

This section includes an organized evaluation of Crenshaw's model of intersectionality, as presented in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex."

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[28] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 148.

[29] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 148.

[30] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 149.

[31] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 162.

[32] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166.

[33] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 167.

Utilizing a protocol from the "principle of inverse consistency," the study evaluates Crenshaw's model from the perspectives of charitable, critical, and appropriative interactions. Moreover, this section assumes that God's purposes for humanity can be reasonably determined from Scripture and from the implications of creation in the divine image and common grace (Gen 1:26–27).[34] Plainly, this section supposes that the different characteristics that each person possesses contribute to differing experiences and understandings that are a part of God's larger plan for that persona and corresponding community.

Means of Evaluation

To establish what features of intersectionality are useful and usable for Christians and which parts should be reinterpreted, or even set aside, the "principle of inverse consistency" provides a method for reading the social sciences with confessional integrity and intellectual honesty.[35] Trentham's hermeneutical protocol incorporates the following steps and intentions:

[34] See Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1–2), 458–94.

[35] Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 483. Trentham's "'principle of inverse consistency' is utilized as a conceptual tool for interpreting developmental models with confessional and intellectual virtue." Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1)," 458.

Table 1. Trentham's four-step hermeneutical protocol[36]

Interpretive Steps	Interpretive Aims
1. Envision Redemptive Maturity	Develop a thoroughgoing confessional-doctrinal vision and imagination for human development unto Christlikeness
2. Read for Receptivity	Gain a deep and thorough understanding of the proposed paradigm with intellectual honesty and precision
3. Employ Reflective Discernment [Charitable and Critical Reflections]	Interpret the paradigm from a critically reflective and charitably reflective perspective
4. Identify Appropriate Outlets	Carefully identify the various contexts and processes in which the model may be utilized to inform or enhance the practice and administration of Christian education

By use of this "hermeneutic of caution," I aim to present the insight provided by the theory of intersectionality while concurrently centering redemptive insight.[37] While intersectionality was never intended to serve as a worldview, but a tool, the interpretive steps advanced by Trentham can adapt this socially maligned concept to be palatable for Christian thinkers. Consequently, an intersectional analysis can provide an indispensable lens for reframing and the formation of new knowledge due to it asserting new ways of studying experiences of oppressed and excluded groups.[38] Still, as the term intersectionality has grown to be extremely inclusive and additive, there can be no true understanding of intersecting differing characteristics of humanity without engaging

[36] This is the hermeneutical protocol presented by Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 488. The first and second interpretive steps ("Envision Redemptive Maturity" and "Read for Receptivity") were addressed in the previous sections ("Envisioning Redemptive Maturity" and "Reading 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex'"), respectively. The final interpretive steps are addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

[37] Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2)," 482.

[38] Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, "Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens," in *Emerging Intersections: Race, Class, and Gender in Theory, Policy, and Practice*, ed. Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 5.

Crenshaw's foundational "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" charitably and critically.

Employ Reflective Discernment

This step involves the interpretation of the paradigm from a charitably reflective and critically reflective perspective.

Charitable interaction. This exercise assesses Crenshaw's theory from a charitable perspective to identify beneficial aspects of her conclusions. First, Crenshaw's theory must be "read for receptivity."[39] While it would not be a beneficial practice to interact with Crenshaw's theory step by step, this exercise is rooted in biblical affirmations. Without agreeing with all aspects of intersectionality, there are a number of assertions put forth by Crenshaw that can be appreciated.

First, and foundational, is that Crenshaw highlights intersectionality's roots in the court system.[40] She does this throughout "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," however she specifically uses the definition of discrimination from anti-discrimination law.[41]

Identifying intersectionality as part of a legal structure acknowledges it being a practice and not a worldview.[42] Thus, Crenshaw's application of intersectionality aims to identify how doctrinal manifestations of a single-axis framework contributes to the

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[39] See step 2 in table 1 (and the previous section of this chapter).

[40] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 141.

[41] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 150. Discrimination is defined as follows: discrimination which is wrongful proceeds from the identification of a specific class or category; either a discriminator intentionally identifies this category, or a process is adopted which somehow disadvantages all members of this category.

[42] Many Christians have attempted to engage intersectionality as if it was a Christian worldview. However, at its root, its clearly identified as a theory and critique found in legal rhetoric. Still, Crenshaw does indicate in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" that the application to Black women as a starting point (140). This would seem to indicate that intersectionality would have to be reimagined for usage that was not parallel to the parameters set forth in this foundational article.

marginalization of its target group.[43] Her use of this application is particularly effective in demonstrating how the problem of exclusion cannot be solved by simply including a distressed population within an already established structure.[44] Essentially, the ails of one community cannot be solved by simply adding them to another.

Secondly, Crenshaw seems to acknowledge the incompleteness of both feminist and liberation theologies. She contends that "neither Black liberationist politics nor feminist theory can ignore intersectional experiences of those whom the movements claim as their respective constituents."[45] For Crenshaw, both liberation politics and feminist theory must account for the specific and particular concerns of Black women, and, at times, both follow a single-axis approach of engagement which leaves them vulnerable.[46] She argues that "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often do not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender."[47] Sarita T. Lyons suggests that "women must reject feminist ideologies that encourage them to rename themselves as a form of self-esteem, instead walking in an identity that reflects the nature and character of God."[48] Kim and Shaw agree:

> Intersectionality recognizes that people experience multiple and intersecting systems of oppression and domination simultaneously. Rather than applying "single-axis" thinking, intersectional analysis relies on "both/and," an analytical lens that allows for the complexities and contradictions of holding positions of dominance and subordination at the same time and having those concurrent locations mold and fashion experiences that are not race or gender or race plus gender but are rather the

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[43] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–41.

[44] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[45] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166.

[46] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 151–66.

[47] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[48] Sarita T. Lyons, "Black Women and the Appel of the Black Conscious Community and Feminism," in *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, ed. Eric Mason (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 143.

confluence of race and gender into something that is both and neither.[49]

With context as key, an intersectional approach muddles liberation theologies by reminding that no single identity accounts for the complexities of human experience or theological understanding.[50]

Additionally, Crenshaw recognizes an interesting connection between the lived experiences of Black women: being woman and being Black.[51] She details the lived experience in relation to sexism and racism by referencing a distorted analysis because "the operative conceptions of race and sex become grounded in experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon."[52] When addressing the court cases of *DeGraffenreid*, *Moore*, and *Payne*, Crenshaw demonstrates the lived experiences of the Black women plaintiffs who argue for a more comprehensive understanding of their experience.[53] By identifying and emphasizing the importance of lived experience, Crenshaw articulates that the failure to embrace the complexities of compoundedness can have dire consequences.[54] Crenshaw provides a helpful illustration to aid in the comprehension of single-issue analysis challenges.[55]

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[49] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 7.

[50] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 22.

[51] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–67.

[52] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 140.

[53] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 141–48. Crenshaw argues that the way that courts interpret claims by Black women is part of the Black women's lived experience: they do not represent women or Black people, instead they represent their own unprotected and unrecognized class identified as Black women.

[54] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166.

[55] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 149. The illustration is as follows: "consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. Judicial decisions which premise intersectional relief on a showing that Black women are specifically recognized as a class are analogous to a doctor's decision at the scene of an accidence to treat an accident victim only if the injury is recognized by medical insurance. Similarly, providing legal relief only when Black women show that their claims are based on race or on sex is analogous to calling an ambulance for the victim only after the driver responsible for the injuries is identified."

Critical interaction. This exercise advances a critical assessment of Crenshaw's theory to determine any unhelpful aspects. Walter Earl Fluker asserts, "Standing at the intersection where worlds collide is, at best, hazardous duty."[56] Intersectionality becomes problematic when it stops being an insight and becomes an ideology. Similar to other concepts, intersectionality can be used to "promote the flourishing of the human community or can be used to create new forms of systematic sin."[57] As a result it is imperative for intersectionality, like other social sciences, to be examined critically.

One of the critiques of Crenshaw's theory is the fostering of an unbiblical view of human identity. Though Crenshaw's focus is clearly Black women, she leaves the door open for describing personal identity as inclusive of race, gender, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability.[58] Denny Burk argues, "Intersectionality fails to distinguish between social categories that are morally neutral and those that are morally implicated."[59] Burk highlights how race and gender are set alongside sexual orientation.[60] While the Bible does celebrate racial diversity,[61] Scripture does not affirm diversity in sexual orientation.[62] Sin is not to be celebrated, however it is to be restored with a gentle spirit (see Gal 6:1; Jas 4:11–12).

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[56] Walter Earl Fluker, *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility, and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 7.

[57] Joe Carter, "What Christians Should Know about Intersectionality," Gospel Coalition, last modified March 29, 2017, http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-christians-should-know-about-intersectionality/.

[58] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 151. As this is an exercise engaging specifically with "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," I do not engage the growth of today's identity politics as Crenshaw did not communicate the weighing of oppression in this article.

[59] Denny Burk, "Two Ways in Which Intersectionality Is at Odds with the Gospel," *Denny Burk* (blog), July 19, 2017, https://www.dennyburk.com/why-intersectionality-may-be-at-odds-with-the-gospel/.

[60] Burk, "Two Ways Intersectionality Is at Odds with Gospel."

[61] See Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:12–14; Rev 7:9–10.

[62] The Bible details that all sexual activity outside of covenantal marriage is sinful. See Heb

The exercise also highlights that Crenshaw succumbs to labeling people as knowable primarily through their political and social group. This is in direct opposition to being known first and foremost as image bearers of a holy God (Gen 1:26–27; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9). Crenshaw seems to treat the voice of Black women as superior to both white women and Black men in an effort to capture the experiences of all. Crenshaw's theory does not have a biblical category of sin, repentance, redemption, or grace. Furthermore, it does not contain an understanding of human identity being that all people are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27), which results in no model of growing in knowledge, righteousness, redemption, and holiness. When this unchecked brand of intersectionality merges with the gospel, it can "leave us with an immature faith, a false hope, and a deceptive vocabulary," according to Rosaria Butterfield.[63]

Another critique of intersectionality as presented in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" rests in the exacerbation of social divisions instead of healing them. As Christians are to be in the restoration business,[64] this action can create an "oppression Olympics"[65] or identity politics. Some argue that intersectionality asserts that individuals with more prized characteristics are inherently set up to succeed while those possessing disfavored characteristics are in a constant state of protest.[66] Burk argues that "intersectionality may be good at pointing out what divides us, but it is

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13:4 and 1 Thess 4:3. While Scripture prohibits such activity, oppressing those in sin is sin within itself. See Ps 9:7–10.

[63] Rosaria Butterfield, "Intersectionality and the Church," *Tabletalk Magazine*, April 2020, 13–14.

[64] Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19; 22:39; Rom 13:8–9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8; Matt 5:44; Luke 6:32, 35.

[65] Burk, "Two Ways Intersectionality Is at Odds with Gospel."

[66] Allison, *Embodied*, 61; Derryck Green, "Intersectionality and the Christian Left," *Juicy Ecumenism: The Institute on Religion and Democracy's Blog* (blog), October 15, 2020, https://juicyecumenism.com/2020/10/15/intersectionality-christian-left/; Carter, "What Christians Should Know about Intersectionality"; Burk, "Two Ways Intersectionality Is at Odds with Gospel."

horrible at bringing remedy to those divisions."[67] Scripture, on the other hand, provides a remedy as outlined in Galatians 3:27–28: "For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christians are to focus on removing hostilities, not raising them.

Crenshaw treats the ideal human experience as being highly individualized to capture a community. Allison identifies three issues with human individuality: (1) being lost as a particular person, (2) overestimating individuality, and (3) intersectionality.[68] While intersectionality proponents assert that no singular identity is fully explanatory for any facet of oneself or their corresponding experience,[69] a Christian worldview argues that identity in Christ supplants that claim (Gen 1:26–27). Still, identity in Christ does not negate particularities that individuals possess. Particularities provide a more palatable approach on appreciating individuality as God specifically designs and creates humans to be particular embodied individuals who are to map out who they are as a particular person *designed and created by God*.[70]

Identify Appropriate Outlets

This exercise also takes an appropriative perspective to identify suitable means of accepting, adopting, and applying aspects of Crenshaw's theory. A redemptive intersectional approach can be had that leaves no one out, that leaves no one's experience unconsidered in investigating and enlarging ideas of God, sin, redemption, and the church—an intersectional approach that leaves no one's oppression unchallenged and no

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[67] Burk, "Two Ways Intersectionality Is at Odds with Gospel."

[68] Allison, *Embodied*, 59–61.

[69] Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, chap. 2, "Biography as Intersectional Theology," para. 1.

[70] Allison, *Embodied*, 17, 59–72.

system of oppression intact.[71] Kevin Vanhoozer asserts, "John Calvin rightly stipulated that self-knowledge is not possible without knowledge of God, but today we should probably add that self-knowledge also requires knowledge of the social world we inhabit."[72]

Crenshaw's approach of identifying, and in some instances centering, the multidimensionality of the Black women's experience provides insight in engaging with all human particularities.[73] Though Crenshaw provided an urgency to address these individual components to ensure that all are represented, for Christians, the foundational lens for appropriating any aspects of intersectionality must be Christ-centered; thus, there is no room for intersectionality to become its own ideology. A redemptively appropriate intersectionality "attends to knowers' social location."[74] It incorporates lived experience and discards any notion of a normative center.[75] Redemptively thinking intersectionally presumes that individuals live as Christians influenced by their social location that has influence on one's Christian walk. The works of both Esau McCaulley and Kevin Vanhoozer speak towards vital components that can be pulled from a redemptive appropriation of intersectionality.[76]

Social location and doctrine. When identifying appropriative outlets, it is imperative for Christians to acknowledge that the complexity of lived experience and

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[71] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 13.

[72] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastors Guide to Making Disciples through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), Kindle.

[73] Allison, *Embodied*, 59–72.

[74] Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 34.

[75] May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, 34.

[76] This section was developed after conversation with John David Trentham regarding the synthesis of McCaulley and Vanhoozer. Hence, McCaulley and Vanhoozer serve as primary influencers in this observance. See Esau McCaulley, *Reading while Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020); Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*.

contexts matter. A primary outlet in doing so is engaging with the impact of social location and doctrine. Thus, fulfilling the Great Commission by making disciples involves more than knowing things. Scripture or doctrine alone is not enough to make disciples.[77] According to Vanhoozer, knowledge alone gets no further than "Bonhoeffer's 'cheap grace'—a belief in the forgiveness in Christ without repentance that admires Christ but stops short of following him. Bonhoeffer describes it as 'baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession . . . grace without discipleship'."[78]

Social location, or sense of place, specifically for African Americans,[79] can be perceived as an "involuntary presence" that results from a history of forced migration and exploitation.[80] This social location involves, in addition to physical characteristics and biological classification, "color caste, minority status, ancestry, subculture, and group belonging and solidarity."[81] As evidenced in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," Crenshaw's slant of the humanness of an individual as tied to their experiences bears appropriative reflection. Human culture and God can result in an endless battle for human affection.[82] Resultingly, when classifying and comprehending an individual's experience of humanness, their intersections must be considered. Crenshaw contends that for any real efforts of reconciliation to be made, an analysis of the plagues affecting the individual must be conducted.[83] In essence, the ailes and location of an individual must

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[77] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, xii.

[78] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, xii.

[79] Social location applies to all groups. Counter to African Americans, white normativity speaks of having a dominant social location over other racial groups being accepted as "just how things are." Michael O. Emerson and George Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers: Toward a Mutual Obligations Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12–13.

[80] Frederick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 62; Charles H. Long, "Passage and Prayer: The Origin of Religion in the Atlantic World," in *The Courage to Hope: From Black Suffering to Human Redemption*, ed. Quinton Hosford Dixie and Cornel West (Boston: Beacon, 1999), 176–79.

[81] Ware, *African American Theology*, 62.

[82] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 3.

[83] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166. Crenshaw speaks

be addressed, but must be done so through sound doctrine, which engages the question, "'Who is Jesus Christ for you today?'"[84] Trentham explains, "Doctrine includes the basis of confessional truth as the content of what is taught, the commitment to communicating that truth in a way that is referenced to discernment and wisdom."[85]

Social location is tied to and impacts human condition. J. Deotis Roberts asserts that "God speaks to the human condition. God speaks savingly to humans in a particular historical and cultural setting."[86] Consequently, African Americans are likely drawn to theological truths that affect their human condition, like that of Puritan theology and others. Vanhoozer argues that

> interpeters are never disembodied minds but embodied persons, persons who are male or female, persons who inhabit a particular place in space and time and so are susceptible to historical and cultural conditioning. Is exegesis without cultural presuppositions possible? It is not. Biblical interpreters have identities that cannot simply be checked at the door upon entering the academy. A human being, we might say, is always [embodied], never generic.[87]

This application provides an avenue for humans to seek God's address for them in context of their presence and experience. Thus, the social location of a person can cause a person to read the Bible differently.[88]

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specifically in regard to reconciliation in the Black community and the need of analyses of sexism, patriarchy, and race.

[84] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, 1–13. See also John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5. This question, originated by Stackhouse and re-stated by Vanhoozer, was originally adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reference to "who Christ really is, for us today." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Letter to Eberhard Bethge, April 30, 1994, in *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, rev. ed. (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 279.

[85] John David Trentham, "Mere Didaskalia: The Vocational Calling and Mission of Christian Teaching Ministry," *Christian Education Journal* 18, no. 2 (2021): 217.

[86] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 38.

[87] Kevin Vanhoozer, "One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 94.

[88] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 17. The social location of the enslaved caused them to read the Bible differently. Enslaved Blacks viewed God's redemption of Israel from slavery as a model for their understanding of His characters, claiming that God is a liberator. This focus was in direct opposition to the focus of slave masters who stressed social order with white and blacks at the top and bottom respectively. This social location for African Americans has and continues to greatly impact their

What humans know, experience, prove, remember, relate, feel, and decide influences and responds to their specific narrative.[89] Howard Thurman describes the experience of reading the Bible for his grandmother who was a former slave. By her request, Thurman omitted sections of Paul's letters in his reading. When he eventually asked why, she responded

> During the days of slavery, the master's minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves. Old man McGhee was so mean that would not let a Negro minister preach to his slaves. Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three or four times a year he used as a text: 'Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters . . . as unto Christ.' Then he would go on to show how it was God's will that we were slaves and how, if we were good and happy slaves, God would bless us. I promised my Maker that if I learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.[90]

McCaulley contends "that the enslaved person's biblical interpretation, which gave birth to early Black biblical interpretation, was *canonical* from its inception. It placed Scripture's dominant themes in conversation with the hopes and dreams of Black folks. It was also unabashedly *theological*, in that particular texts were read in light of their doctrine of God, their beliefs about humanity (anthropology) and their understanding of salvation (soteriology)."[91] Therefore, what is needed to "inspire faith in the oppressed under the sustained domination of the oppressor is belief in a God of all-power who is able to promise the ultimate vindication of the good and the defeat of evil and injustices."[92] The God of the Old and New Testaments is that God.

There is a sound history of Black Christians who saw, in the same Bible used by oppressive slaveholders, "the basis for their dignity and hope in a culture that often

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interpretation as a result.

[89] Allison, *Embodied*, 65.

[90] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon, 1976), 30.

[91] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 19.

[92] Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation*, 43.

denied them both."[93] From a biblical perspective, application is acceptable based on social location. Roberts speaks to the reception of theological arguments towards Black people as being "addressed to a powerless people, a people seeking Black Power as a means of liberation from the oppressive control of White Power, the question concerning the omnipotence of God is of crucial importance."[94] As a result of social location and the history of slavery in the United States, all-power is a precious attribute of God for Black people while impotent goodness has little appeal.[95]

As Crenshaw contends that the court rulings demonstrated the failure to comprehend of the full experience and identity of who Black women are, a redemptive appropriation of this concept would need to address this lack of comprehension via social location and doctrine. "Doctrine, like Scripture, teaches disciples who they are 'in Christ'" in the midst of their circumstances.[96] Just as context speaks to the Bible, the Bible, as the Word of God speaks back. It expands understanding of successes and plights, in addition to the relationship of particularities to the wider human stories.[97] When discussing theology and doctrine, Beth Felker Jones suggests conflict concerning the use of experience as a resource for theology:

> One strand in contemporary theology has little patience with appeals to experience, seeing experience as hopelessly subjective, individualistic, and sinful. Another strand of theology seeks to make it clear that experiences always and necessarily influences our practice of doctrine and prefers to make that influence clear rather than pretending objectivity.[98]

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[93] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 8.

[94] Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation*, 43.

[95] Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation*, 44.

[96] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*.

[97] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 19; Allison, *Embodied*, 59–72.

[98] Beth Felker-Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 24.

Still, everyone reads the Bible from their locations.[99] "The social location of enslaved persons caused them to read the Bible differently. This unabashedly *located* reading has marked African American interpretation since."[100] Black interpretation is made Black by the "collective experiences, customs, and habits of Black people in this country."[101] Brian K. Blount states that "Euro-American scholars, ministers, and lay folk . . . have, over the centuries, used their economic, academic, religious, and political dominance to create the illusion that the Bible, read through their experience is the Bible read correctly."[102]

Essentially separating embodiments creates a divide that remains disjointed without those joining points being restored through an appropriate integration "in a way that reflects the complexity of the lived experience."[103] The lived experience of race and its corresponding effect on individual and collective faith can be complex. Race is an indicator for discernment of place. "Thus, race is used for fixing social location and for detecting and assessing the processes, historical and social, going into the formation of the world wherein African Americans live."[104] Moreover, social location contributes heavily to various questions that are asked: "Who am I? What is my place in the world? What is the history and experience at which I am the center?"[105] D. A. Horton argues for

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[99] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 20.

[100] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 17.

[101] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 20.

[102] Brian K. Blount, *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in an African American Context* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 15.

[103] Kristen A. Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race: The Emergence of Racial Identity as a Critical Element in Psychological, Sociological, and Ecological Perspectives on Human Development," in *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks*, ed. Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 24.

[104] Ware, *African American Theology*, 62.

[105] Ware, *African American Theology*, 62.

"ethnic conciliation" where ethnic heritage of every human being is affimed and not idolized or ignored.[106]

Felker-Jones argues that "if we know God through experience, then the subject matter of theology is no longer God but us. We end up making God in our image instead of the other way around." [107] We must know our experiences through God. Still, God cares about our experiences and human experience influences our theologies.[108] Experience proves to be both strong and slick, whether transforming lives or fostering idols.[109] When speaking to the Galatians, Pauls asks, "Did you experience so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing?" (Gal 3:4). This experience, in the midst of our social location, is beneficial, as Felker-Jones argues, "God uses our experience of his grace to shape our understanding of Scripture. God uses our experience to enable us to see, know, and live the truth that 'everything old has passed away' and 'everything has become new.'"[110] In referencing African Americans, McCaulley asserts, "It is true that Blacks were drawn to Christianity because elements of the Old Testament story and elements of Jesus' life coincided with their own experience."[111]

While contending for the appropriation of social location, McCaulley highlights the difference between acknowledging the social location of biblical interpretation and allowing social location to overshadow the text itself. "There must be

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[106] D. A. Horton, *Intensional: Kingdom Ethnicity in a Divided World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2019), 17–18. Horton states that "ethnic conciliation" can only be accomplished in its full holistic work by those who follow Jesus because Christians are the only ones who have experienced both conciliation and reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17–20; Eph 2:11–22).

[107] Felker-Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 25.

[108] Felker-Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 26.

[109] The appropriation argument for social location and doctrine as extractions of a redemptive view of intersectional intent is not reflective of standpoint epistemology. Standpoint epistemology argues that stanpoints are in fact relative and cannot be evaluated by any absolute criteria, and that oppressed standpoints are valued higher than non-oppressed. A redemptive appropriation uses sound doctrine in Scripture and action as the absolute criteria and foundation for adoption.

[110] Felker-Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 27.

[111] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 19.

places where the Bible actually shapes Black Christian thought by telling us things that we did not already know."[112] Essentially, for African Americans, there must be more than the affirmation of liberation or winning the culture wars.

The Bible is the only book that reads to man. It is "living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Reading is not the end to itself. The Bible is living and active to human situations. Since human social location and experiences present specific and unique questions to the Scriptures, the Scriptures return the favor and pose questions back. Although there are some experiences that are common to humanity, there are also some ways in which the Bible will pose particular challenges to specific groups.[113] For the Christian, "the challenge is to read the Bible in such a way that we neither learn merely *about* it (as in much biblical scholarship) not merely *use* it to substantiate our doctrinal claims (as in much systematic theology) but rather learn *from* it in order to be changed *by* it."[114]

An appropriative outlet to further investigate would be the engaging of intersectional theology. One advantage of taking an intersectional approach to theology is that intersectional theology is contextual.[115] Though contextualization proves to be the primary strength in this approach, its prioritization can result in conflict and error. "It begins in the stories of those who are doing the theologizing, and it is always aware of the intersections of identities and the impact of structures of power."[116] Instead of beginning

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[112] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 182.

[113] Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 20.

[114] Kevin Vanhoozer, "Interpreting Scripture between the Rock of Biblical Studies and the Hard Place of Systematic Theology: The State of Evangelical (Dis)union," in *Renewing the Evangelical Mission*, ed. Richard Lints (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 218.

[115] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 4.

[116] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 4.

with Scripture or sound doctrine, intersectional theology misprioritizes a welcomed focus. Still, this approach would further engage with doctrine as a "kind of theatrical direction that helps disciples both understand the whole story of salvation and their particular part in it."[117]

As Crenshaw highlights the incompleteness of both feminist and liberation ideologies, pursuing a redemptive intersectional lens strives to make work more accurate and complete by personal experiences and social location as essential methodological components.[118] Kim and Shaw explain,

> We must recognize the importance of experience in how we understand God in our world. People's experiences of imperialism and colonialism led to the rise of postcolonial theology. The experiences of poverty and socioeconomic discrepancy in Latin America led to the rise of Latin American liberation theology. Experiences of racism and discrimination led to the rise of black theology, Asian American theology, and Latinx theology.[119]

McCaulley shares "for Paul, his Scriptures (the Old Testament) were a fire that leaped the gap and spoke a word to his ethnically mixed churches about the nature of their life together. What an audacious thought! The Black pastors I knew had the same audacity to think that texts of the New Testament spoke directly to the issues facing Black Christians."[120]

People's lived experiences and contexts matter. It is easy to think of individuals' identities and lived experiences separately; however, recognizing and understanding one's lived experiences aids in the comprehension of God's presence in individual lives. Kim and Shaw argue, "Hearing many diverse voices and experiences

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[117] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, xix.

[118] Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, chap. 3, "Intersectionality as Theological Method," para. 7.

[119] Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, chap. 2, "Biography as Intersectional Theology," para. 74.

[120] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 12–13.

from the margins will help all of us in understanding God's presence in our world."[121] There must be "at least a basic understanding not only of the Scriptures but also of the context disciples inhabit. The cultural context deeply influences the way people experience, interpret, think about, and seek to live out the gospel. To Socrates' adage 'Know thyself' we must add, 'Know thy culture.'"[122]

The value of narrative as an intersectional lens is that it creates space to see, examine, and value the complexities, intricacies, contradictions, and individuality of each person's experiences in a more comprehensive matter, as evidenced by Crenshaw. "Narratives identify us, and we communicate with others through the narratives we tell."[123] Intersectional thinking is rooted in, and values narrative ways of knowing.[124] Knowing has proven to be personal. The knowing of the marginalized once communicated are now counterstories which are all throughout the New Testament.[125] "All of the recorded healings during Christ's incarnational ministry are counterstories since they involve marginalized people seeking help."[126] Hence, each person has numerous intersecting particularities formed in our lived experiences, interactions, and systems.[127] Particularities promote experiences.[128] By considering the concept of a

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[121] Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, chap. 2, "Biography as Intersectional Theology," para. 75.

[122] Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers*, 7–8.

[123] Allison, *Embodied*, 65.

[124] May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, 20.

[125] See Matt 8:1–4; 9:1–8, 32–34; 12:9–14; 26:51–56; Mark 1:21–34; 40–45; 6:53–56; 8:1–10; 10:46; Luke 13:10–17; 17:11–19; John 4:1–45.

[126] D.A. Horton, "A Missiological Assessment of Critical Race Theory, Part 2," *D. A. Horton* (blog), October 9, 2021, https://dahorton.com/intensional-thoughts/2021/10/9/a-missiological-assessment-of-critical-race-theory-part-2.

[127] Allison, *Embodied*, 61–62.

[128] Allison, *Embodied*, 61.

redemptively appropriative intersectionality[129] from a Christian worldview, one can identify who they are as a particular individual created by God.[130]

In "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Faith," Crenshaw outlines a problem and uses intersectionality as a call-to-action for resolution. Vivian May asserts that intersectionality is a "problem solving approach."[131] An intersectional approach can provide critiques, challenges, and directions for the church as it pursues to be an inclusive, equitable, and just community of faith.[132] An appropriative intersectional lens is not solely for members of subordinated groups as everyone has race, gender, sexuality, ability.[133] Intersectional thinking as central creates an environment inclusive of all experiences. Still, these experiences should not result in a comparison of the haves and have-nots. Overlapping social differences play a role in individual and community contexts.[134] Therefore, an intersectional lens calls for listening across and within, beyond comfort zones, seeking out differences, and taking seriously the challenges of experiences and perspectives. According to Kim and Shaw, an intersectional lens contributes as follows:

> an act of faith; it trusts we can find God speaking in our neighbors, our friends, and sometimes in people with whom we have little in common. It is a spiritual discipline that invites us to profound attentiveness to others, to ourselves, to the social and religious matrix that locates us in relation to power, and to the movements of God's spirit and the call to justice throughout it all.[135]

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[129] This language has been adapted from Trentham, "Reading Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1–2), 458–94.

[130] Allison, *Embodied*, 59.

[131] May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, 19.

[132] See Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 166–67; Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), preface, para. 5, Kindle.

[133] See Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–40; Allison, *Embodied*, 61–66.

[134] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 157, 162.

[135] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 18.

Conclusion

Aware that an entire dissertation can be written to analyze this theory, this chapter serves as a specialized look at Crenshaw's introduction of intersectionality and applies the principal of inverse consistency to it. While this chapter does not intend to affirm Crenshaw's model, many of the isolated assertions of the model can be appropriated for the advancement of the gospel. Clearly, there are dangers in relying on experience as a resource for doctrine, however the importance of experience cannot be discounted.[136] "If our cultures and histories define the totality of our interpretive enterprise, the price of admission can be complete acquiescence to that culture's particularities."[137] Still, the way we see people, from womb to tomb, changes as a result of the *imago Dei*.[138] Allison states, "Given that the statistic that the world's population is about eight billion, some of us feel lost among that inconceivable number of others."[139] A redemptive approach ensures that no one is lost in the crowd.

This chapter does not serve as a proverbial olive branch towards made-up minds; the intent of this chapter is to encourage a more in-depth investigation into the original source, not its development, as well as encourage individuals who identify with varying lived experiences and descriptors that God loves and foresaw their differences. Intersectionality, at its inception, is messy. It includes, but is not limited to, all of life's paradoxes, disparities, and struggles of the human experience. Intersectionality at its onset is focused on "law and societal structures while Christ's church is primarily focused on transformation internally first (discipleship), that leads to external

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[136] Felker-Jones, *Practicing Christian Doctrine*, 24.

[137] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 22. McCaulley further argues that this can be true of all particularity groups, specifically highlight European domination of Scripture as well as Black culture.

[138] Tony Merida, "Men and Women as Partners in the Gospel," in *For God So Loved the World: A Blueprint for Kingdom Diversity*, ed. Walter R. Strickland II and Dayton Hartman (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 185.

[139] Allison, *Embodied*, 59–60.

mobilization (evangelism)."[140] Trentham argues, "Scripture is the essential truth of God (his identity and mission) received. Doctrine is that truth envisioned. Discipleship is that truth lived."[141] Collins and Bilge share that intersectionality's focus on people's real lives opens space for diverse perspectives[142]; Kim and Shaw contend that "theology is never removed from the real lives of human beings and their suffering; it is never something that ends with ideas, but always translates into action."[143]

Crenshaw's model of intersectionality is truly unprecedented. Her comprehensive approach at the infancy of this phenomenon is conversant to Christian scholars, educators, and leaders. Denny Burk argues that "Christians are going to have to think carefully and biblically about identity, privilege, allyship, intersectionality, and a host of other related topics that are driving the conversation in the culture today."[144] Regardless of its advancement, a true analysis of intersectionality cannot be undertaken without engaging its origin as detailed in "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex."[145] For Christians to utilize this approach and achieve its primary aim, loving one's neighbor and all of their complexities from the identity of a deeply loved sinner who is conforming to the image of Christ is essential.[146] The conclusion, from a biblical worldview, of a Christian look at an appropriative intersectionality should be to "help those who feel lost as individuals, as well as to remind those with an exaggerated sense of self, that all they are and have comes from God their creator who enables them to live

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[140] Horton, "Missiological Assessment of Critical Race Theory, Part 2."

[141] Trentham, "Mere Didaskalia," 218.

[142] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 5.

[143] Kim and Shaw, preface to *Intersectional Theology*, para. 11.

[144] Denny Burk, "Check Your Privilege," *Denny Burk* (blog), May 26, 2017, dennyburk.com/check-your-privilege/.

[145] See Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 139–67.

[146] David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 60.

whole in this fractured world."[147] Proposed solutions should not be based exclusively on attributing responsibility to either whites or nonwhites,[148] an appropriate solution needs the Bride of Christ and all of her diversity. Christians must be "rigorous exegetes of both the Bible and our own social locations, as we use common grace and common sense under the authority of Scripture in our efforts."[149] This exercise is one small answer to Crenshaw's invitation "to facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups from whom it can be said: when they enter, we all enter."[150] Let this serve as a gospel conversation starting point, not the finish line.[151]

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[147] Allison, *Embodied*, 61.

[148] Emerson and Yancey, *Transcending Racial Barriers*, 126; George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division: A Unifying Alternative to Colorblindness and Antiracism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, (2022), 31–60.

[149] Jarvis J. Williams, *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 155.

[150] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 167.

[151] D. A. Horton, "A Missiological Assessment of Critical Race Theory, Part 4," *D. A. Horton* (blog), October 14, 2021, https://dahorton.com/intensional-thoughts/2021/10/14/a-missiological-assessment-of-critical-race-theory-part-4.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The precedent literature suggests that African American pastors play a significant role in the African American community, specifically highlighting the joining of race and faith among their congregations. As shown in chapter 2, an array of research has addressed issues concerning race, faith, and biblical/pastoral leadership. However, missing from the literature base is perspectives of pastors who have shared their lived experiences regarding their race and faith intersectionally. How do African American pastors view their roles and responsibilities? How do these pastors feel that their race affects their personal faith and pastoral leadership? What is the process of addressing race-related issues in their local churches and surrounding communities?

The first objective of this study was to capture common themes found in precedent literature regarding the lived experience of race and faith, the lived experience of African American pastors, and the resulting impact of these lived experiences on leadership. The next objective was to speak with African American pastors who have had to deal directly with issues concerning race and faith and have continued in ministry due to or in spite of it. Gaining a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon provides Christians, both in and outside of leadership, a sound narrative describing the challenges and celebrations of serving as a Black pastor in a racialized society. In order to accomplish this objective, I interviewed ten pastors who matched the purposive criteria for this study. The interview findings were then compared with the precedent literature findings found in chapter 2.

This chapter outlines purpose, appropriateness and validity of the research methodology that was employed. This is inclusive of procedures and methods, instrumentation, population and sampling, and delimitations. A firm adherence to these proposed controls promoted and preserved great assurance in the study's validity and reliability.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how living in an intersecting social existence across the lines of race and faith impacts the lives and leadership of African American pastors. Essentially, the drive of this research was to highlight the intersectionality phenomenon and its effect on Black Christian pastors. Using a phenomenological approach, African American pastors were interviewed regarding their experiences in Christian leadership considering race and faith.

Research Questions Synopsis

In an effort to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research questions were addressed.

1. How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?
2. In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?

Design Overview

The methodology of this research was reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary prior to any interviews being conducted with the participants. Upon receiving approval from the ethics committee, I initiated the research process which followed a phenomenological method of study.

The research design consisted of ten extensive interviews with African American pastors located in areas in which there have been twenty-first century police

killings of African American males.[1] Curtis J. Evans suggests that the appropriate methodology to study the black life and black problems call for "an acknowledgement of the array of social forces and customs that stood in the path of a systematic study."[2] Therefore, the design was used to answer the central research question: How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith and its impact on their lived experience of Christian leadership? I conducted interviews, either in person or via electronic video media. The interviews were then recorded and transcribed prior to being subjected to summary and content analysis. The analyses were performed in an attempt to identify themes and commonalities as well as reliabilities and inconsistencies.

Additional data collection included content provided by the participants, inclusive of sermon material, journal, blog and social media posts, Bible study and Sunday school curricula that are pertinent to their lived experience of race, faith, and their leadership practices. For analysis, coding methods were used to identify appropriate themes, statements, and quotes. Next, I compiled a written narrative. Finally, an interpretive summary was written based on participant experience of the research phenomena.

Clarifying Researcher Bias

In order to ensure that this research type bears integrity it is important to clarify researcher bias.[3] In my case, August 9, 2014, is a date that will never escape my

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[1] See Jasmine C. Lee and Haeyoun Park, "Fifteen Black Lives Ended in Confrontations with Police. Three Officers Convicted," *New York Times*, last modified October 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/17/us/black-deaths-police.html. This article gives a detailed list of fifteen killings of African American males while in police custody from 2014 to present. As a result of the intensity of present racialized times, pastors serving in these locations during these happenings and after are the best fit for focusing on race and faith dealings per lived experience.

[2] Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149.

[3] Clarifying any bias that the researcher may possess "creates an open and honest narrative." Furthermore, "good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their

consciousness. On this day, my home town of St. Louis, Missouri, went into a frenzy as Officer Darren Wilson, then of the Ferguson Police Department, shot and killed Michael Brown Jr. While the nation descended upon St. Louis with cameras and audio recordings detailing this tragedy, I remember running to the phone to answer a call from my father, the Police Chief of Berkeley, a neighboring city. I remember there being a clear racial divide where the majority of African Americans were calling for justice, and several non-Blacks stated that justice had already been served or plainly remained silent.

I recall the days, weeks, and months that followed. Protests had reached their tipping point with buildings and vehicles being burned. Some innocent protestors were attacked. Some duty-following police officers were as well. I recall one evening where the protests left Ferguson and headed into Berkeley. My dad, as well as several other officers I know personally, met with protestors at a nearby gas station. I remember watching this happen via Facebook Live. Next, I recall bursting into tears as someone threw a flammable object towards the gas pumps where the officers, including my father, were standing.

The next day, there were media outlets showing protests at another gas station. In the back, behind the reporter, was a pastor whose ministry is less than ten minutes from my local church. Throughout the Ferguson protests and the many more that followed, there has been an overwhelming number of African American clergy present versus that of other ethnic groups. I often wonder why. I remember meeting with a few friends of other racial backgrounds and after asking their opinion on why the church did not seem to be unified, from my position, across racial lines. To my surprise, most of them shared that their pastors had not addressed any of the killings of Black males;

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interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background." John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 200–201.

however, they did share that their churches addressed mass killings like the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando. This feeling of confusion, rage, and grief left me stunned and trapped as a Christian and as a Black male.

These are the experiences that create a true desire to understand how pastors reconcile their race and faith, especially considering the present times of racial tension. As an African American male, the son of a police officer and the son of a pastor, I see how one could potentially get lost in the shuffle of what at times seems to be a conflicting battle. The response from and to the church surrounding tragedies, like the unjust killings of African American males, are but one example of how my race can be seen to be at odds with my faith, especially on account of those not of color. Still, the same bias that fuels my passion to understand this phenomenon also makes it necessary to create a research protocol that upholds the fidelity of the findings.

Population

Clark Moustakas pinpoints participant experience of phenomenon as the central component when identifying and selecting participants for phenomenological study.[4] Therefore, the research population for this study was African American senior pastors who were purposely selected via precedent literature, media outlets, and web-based research. These pastors needed to have served as senior pastor in one church for a minimum of ten years. Furthermore, these pastors had to have served in a church in a fifty-mile radius of a nationally recognized racially charged event for no less than two years from when that event took place and remained in that post for no less than three years after the occurrence.[5] The aim was to identify pastors who have experienced the

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[4] Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 107.

[5] See Lee and Park, "Fifteen Black Lives Ended." Per this article, fifteen African American men were killed by police officers beginning in 2014 in the following cities: Staten Island, NY; Ferguson, MO; Cleveland, OH; Arlington, TX; Baton Rouge, LA; Chicago, IL; Charlotte, NC; Brooklyn, NY; North

most intense nationally recognized racial disparities and their effects and have remained in service despite those occurrences—preaching, leading, teaching, and serving their congregants and surrounding community.

Sample

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select the study's participants. In this case, purposive sampling was used to show that interviewees or participants were selected because of their knowledge and verbal expressiveness to describe the subculture in which they belong.[6] The purposive sampling approach produced participants who have navigated racial injustices with lived experiences on the effect of their racial and faith-based lives, highlighting the phenomenon of intersection. This approach to sampling is common in phenomenological methodology.[7]

Participants were selected via precedent literature, media outlets, and 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 much of the community does not possess. As a result, selected participants epitomized a perspective rather than a population in the attempt to "gain examples of experientially rich descriptions" and thus be viewed as experts via experience on the research topics.[8]

Charleston, SC; Baltimore, MD; Prairie View, TX; Cincinnati, OH; Falcon Heights, MN; and Tulsa, OK.

[6] Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 353.

[7] See David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000); Meredith D. Gall, Walter R. Borg, and Joyce P. Gall, *Educational Research: An Introduction* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996); Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*.

[8] Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 353.

For defining the best sample size, researchers do not have a uniform answer. Most researchers are of the thought that the sufficient number lies between three and ten. However, according to Max Van Manen, the more appropriate question to ask is "how many examples of concrete experiential descriptions would be appropriate for this study in order to explore the phenomenological meanings of this or that phenomenon?"[9] All things considered, the size of the sample for this study consisted of ten participants, which was ultimately determined in an effort to gather quality and extensive data from multiple inputs. According to John W. Creswell, this satisfies the best practice for phenomenological study.[10]

Delimitations

This study intended to capture the lived experiences of race and faith among African American pastors and their lives and leadership practices. Due to the purposive sample of this study, the following delimitations applied:

1. The research was delimited to African American senior pastors.
2. The research was delimited to include pastors who serve within a fifty-mile radius of the cities where African American males were killed by police officers in the twenty-first century.
3. The research was delimited to pastors who have served a minimum of ten years as senior pastor in their present location.
4. The research was delimited to pastors who voluntarily assert that their race has played a role in how they led their congregations.
5. A balanced number of religious denominations were represented in participant selection.
6. The research was delimited to the participating sample.

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[9] Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 353.

[10] See John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 157.

Limitations of Generalization

The nature of this phenomenological study and purposive sampling limited its generalizability. The findings of this research may not necessarily generalize to pastors of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. This research may not necessarily generalize across geographic areas where racialized incidents have not occurred. Additionally, the findings from this research may not necessarily generalize across churches with an African American senior pastor but not a majority of African Americans in the congregation. This study proposes transferability as the intended goal of this phenomenological research, not generalizability.[11] In turn, the study generalizes to the ten participants and may be transferable to other African American pastors throughout the United States.

Instrumentation

Since this study utilized a phenomenological approach, an ideal research protocol called for detailed first-person accounts of the participant experiences. Creswell details how interviews, research diaries, and documents are effective instruments for gathering this type of data.[12] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin highlight that these instruments "facilitate the elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings about the phenomenon."[13] Therefore, through research instruments, participants needed to be accommodated in a way that elicited candor and truthfulness in order to produce the rich data this study intended to capture. The process of data collection and analysis took place in three stages. Each stage and its corresponding instrumentation is detailed in the following section.

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[11] Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 51. The aim of phenomenological research is not generalizability but transferability. This study is no different.

[12] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 185–87. Also see Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, 56–78.

[13] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*, 56.

Procedures

The following paragraphs outline and describe the progressing phases of the research protocol. The study developed methodically over three stages of data collection and analysis: (1) preliminary procedures; (2) interview schedule; and (3) data organization.

Stage 1: Preliminary Procedures

This research sought to understand the phenomenon of lived experience specifically related to African American pastors. As a result, criteria was developed in an effort to identify potential research participants and provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences and perspectives. Selected participants were purposively selected, having served a minimum of ten years as a senior (or lead) pastor in a church located within a fifty-mile radius of an African American killing by police officers in the twenty-first century.

Creation of questions/schedule. In order to conduct a meaningful study, the process of question formulation was key. The aim of interviewing in a phenomenological study is to allow for the participant to describe their experiences and perspectives in which they value. This must be done via open ended questions. Hence, the questions posed to the research participants followed suit in an effort to protect the reliability of the research.

Expert panel. Another component of the preliminary procedures was to establish an expert panel to aid in the fine tuning of the research questions and protocol. This panel consisted of three individuals who have earned a research or professional doctorate degree and offered expertise consistent with this research project: (1) seminary professor and researcher; (2) a current professional doctoral student who also serves as an African American pastor, (3) a University professor and African American pastor.

Interview protocol. After refining via expert panel, I developed and cemented a protocol that formed the schedule for each of the interviews.The interview process occurred in two phases: initial and follow-up.[14] The initial interview took place in-person or via video software. The second or follow up interview occurred within seven to ten days from the initial interview via video software. Each interview was digitally recorded by video with separate audio recording for back up.[15] The cause for using video recording was in order to take into account body language, verbal pauses, and emotional responses that could add to the richness of data in the collection process.

By using a semi-structured interview approach, I was afforded the opportunity to collect feedback concerning viewpoints, current practices, historical narratives, and more from pastors concerning the topics of race, faith, and leadership. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to speak freely and openly in order to capture the best data needed for this study, as the interviews were expected to directly relate to the listed categories discovered in the literature base. Each interview question was open-ended, to further prompt thorough and articulate responses concerning participant perspectives on lived experiences of race and faith.

The following principles were used to develop the interview schedule:

1. The interview questions were shaped to reflect the nature of the research questions.
2. The scope of topics to be considered were arranged in a logical order.
3. The questions were inspected by the expert panel and adjusted accordingly.
4. Two pilot interviews were conducted to test the interview protocol for discussion flow and adherence of the research purpose.

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[14] Due to the research topic and its corresponding nature, the interview process was divided into two separate phases to reduce participant fatigue. I made every effort possible to care for the participant, as well as aid in the attainment of interviewee reflective steam.

[15] Each participant was notified of the methods of instrumentation for their respective interviews. Furthermore, each participant was given the option of having their recordings destroyed or used for the expansion of this research at a later time.

5. The interview questions/schedule were then adjusted again and reviewed by the expert panel.

This process assisted in formulation of the wording and sequence of the final questions asked throughout the study. A copy of the research protocol can be found in the appendix.

Research journal. A research journal was kept throughout the study detailing processes, background information, and additional components of the interviews. Additionally, the journal consisted of my pertinent notes, including discoveries and developments. The aim of the journal was to contribute to the formulation of "rich, thick descriptions" as described by Creswell.[16]

Pilot interviews. To further ensure the validity and reliability of the study, two pilot interviews were conducted after the development of the interview protocol and schedule. These two interviews were not included in the findings of the overall research but were conducted as though they would be. The purpose of these interviews was to aid in the familiarity of the interview schedule and to help identify potential occurrences likely during the interview process.[17] The themes that arose from the interviews were considered alongside the precedent literature for evaluative purposes. At the conclusion of this process, the open-ended questions were finalized.

Stage 2: Interview Schedule

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin detail that the "aim of developing a schedule is to facilitate a comfortable interaction with the participant which will in turn, enable them to provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation."[18] This assertion

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[16] Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 180–91.

[17] See David R. Krathwohl and Nick L. Smith, *How to Prepare a Dissertation Proposal* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

[18] Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis*, 59.

illustrates the importance of highlighting the development of participant responses and the identification of their foundation. The goal of this interview schedule was to have participants detail their experiences and perspectives in light of the framework of race, faith, and leadership.

In order to do so, I aimed to build rapport with the participants throughout the interview process. This process consisted of the ten semi-structured interviews where I followed the predetermined questions but allowed for the participants to deviate from those questions as long as the content remained on course. The impending responses would ideally provide foundational narratives and information for current practices of pastoral and Christian leadership. Furthermore, these responses would hopefully identify areas of opportunity for identity development and racial reconciliation.

Furthermore, the two-part interview process illustrated the importance of a continued rapport for both myself as the researcher and interviewee. I was afforded an additional point of contact with the interviewee. Conversely, the interviewee was provided with time to reflect and detail answers that led to fruitful data from the study's designated experts.

Data collection. Data collection occurred in a twofold way: (1) participant interviews, and (2) participant submission of applicable content (sermons, journal, blog/social media posts, Bible study and Sunday school curriculum).[19] The initial phase of data collection took the form of interviews. As stated above, the two-part interviews occurred in-person or via video software (i.e., Zoom, Skype, etc.). Open ended questions were utilized to prompt each participant to share what they believed to be relevant and beneficial. The next stage of data collection consisted of participant submission of applicable content. This content included sermons, journals, blog/social media posts,

[19] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 81.

Bible studies and Sunday school curriculum, related to the phenomenon. Participants provided the content at or following the initial interview.

Member checking. Also a component of validity and reliability, member checking began in stage 2. Member checking aids in the research process as the researcher asks for the participants' views of the credibility of the research findings.[20] While this serves as a measure of reliability, it also ensures the accuracy of the interview process. The research implored this accuracy and validation strategy as a form of critique for participants to provide critical observations and interpretations for the advancement and accuracy of the research. Essentially, participants were able to review the research data analysis with the option to provide feedback, alter or approve.[21] Therefore, participants were afforded the opportunity to be active in the findings and the data collection processes.

Stage 3: Data Organization

The following is a description of the process which was utilized to organize the data needed to address the research questions. The information collected enabled me to describe the lived experiences of race and faith among African American pastors and its impact on their leadership practices. As a result, the goal of this analysis was to interpret the data collected, identify patterns and themes, and construct framework. All interviews were video and audio recorded per the interview protocol. The supplemental content was also gathered throughout the interview schedule and addressed throughout the data organization process.

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[20] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 252.

[21] Each participant was given ten days to provide feedback. If the participant did not return a response within ten days, I moved forward with acceptance of research data analysis.

Data analysis. Creswell provides an approach for data analysis that this study followed.[22] Initially I started with a description of his experience with the phenomenon in an effort to set aside any bias. In turn, the focus was solely on the participant input. Once the data was gathered, I begin to go through the interview transcriptions and "highlight the significant statements, sentences, and quotes that provide an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon."[23] Next, I formulated a list of significant statements in the interviews and additional content, if applicable. From these statements, the analysis turned towards developing themes before writing and describing a textural description.

Coding was an integral part of this data analysis serving in both interviews and its 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. As mentioned previously, I kept a research journal and used it to identify significant participant quotes. Also, pre-codes were created based on significant statements and repetitive wording throughout the transcription phase.[24] In addition to this pre-coding, two coding cycles were used: narrative and focused.[25]

Below is a detailed account of how the experience took place. Lastly, a composition description was developed based on textural and structural descriptions.[26]

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[22] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 193–94.

[23] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 82.

[24] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016), 21.

[25] *Narrative coding* includes coding participants' stories including their interaction with others and retelling them. Saldaña, *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 155. *Focused coding* "searches for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories" or themes (240).

[26] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 194.

This phenomenological analysis was guided by the research questions on the lived experience of the human phenomenon.[27]

Validity and Reliability

This study purposes to draw attention to matters that may be viewed as personal and controversial on behalf of myself, as the researcher, as well as the study participants. The aim was to elicit personal and accurate reflections that may cause discomfort and disruption in the daily lives of those invested. As a result, the analysis followed suit with the framework of the research in fluidity and transparency. Johnny Saldaña asserts that while quantitative analysis calculates the mean, "qualitative analysis calculates the meaning."[28]

Validation Strategies

With the meaning of this study being of the utmost importance, reliability and validity measures are essential in order to arrive at worthwhile conclusions. Consequently, this research utilized four validation strategies: (1) peer review, (2) clarifying researcher bias, (3) member checking, and (4) rich, thick description.[29]

Peer review or debriefing. Creswell references Lincoln and Guba, stating that a peer debriefer serves as an opposer "who keeps the researcher honest" and asks the hard questions of the researcher.[30] Therefore, I identified a peer reviewer and wrote detailed written reports of debriefing sessions.

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[27] Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice*, 297–310.

[28] Saldaña, *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 10.

[29] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 250–53. Researcher bias was detailed in the "Clarifying Researcher Bias" section of this chapter.

[30] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 251.

Clarifying researcher bias. Creswell, Sharan B. Merriam, and Elizabeth J. Tisdell highlight how it is important to note any potential researcher bias from the outset of the study.[31] As a result, researcher bias for this study was addressed in the design overview.

Member checking. Member checking aids in the research process as the researcher asks for the participants' views of the credibility of the research findings.[32] The research implored this validation strategy as a form of critique for participants to provide critical observations and interpretations for the advancement and accuracy of the research. Essentially, participants were given ten business days to review the research data analysis with the option to provide feedback, alter or approve.[33] Member checking was also discussed in stage 2 of the research instrumentation.

Rich, thick description. A rich, thick description conveys the findings of the study. I kept a research journal that serves as a record of the atmosphere, mannerisms, body language, and anything else that would aid the reader in having a more holistic understanding of how the interviews took place, once completed. The rich, thick description allows readers "to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study."[34] This detailed account is inclusive of general ideas and specific details with strong descriptive language and quotes.

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[31] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 251; Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016).

[32] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 252.

[33] Each participant was given ten days to provide feedback. If the participant did not return a response within ten days, I moved forward with acceptance of research data analysis.

[34] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 252.

Research Assumptions

Due to my experiences and background as an African American Christian, the son of a police chief and pastor, evidence from the precedent literature, and statistical data, four assumptions were made regarding this study.

First, the disunity between dominant American Christianity and the African American community is negatively affecting African American Christians. This assumption is based on the evidence gathered from the precedent literature and personal experience surrounding massive social injustice protests where there was a visible racial divide between African American and White church leadership. Second, historically, African American pastors have addressed race related and/or culture related issues as a part of their regular ministry assignment, and it is assumed to continue presently.[35] This assumption is formed from the common admission by pastors who have acknowledged the need to speak on topics directly affecting their congregants and surrounding communities.

A third assumption is that participants would reflect accurately concerning their lived experiences. This assumption is based on my personal interest, resulting experience, and the anticipated desire of participants to provide valuable data that can help other pastors, Christians, and leaders understand their experiences. The fourth assumption is that pastors serving in the highlighted areas under the required limitations are exemplar pastors in the area of intersection of race and faith.[36] This assumption is premised on the notion that these pastors who were in ministry when these events took place and are presently in ministry have had to deal with the effects of racial injustice in a more direct and publicized fashion than others.

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[35] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 274.

[36] By exemplar pastors, I classify these pastors as experts due to their longevity in the pastorate coupled with their direct experiences with nationally recognized events that struck a racial core in their direct communities and beyond.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study arises from a desire to understand the phenomenon of African American pastors who have dealt directly with the intersection of race and faith and its effect on their lives and leadership. Furthermore, the aim is to provide a helpful resource for all Christians in how race plays an important role in the way faith is learned, developed and applied, particularly in the African American context. African American Christians may be frustrated, dismayed, and fatigued by the racial happenings in modern day society and the response of the church is a crucial component in how they ultimately identify. This poses a reminder that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

An increased understanding of detailed personal narratives faced by African American pastors may not only provide context to their lived experiences, it may also serve as an encouragement for pastors to continue in their ministerial assignment. The acknowledgement and articulation of this issue can potentially bring about opportunity for further study on contextual biblical leadership and intersections. Furthermore, this research may bolster racial reconciliation efforts.

Summary of Chapter

In summary, this chapter provides an in-depth description of this study's research methodology. A phenomenological study was employed to understand the phenomenon of lived experience and intersection of race and faith among African American pastors. The participant sample consisted of ten purposefully selected pastors. Individual interviews were used as the data collection method. The corresponding interview questions were determined by the precedent literature and established research questions. In the analysis phase, research questions were reviewed against the precedent literature on the lived experiences of race and faith, African American pastors, and the resulting impact on leadership to find consistent themes.

Furthermore, several strategies were employed in order to ensure dependability and reliability of the results. A conceptual framework for coding was developed for study analysis. Next, interpretations and conclusions were drawn from the analysis and further studies recommended. Ultimately, this study anticipates aiding in the understanding of how pastors reconcile their race and faith and, in the end, how it affects their leadership and lives.

In the following chapter, the analysis of the findings are presented. The concluding chapter, chapter 6, details research implications and research applications.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

This study sought to explore the phenomenon of lived experience among African American pastors, in hopes of identifying some components that will benefit African American pastors as well as non-African American Christian leadership who aim to serve in a culturally competent ministry assignment.

In an effort to illuminate the research problem, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?
2. In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?

Compilation Protocol

For this phenomenological study, this research protocol allowed for rich, detailed 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 organization. After interview questions were fine-tuned by the input of the expert panel, a protocol was developed that formed the schedule for each of the ten interviews.[1] All interviews were both digitally and video recorded and transcribed verbatim for accuracy.

All interviews were analyzed using NVivo software. The formal process of data analysis began with a coding process, which was determined by the precedent

[1] The interview protocol can be found in the appendix.

literature and research questions. 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 as a whole to determine if there were any connections relating the categories. Last, the categories were compared and contrasted against the precedent literature.

Demographic and Sample Data

The research population for this study was African American senior pastors who have served in that capacity for a minimum of ten years. This study was delimited to pastors of churches that meet the following criteria: (1) serve within a fifty-mile radius of the cities where African Americans were killed by police officers in the twenty-first century; (2) served a minimum of ten years as senior pastor in their present location; and (3) voluntarily assert that their race has played a role in how they led their congregations.[2] Additionally, a balanced number of religious denominations were represented in participant selection. Some may question whether the lived experience of these pastors in such close proximity to nationally recognized racialized events would be transferable to other pastors who have not directly encountered similar occurrences. However, research has shown that individuals who have experienced racial trauma could be considered experts in the topic.[3] Relatedly, many of the pastors interviewed in this project identified racially related events that have occurred in their lived experience not related to nationally recognized events.

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[2] See Jasmine C. Lee and Haeyoun Park, "Fifteen Black Lives Ended in Confrontations with Police. Three Officers Convicted," *New York Times*, last modified October 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/17/us/black-deaths-police.html. This online article gives a detailed list of fifteen killings of African American males while in police custody from 2014 to present. As a result of the intensity of present racialized times, pastors serving in these locations during these happenings and after are the best fit for focusing on race and faith dealings per lived experience.

[3] Kenneth V. Hardy, "Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 22, no. 1 (2013): 24–28.

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. Accordingly, a "snowball sampling" strategy was employed in which each participant was asked for referrals to other individuals they knew to be qualified for participation in this study according to the established criteria. In total, ten participants were chosen for this study.

PP1. Participant Pastor 1 is the senior/lead pastor of a nondenominational church. His church is located in Hazelwood, Missouri, which is within the required radius of the 2014 Michael Brown Jr. incident. He was formally involved with the United Methodist denomination and has previously served as a seminary professor in Texas. He has pastored in his current ministry assignment for fifteen years.

PP2. Participant Pastor 2 is the founder and senior pastor of a nondenominational church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His church listed within the specified radius of the 2016 incident that resulted in the loss of life of Terence Crutcher. He is currently completing his Doctor of Ministry degree and has previously served as a guest panelist and speaker for Racial Reconciliation Conferences.

PP3. Participant Pastor 3 has served as senior pastor at his church, which is located near the Alton Sterling incident of 2016, for nineteen years. Reared in the deep South, he is often viewed as a leader in community affairs and race related issues in his local community. The church is a Baptist church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

PP4. Participant Pastor 4 is the pastor of a historical Baptist church in Cincinnati, Ohio. His church is within the required proximity of the 2016 death of Samuel DuBose, and he has served as pastor there for twenty-nine years. Additionally, he presents workshops and seminars across the country related to community-based problem solving and asset attainment.

PP5. Participant Pastor 5 is the pastor of a Southern Baptist church in

Arlington, Texas. He has been the pastor for thirty-five years, since the church's inception. The church is located within close proximity of 2015's Christian Taylor encounter with police which ended in his death. Furthermore, he has served as a traveling lecturer to many colleges and seminaries throughout the country.

PP6. Participant Pastor 6 is the senior pastor of a nondenominational church in Chicago, Illinois. His church is within a fifty-mile radius of both 2014's Laquan McDonald and 2016's Paul O'Neal loss of life. Previously, he was affiliated with Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, Global United Fellowship, and the United Baptist State Convention. He has served as the church's pastor for twenty-four years.

PP7. Participant Pastor 7 is the pastor of an African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) church in Charlotte, North Carolina, within the required radius of the Keith Lamond Scott incident with police that resulted in loss of life. With over twenty-five years of pastoring, he has served in his current ministry assignment for fourteen years. Furthermore, he serves in numerous capacities associated with the African American community, including but not limited to, the NAACP and the Black Political Caucus.

PP8. Participant Pastor 8 is the senior pastor of a Missionary Baptist church (MBC) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with over twenty-three years of pastoring experience. His church is located within the fifty-mile radius of the 2016 Philando Castile incident. In addition to experience in Minneapolis, he has previously pastored in Washington DC. He is a local leader of community affairs and self-declared advocate for social justice and the rights of all.

PP9. Participant Pastor 9 is the senior pastor of a Missionary Baptist church (MBC) in St. Paul, Minnesota, within the fifty-mile radius of the 2016 Philando Castile incident. He has been the pastor for over twenty-eight years and is also a denominational leader. Originally from the deep South (Mississippi), he has deep familiarity with the Jim Crow era as he proclaims it has helped shape his life.

PP10. Participant Pastor 10 is the founder and senior pastor of a nondenominational church in St. Louis, Missouri. He has served in this role for over thirty-two years and his church is within the required radius of the 2014 incident the resulted in the death of Michael Brown Jr. Additionally, he has an earned doctorate from a respected Southern Baptist seminary. Located in one of the area's most ethnically diverse communities, the church is becoming a multi-ethnic and multi-generational congregation mirroring its physical neighborhood.

Table 2. Participant pastor profile[4]

ID	*Church City, State*	*Number of Years Pastoring*	*Number of Years Pastoring at current location*	*Within Radius of What Incident (Year)*
1	Hazelwood, MO	24	15	Michael Brown Jr. (2014)
2	Tulsa, OK	18	18	Terence Crutcher (2016)
3	Baton Rouge, LA	19	19	Alton Sterling (2016)
4	Cincinnati, OH	29	29	Samuel DuBose (2015)
5	Arlington, TX	35	35	Christian Taylor (2015)
6	Chicago, IL	24	24	Laquan McDonald (2014)/ Paul O'Neal (2016)
7	Charlotte, NC	25	14	Keith Lamont Scott (2016)
8	Minneapolis, MN	23	23	Philando Castile (2016)
9	St. Paul, MN	28	28	Philando Castile (2016)
10	St. Louis, MO	32	32	Michael Brown Jr. (2014)

In its entirety, this group of participants is greatly qualified for this study according to the stated criteria. Not only do each of them meet the standards set forth in

[4] For a listing of all potential incidents that could be used for the purposes of this study, see Lee and Park, "Fifteen Black Lives Ended."

the methodology of this project, many of these pastors have served as a senior pastor for well over the stated ten year minimum and over half of these pastors had direct dealings (engagement with family of the deceased, etc.) with aftermath of the black life ended after altercations with police. Also represented are pastors who oversee extended ministries of the church (such as radio programs, frequent blogging, university professors, etc.).

Findings and Displays

In the process of gathering data from these pastoral leaders, much wisdom and insight surfaced. Through the process of content analysis and with respect to the precedent literature, four themes emerged from the study. The themes and related quotes are presented in this section.

Theme 1: African American Experience

The first theme to emerge from the data was the African American experience, and within this first major theme were three subcategories of the African American experience: streams of consciousness, Black identity, and the Black church.

Streams of Consciousness

The first subcategory is "streams of consciousness"; this described the relationship between the comprehensiveness of perspective, and experiences, as related to race and faith in the participants. Overall, five of the participants identified streams of consciousness as a reality of the Black experience. PP4 details streams of consciousness by referencing W. E. B. DuBois, in addition to his experiences as an African American:

> DuBois talked about having a dual stream of consciousness, and this also gets back to your former question. I have an Afrocentric stream because I am black, born and raised in a black family. I've lived the black experience. I know what it means to be the only black person in the room and also have an Eurocentric stream of consciousness. I'm born and raised in America, attended public schools, sat in classes and had to learn about the French Revolution, and European history and all that stuff.

PP2 agreed, noting that African Americans tend to have differences and different viewpoints due to past and present issues: "We still have differences and have different viewpoints . . . there has to be a greater appreciation for the historical challenges that African Americans have faced, and even the contemporary challenges we face." PP9 noted attempts by non-African Americans to understand these viewpoints, specifically how African Americans define racism: "They wanted to understand what is when we say a comment, or an action is a racist comment or action. They wanted us to share with them our experience, so they could be more aware and to be educated more of it."

PP2 recalls some historic events where he described streams of consciousness as being active from Black and White perspectives:

> Years ago, we had a guy named Rodney King in LA. He was beaten by the police and the whole nation watched it. It was caught on camera, black and white could have been in the same room because we were, in the same country at the same time watching the same thing. White people said, "Why did he just lay down?" And black people said, "Why do they keep beating him?" We're at the same time, same room, same country, watch the same thing, two different conclusions. Another incident was when a guy named O. J. Simpson went on trial, and at the end of the trial they came out and said not guilty, this nation did this. We all watched it at the same time in the same nation, same thing, black people said, "Wow, we finally got justice." White people said, "This is bulls**t, he did it." Two different streams of consciousness.

In referencing deaths of African Americans in encounters with police, four participants comment on differing viewpoints within the incidents. PP2 references Terence Crutcher's death in 2016 by saying that,

> Some people view it as, that was Terrence's fault and he should never trust the police. And then those of us who don't believe that, of course, felt like there was some things that the police officers should have done. So, having those dialogues with pastors who were white, to try to get their viewpoint, for them to understand our viewpoint, and to try to come away with some kind of understanding.

PP4 adds perspective in the death of Timothy Thomas in Cincinnati in 2001:

> Here in the city of Cincinnati a 19 year old young man, Timothy Thomas, was gunned down by police down in over in an alley. Our city divided, and they divided not only along the lines of race, but even along the lines of clergy. And white people said "Why did he run?" Black people said, "Why did they shoot him?" Now, here's

> the difference, here's the problem, is that by me having a dual stream of consciousness. Using our Afrocentric stream, I'm like why did you shoot him, but I also have a Eurocentric stream, I can say we shouldn't be running from the police, all right? But when white people only have a Eurocentric stream, which means they can't see what I see. So that's why you have the first three Gospels in the Bible called synoptic, and syn meaning with, optic meaning vision, so it means seeing through the same lenses.

PP10 details viewpoint on the 2014 incident that resulted in the death of Michael Brown Jr.:

> This confrontation, it was fueled with something else. I also knew that it was very possible that Mike had stepped out of line and was being unwise in what he was doing and just kind of may have gone off on the cop or whatever. But as an African American, knowledgeable of the area, I guess I lean more toward the belief that the officer could've used a stun gun . . . could've handled it differently. That death, over stealing some cigarillos if that's what he did, death over him being unsuccessful in taking his gun. He was unsuccessful. The young man was unarmed. I can see him shooting like that if Mike was shooting at him. I just could not get that.

PP9 displays frustration as he references the events that led to Philando Castile's death in 2016,

> First of all because I am an African American, and you are tired of, once again, the black male, young male especially, been targeted, picked off. Even if we are in the "wrong neighborhood," we can be pulled over if they feel that we shouldn't be there.

PP6 described part of the multiple streams of consciousness of African Americans to be inclusive of dealing with the insensitivities of non-African Americans:

> Insensitivities to things that they think that they understand but they really don't because they never had the live it. And because of that I don't think that they will really ever be able to be as sensitive to these issues. Sometimes, they have a sincere desire or maybe a sincere heart to want to help. But I think sometimes the insensitivities of what it is to really be black and what it is to really be looked upon as you are not good for or you are not worthy of, or at the end, you are this one experience that I just had. And as a result, this is how I'm going to deal with everybody in that. So, I think because they'd never lived that, there are oftentimes what I think can be a misconception of what they think that we have received as it relates to how we've been treated. There are spaces where they feel like we may have received more benefits being handed to us and we squandered those benefits. We didn't take full advantage of them and their misunderstanding of that.

PP2 calls for conversation, specifically with white pastors, to address insensitivities: "My experience was just having conversations with white pastors, trying to get them to understand the reaction and the viewpoint of those of us who are African Americans, how

we viewed that event maybe differently than someone who's not black would view it." PP4 adds,

> So, they still don't always see it, and sometimes you watch them have ah-ha moments, and it's like okay, I really didn't understand reparations until you, 'til you kinda broke down for me. Or I really didn't understand how black people feel until you said that.

PP10 adds that a sense of awareness may not always exist: "I found some people that to me were not aware, I think, of the term I coined was their 'eurosensitive' issues and goals. Even if they are not Eurocentric, they are eurosensitive. The internal bias is automatic."

Black Identity

The second subcategory was black identity. Within this subcategory, six participants noted that there is an immense pride in being an African American which has heavily influenced their personal and pastoral lives; at the same time, seven participants also noted that the challenges of being an African American were merely a part of day-to-day life.

PP7 states, "I love being a black man. I love being a black man in America." PP9 accentuates, "We're black and we're proud." PP4 complements, "I have this tremendous amount of pride in my history, in my people, and we were also taught though that that doesn't make us better than anybody else. So, race has positively impacted me." PP10 adds,

> One part of me, wanted to make sure that everyone knew, and I guess till this day I'm still going to do this, that I'm unashamedly, unapologetically black. I've absolutely no qualms about that. I was there, and I am now. I am a black man. I understand that. I'm proud of that. I'm confident in that. We're beautiful people. We are who God has made us to be. There are problems in our group like it is in everybody else's, but we aren't second to anybody, and we have this long rich history of what God has done and how HE has inspired and even some of us who don't believe in God.

PP5 confirms that his identity is tied to being black, "I think I'd be lost if I was another race. I would be lost at the thought of not being black, well who would I be?" He further adds that he views his blackness as a blessing scripturally,

> Genesis 9:1 says that, "God blessed Noah and his sons," one of Noah's sons I believe was darker complexion, and God blessed all three of Noah's sons: Japheth, Shem, and Ham. I'm a descendant of Ham, but I'm blessed according to the Scripture, never was cursed, I'm blessed.

PP2 explains how his pride in blackness incorporates African American success, "I've seen a lot of black excellence, African American achievement. And so, I guess positively I've seen enough examples of people overcoming odds that look like me that, that it's kind of helped to inspire me to achieve."

In addressing the challenges of daily living as an African American, PP9 shares that the challenges make one work harder:

> It made me refuse to be marginalized as a person that would not succeed, not qualified, or not equal, so it made me work just as hard. And it does affect you. It affects you mentally, psychologically, because you overwork yourself. You work harder than the next person who has it easier being white, and being black, you have to work so hard. But it made me really the man that I am today, because I refused to be rejected or labeled as lazy, who's not qualified for this, who's not qualified for that. Negatively, it impacts you because you have to live with that thought. You live with it, and you look at them sometimes, and you feel what they're thinking in their spirit. And then certain things they say turn you off, because it's that thing, man. When you grew up in it, you're really on guard all of the time and you hate that.

PP9 further contends,

> People may accept you, but that doesn't mean they approve of you. You can't forget that. Because you're qualified to do something doesn't mean that you have been approved. You still have to fight. You still have to keep proving yourself. You still have to be better than the other person.

PP7 describes the potential fallout of double standards:

> The negative part, because I'm a black man in America, I do know that opportunities have been denied, and that I'm always looked upon in a disparaging way. And that victims of double standards that get applied against black people by virtue of the color of their skin, and that has happened to you.

PP6 shares of living in a contradicting society where, "that dynamic of how we are good enough for the economic impact that we have, but not good enough to really be

considered an equal in society."

PP4 discusses how once success is achieved it can potentially be limited as an African American as "even when a black person gets put in position, it may not be enough that they get there. They can have the position and have no power."

PP1 insisted that he could not think of an example of a positive impact of race in his life. PP3 reflects on his upbringing to address the challenge of race being ever present,

> I born and reared and minister in the deep South where race is a very real thing, right? It's not some metaphor. It is how government and society is constructed, and so, even in Baton Rouge, we are still dealing with people who are trying to segregate themselves from the rest of the city based on race. For me, race is front and center every day. Race is front and center in my town.

PP5 references an old saying: "In the south, it was one drop of African or black blood made you black. Somebody said, 'The blood of a negro, is like the blood of Jesus. One drop makes you whole.'"

PP4 reflects on the large-scale viewpoint of race:

> Race negatively impacts me as a part of the collective when I see poverty, and the rates of poverty are higher among African Americans. When I see the criminal justice system, and we make up 12 percent of the population, and over 50 something percent of those behind bars. And I understand that race has an impact on that.

Black Church

The third subcategory within the first major theme of the African American experience was the Black church. Within this subcategory, there was one prominent contributor to the African American experience—the history and function of the Black church. All of the participants detailed differing perspectives of what the Black church means to the Black community. The distribution of answers can be seen in figure 1.

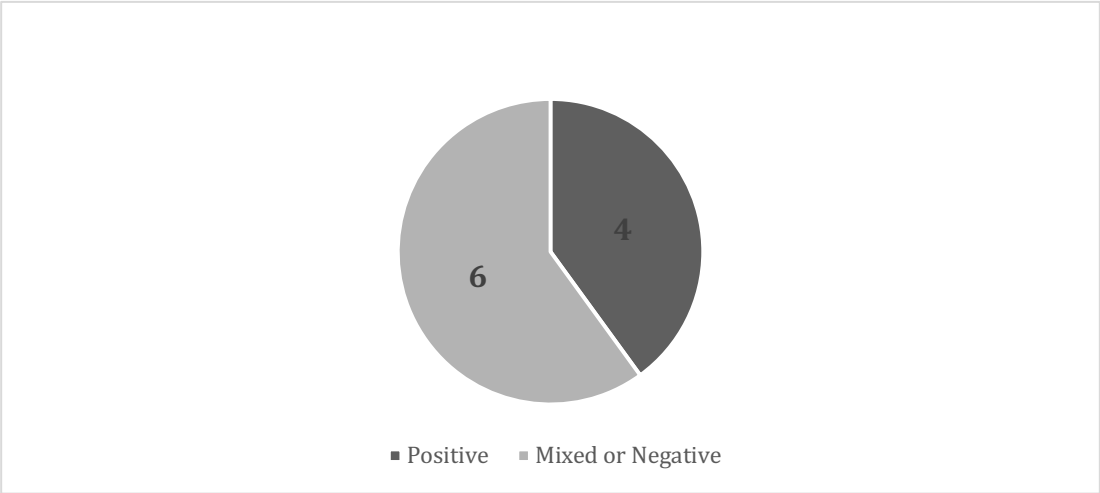

Figure 1. What the Black church means to the Black community

PP1 details the importance of the Black church from a place of ownership and belonging:

> Oh, still everything. Still . . . . Even though I, I know we have fallen short and are falling short, but right now the Black church is still the only institution in America that we own and run. And still for many of us, it's the only place we can go and feel at home. You know, we have corporate folk who go to their corporate jobs every day and still don't feel welcome. But when they go to the Black church, they reach out like everybody else.

PP4 shares that the Black church is African American's sole entity of ownership in America stating, "I'm black in American, and we don't control anything, other than the Black church and they're closing one by one." PP7 agrees that the Black church is a place for the Black community as a whole, stating,

> It's a place where people can turn to voice their concerns. They can come to get educated about what's happening to our community and our community is a place where they wanna be. The Black church is a clearing house for our issues and challenges, where it can be addressed and negotiated.

PP5 details that the Black church has historically served as the hospital for the Black Community: "The Black church was that one place where you could go for solace and where you go to be rebooted to face life another six days, to only come back and be healed again." PP9 agrees by stating that "the Black church is the fabric that holds us

together."

On the other hand, PP8 suggests that that Black church has essentially lost its place as the moral compass of the community,

> In today's culture, I believe the church is just another organization that provides services to the community. I do not see it at the present time as being the moral compass of it. I don't know when that happened or how . . . . But the relevance of the black church in community when I look across this country has lessened to a serious degree.

PP2 asserts that the Black church "used to be the center of our community in terms of social justice and events. It has changed over the last twenty years. Something has lost its relevance." PP6 agrees but also sees the urgency and optimism in reclaiming its place:

> I think that we've lost the sense of being the voice, not just reason, but the voice that speaks for people without it. I think that we have to regain that. I think that we are on the path to that because of all of the challenges that our communities still face. I think that we are rebuilding that because now people are starting to have to look to the church for those things again.

PP4 suggests that the reclamation is tied to going to the community,

> to this day I've never had anybody from a Christian Church knock on any of my doors, never. Now, I've personally done it, but I've never had anybody from a Christian Church, quote/unquote Christian Church, knock on my door. I've had Jehovah's Witnesses on my door in every neighborhood I went into.

PP3 agrees that the relevance of the Black church is tied to reaching the community and publicly addressing any false perceptions of the Church immediately,

> when you're on the ground and you're meeting everyday needs, and you're telling people, "Hey, man, there's an alternative to the way that you live. You ought to be proud of being black. You know, you're a soldier. You need to be with us," then I think people's minds start to turn and they begin to see the relevance of the church again . . . . It was popular, at least here, among some of the so-called activists part of their mantra was, "We have to stand up because the Black church is not doing anything," and what I discovered and tried to tell other leaders is you have to address that on the spot. Don't pull them in the corner but address it on the spot and declare all the stuff that the church is doing for the community and don't just let that stuff go on as if the church is not doing anything.

PP10 gives insight into a connection between generations and perspective regarding the Black church,

> I think it depends on what generation you're talking to. It's always been questionable to my generation, Boomers. To my parents' generation, Builders, it

> was the hub of the community where everything happens. My generation, I kind of say 50/50. It was respected somewhat but still a lot of skepticism. With the busters and the millennials, it depends on what you say, what you've got to do, what the real paradigm is, whether or not you seek them out. It's an interesting time and season.

Nevertheless, PP5 gives a historical narrative to why the Black church's importance is monumental:

> Black church is actually older than the Black Family . . . . we didn't have families. We couldn't legally marry. That's why we jumped over the broom. And they could separate your family at the drop of a hat. We had churches sometimes. Even if they were underground churches, and preachers, but we didn't have intact families. . . . And that's probably why the Black church has played a much stronger role in the lives of Black people than the white church plays in the lives of white people.

Though there are differing opinions over the current status of the Black church, all participants are in agreeance of its overall importance and necessity for the Black community. PP3 specifies that the Black church is one of the four entities that are necessary for the developing of its community:

> There are four entities that I would say are going to be necessary for the uplifting and uprising of the black community that I think we're drifting away from in some instances but making the realization in others again. One is the Black school, where we're supposed to generate knowledge. Second, is the Black bank where we have to be creative about resources. Third, is the brothers and sisters on the street. Fourth, of course, is the Black church to provide the moral and the spiritual grounding and guidance.

PP4 concurs with what he refers to as the pillars of the Black community:

> You know, the four pillars of, of the black community during the time of segregation was Black church, Black Press, Black Businesses and Black Schools. That was when we were building, we were getting stronger. Right now, the Black Press, most people don't get their news from there anymore. Black businesses are a drop in the bucket in the GDP of our country. Black church struggling, black schools, HBCUs and others are struggling because we don't choose not to support our own.

PP1 adds that different movements have affected the Black church and taken the emphasis off of aiding people and the community:

> We've had three movements that affected us. One is fundamentalism. Black people never been fundamentalists, but when King died, we moved away from the liberation motif and then we began to become Bible thumpers. We weren't concerned about Civil Rights, the people, the communities. All we were concerned about was "The Word." Secondly, we got influenced by the Prosperity of Ministry Movement, and people like Creflo and those folk, they came along and they got

> Black folk believing that. So, if you were a faithful Christian, you got money. Now, it's the Praise and Worship Movement. Praise and worship is okay, but praise and worship does not move people out into the community to address the opioid crisis, all the homeless, all the people who are starving, to educate the children who are in substandard schools, do something about the communities, divorce. Get folk married. So, the Black church is falling short on emphasizing, pushing, and interpreting the Black people, the necessity of stable families and homes for children.

PP2 concurs and emphasizes that, in addition to Black members, the Black agenda is a necessary component of the Black church: "A black church is certainly one that has black members but also has a black agenda and is concerned about the needs of the black community." PP4 addresses those who claim there is no Black church by stating, "I hear [people] say "There is no Black church, there is no White church, there's just church." I'm like that's garbage. That negates the history of the Black church and what it has meant to black people and our liberation to say there is no Black church." However, PP2 and PP4 disagree in that PP2 contends that there are churches "who are multi-ethnic, but I would view them as a Black church in terms of their approach to worship and how they view outreach and how they speak out against social issues." On the other hand, PP4 states that "a Black church is a church that not only is predominantly made up of black people, but it's power, and its polity is controlled by black people."

Theme 2: Racial Tensions and Reconciliation

The second major theme to emerge from the data was racial tensions and reconciliation. Within this second theme, there were three main subcategories: racism, effect on Christianity, and multiethnic churches.

Racism

Within the subcategory of racism, participants explained the ways in which they not only defined racism, but also shared some experiences of racism historically and personally. All of the participants provided their own definitions of racism; of those,

three cited prejudice and power, two cited falsehoods, two cited indirect action, and three cited ethnic groupings. Table 3 demonstrates the categorization of this subtheme.

PP1 states, "When you add prejudice plus power. That's racism." PP4 adds that "racism is really tied to power and privilege." PP2 concurs,

> Racism would be individual prejudice backed up by some institution that helps to perpetuate that in a way that, in a systematic way prohibits people from achieving, you know, their goals, blocks opportunities, um, you know, relegates them to being perceived as less than human. Um, doesn't treat them with dignity.

Table 3. Definitions of racism

	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants within Subcategory (n = 10)
Prejudice and Power	3	30
Falsehoods	2	20
Indirect Action	2	20
Ethnic Groupings	3	30

On the other hand, PP5 asserts that racism can exist without power by addressing the common phrase concerning African Americans being racist:

> I disagree with the popular view of racism that floats through black academia and liberal academia that says black folk can't be racist 'cause black folk don't have power. Therefore, they can't enact oppression as sin, as systemic injustice, because they are powerless to do so. I think race began with an attitude toward people of another race, and if that attitude that you have on a person or groups of another race is incorrect, un-biblical, then that is racist. So, there's no sin that black people can't commit, including racism.

PP3 describes racism as "the use of this false construct of race to dominate and in a real sense, to dehumanize another race for the benefit of another race." PP10 contributes that it's "the fallout of that false definition of race. It's the ideology that undergirds and falsely justifies the offensive policies and actions that advocate for the superiority of one group of one group of people with different human features over another."

PP8 claims that racism is not an act, but "a mental process of demoralizing and dehumanizing another human being or group of people, individuals." PP9 adds an additional element to racism, "as one feeling that they are more superior than another person when we all are equal. We all are equal."

PP6 asserts that an action takes place but only after an action, "when another group feels threatened or feel superior to other groups, and then acts out on that belief or acts out on that threat towards that particular group." PP7 links racism to ethnic background by stating, "Racism is how one is treated because of their ethnic background. In particular they're treated as an inferior or denied opportunities and discriminated against because of their race or ethnic background." PP5 agrees by stating, "Racism, to me, is making attitudes and actions toward a person or persons of another race based on their racial designation."

Segregation and integration. Further discussing racism as racial tension, a few participants highlighted how they perceive the effects of segregation and integration. PP1 provides a brief historical framework of the African American experience inclusive of slavery, segregation, and integration in addition to black successes in spite of racism:

> Now, do realize that we were the only people, in slavery from 1619 to 1865 and then in segregation from 1865 to 1965, okay? So, you're enslaved, in slavery, and segregation for that long. That's almost 300 years. And you are set free with nothing. Andrew Johnson would not let them give us the 40 acres and a mule. And within those hundred years, in spite of segregation, up until now, look what we did. We created colleges. We created insurance companies. We used to have huge black-owned insurance companies out of Birmingham, Alabama, Gaston and those people were the people that owned those things. I remember we used to have Supreme Life Insurance Company out of Atlanta. We had Ebony, Johnson's Publishing Company in Chicago. It's now going bankrupt. We had Howard University, which the government established after the Civil War. But before that, we had Tuskegee. We had Hampton. We had Wiley College. You go on down, just many tens of colleges that slaves with no money developed. We educated ourselves. We had to deal with Eurocentrism, a philosophy of life, but we developed our own Afrocentric viewpoint. So, you know, we had hospitals. I was born, I was born by a midwife. We had midwives who could do the duties of a nurse. So, these are things that Black genius did, in spite of racism. So, I'm not going to give racism credit for anything. I'm going to give racism credit for exploiting us from 1619 to 2019.

PP4 references the Civil Rights movement and how breaking the back of segregation may have negatively affected the Black community:

> When I look back at the Civil Rights Movement and I'm a student of it, I look at the Montgomery bus boycott where they boycotted to break the back of segregation, and wouldn't ride the bus for over a year, which means they withheld their nickels, quarters, or dimes or whatever it cost back then. But at the same time, they set up an alternate transportation system to get everybody where they needed to go. So, in actuality they set up Uber before Uber was ever thought of, but their struggle was to break the back of segregation. But when the man said all right, get back on the bus, and sit where you wanna sit, we went back, and started putting our money back in the thing, dismantled a system we set up, our own cab system, our own Uber system, to ride the bus.

Though PP8 asserts, "I think it did help me. In the sense of integrated systems, I went to Boise State," PP1 suggests that integration was indeed a negative for the Black community:

> Integration killed the African American communities. And what integration did, it eliminated Black businesses, it eliminated Black teachers, Black schools, black ingenuity. We actually had . . . . Everything that you see over in the white suburbs, we had in the Black neighborhoods that we, ourselves, developed. We had our own grocery stores, we had our own carpentry, we had our own doctors and lawyers. All that stuff was right there. I actually lived up the street from school teachers and lawyers and stuff. Whereas, integration caused them to move of the neighborhood. Now, all you got is, in North St. Louis, is drugs dealers, prostitution, liquor stores, barbecue joints, and a bunch of churches on every corner.

PP4 adds additional context by differentiating desegregation and integration by referencing comments of Stokley Carmichael when sharing,

> He said, "And one day they're sitting at a lunch counter and trying to desegregate." And there's a difference between desegregation and integration but trying to desegregate. "You know, and you sit there, and they pour sugar on you, they pour milk on you, they do all that crazy stuff," and he said, "but this day this one white woman just got to him-" "cause she said, 'I don't understand you people. I wouldn't wanna be anywhere where people didn't want me. I don't understand you people, I don't get it." And he said . . . . For this, some reason this women got to him so he broke ranks 'cause normally you don't say anything, you just take the abuse but he broke ranks, and he said, "Lady, let me explain it to you," he said, "We're not here because we want to be here, we're here to let you know that you cannot tell us where we can and cannot go." He said, "But I guarantee you when this is over I'm never coming back in here." He had the right attitude. Desegregation means you cannot tell us that we can't have full-fledged rights in America, you cannot tell us where we can and cannot go. But guess what, when we win that battle I ain't never coming back in here. But there were others of us who we won the battle, and we couldn't wait to go sit at their lunch counter, and abandon our own little restaurants, and abandon our own businesses, and now abandon our own

churches.

While there have been historic examples and instances of segregation, three participants indicate that a form of segregation is active today. PP4 states that "we are still dealing with people who are trying to segregate themselves from the rest of the city based on race." PP1 echoes that "we don't associate with each other in this area. And so, my relationship with the white pastors and white people is generally limited." PP5 points to the involvement of the church in moving the modern segregation needle, saying, "There's an effort in our city right now to break away from our city to create a mostly white community with some affluent families, affluent black families. That movement was started in a church."

Experiences of racism. When discussing experiences of racism, PP9 states, "You have to be black to understand whether that is a racist comment a person made. If you never experienced racism, you can't define it. You can't tell me when something hurt me or something didn't hurt me. You can't tell me that. I can tell you." Seven participants shared specific instances in which they were personally affected. PP9 states that he lived the history of racism and gives an account of a segregated movie theatre:

> Living in Mississippi, I grew up where when we went to the movies, you had a colored section and a white section. The colored section was up in the balcony. The white section was down on the floor. And we had to go up in the balconies and sit. And sometimes people would throw bottles of popcorn or something up there, call us monkeys. We'd get into fights or something like that, and then plus the school was segregated . . . . So, I know all about it. I experienced it. Lived it. Didn't have to read about it. I'm a part of that history.

PP10 details a childhood incident of playing with a child of a different race:

> One morning while there, I was playing with this little white kid and all that. His mom walks up to him, snatches him by the collar and uses the N-word and says, "I told you not to play with "N**" We don't play with "N**" That was one of the first times that I was in situation where I recall the negative differentiation . . . . I had heard different things, but it was right there in my face, and he looked at me like he didn't know what was going on. I didn't know what was going on. We were just a couple of little boys having fun while we awaited our names being called to visit with one of the clinic doctors.

PP8 shares what it was like being one of the first to integrate into a white school:

> Another negative story was my mother talked two other parents into having their sons be the ones to integrate in a white school that was five miles from us instead of going to a black junior high school that was 10 miles away from us. We went there for that first year, with the name-calling, the fights from the other kids, especially the white males. We had difficulties for that first year before they integrated the whole system.

PP4 accounts his observing the struggle, "The negative things are more or less personal than it is collective because growing up in a Civil Rights household I grew up in watching the struggle . . . and the struggle continues." PP9 shares a more recent instance of racism when being questioned as to why he moved into a new neighborhood,

> In 2002, up here in Minnesota now, we moved out into Apple Valley, a white, upper class neighborhood. It was just a neighborhood to me. We moved there, and the white people in the community even came up and asked me, "So, why do you all want to live here?" I said, "Excuse me?" "Why do you all want to live here?" Who's asking? Why? It's things like that. As a pastor and Christian, you're trying to maintain and be civil, to be spiritual, but get out of my face. Yeah, it bothers you. It really does.

PP6 shared a parallel instance and adds:

> It was obvious that it wasn't a place where we were as welcomed as we were accustomed to being. No neighbors came and knocked on the door to welcome you to the neighborhood. It was almost the like the opposite. Almost as if to say, where are you coming from? What are you doing here? It wasn't as warm and inviting. From the stairs to your door, you might get a murmuring, nothing ever transpired that was a direct contact. Nothing ever transpired where there was any type of altercations, but you could tell that it wasn't a place where you were readily welcomed. There was a part of town for y'all. So, you all go and that's where y'all live at, but this is where we live.

PP1 discusses an out-of-state traffic stop,

> I got stopped by a policeman in Marshall, Texas. And he said he stopped me because I had one of those little rims around my tags that has my church name on it. And he said he couldn't see the name of the state beneath the rim. So, he stopped me. But when he stopped me, he checked the serial number on my car to make sure it was my car. He called in to check to see if I had a record in Texas or whatever. He wanted to see my insurance. He wanted to see my driver's license. Then he asked me . . . I have a Texas driver's license, because I have a home here and I work as a minister, but I have a home in Texas. So, I never changed my driver's license and he asked me about that. He asked me my sister's name and all that, which I didn't give him. But, I'm like, "So this is what these young people go through," because I had a hat, a cap on and then my car, my windows are a little tinted, so you can't tell that I was an older gentleman. Otherwise, I don't think he would have stopped me.

Additionally, PP10 shares an instance of perceived media bias and the Ku Klux Klan during the Michael Brown Jr. protests:

> The camera man finally gets a shot over in front of the new municipal court building in Ferguson. There, the police officers are standing, and I think either in front of them or behind them is a row of the KKK in their gear head to toe. That scene didn't make CNN, that didn't make Fox, that didn't make any news broadcast. It didn't make any of that. So, of course, I'm infuriated at this point. I'm like, "Where are you guys? You all want to come and talk, but you're missing the story. This is the story. This is why black people are so angry. You're missing a major part of the story." I even told other people about this. Everybody goes into shock when they hear this. We never saw that. I said, "Of course you didn't. Because the media just wants you to think this is a bunch of black folks who have no grounds for what they're screaming about."

Articulating that all racism or racially motivated disparities are not overt, PP2 shares what he identified as subtle racism or racial incidents:

> I've had my share of quizzical looks, the comments about what I can and can't do. I have not really experienced a whole lot of overt or like in your face, combative racism, but a lot of subtleties, just kind of under the table, the cloaked racism, I've experienced that. But I've never met a Klansman. I've never, you know, met someone that just called me a n****r to my face, anything like that. I haven't had that kind of experience before.

Effect on Christianity

The second subcategory was effect on Christianity. While participants acknowledge the effect of race and racism throughout American history, they offered a unique perspective on its effect on Christianity. PP9 suggests that racism's effect on Christianity resulted in many African Americans removing themselves from the faith:

> We were so rooted and grounded in our faith. But many blacks defected from the gospel and just left it. It [Racism] could have impacted you if you hadn't been rooted in the faith. Because you just weren't feeling that. You weren't feeling that, Christianity, through what you were personally experiencing . . . . It was kind of hard to apply Christianity with what was going on, that God would make a way. It was kind of hard to see Jesus back then, as a just God to allow things like racism to happen.

Similarly, PP10 shares his response to those in Christian settings who openly say "God does not see color":

> What I think you mean is color isn't a problem for God, but you don't want to tell me God doesn't see color, because you're telling me God doesn't see me. Okay? He sees me. He sees not only my color. He sees culturally where I'm coming from, and why things have certain priorities to me, and he doesn't belittle it or downgrade it because it's not a priority to you, or it doesn't mean that much to you . . . . You know what I'm saying? It's just totally different, but for some reason God doesn't see all of that? Of course, He sees it. And in many ways encourages it.

PP1 discusses segregation amongst church denominations and its impact racially:

> You all simply had the mainline churches that had either independent, churches, or you had them included in a segregated area in the denomination. That's what you had back then. So, when we were growing up, the Methodists didn't sing the Baptist's music. They sang the music like the white folk. The Methodists went to seminary, the Baptists didn't. The Methodists had to conform to white rules and regulations, the Baptists were more congregational.

PP7 adds to the discussion of the intersection of race and Christianity by sharing his experience in a predominately white seminary:

> Being a pupil of a Christian seminary that was predominantly white, it was evident, experiences and expresses of racism. Either in the way you were graded or regarded. Opportunities that were afforded to you, or not, because of that and the basic assumption that you were not as good as, or less than.

Too, referencing his experience, PP1 contributes, "I went to seminary and I had to fight in a white dominated seminary." PP5 highlights the Southern Baptist Convention and their admission of African Americans into their seminaries in the mid-1900s:

> Specifically, when the Southern Baptists officially decided to let blacks in seminaries, Southern, and the rest of them . . . . I think they officially went public with letting blacks in, in the 50s. The press release made a statement, something to the effect, this is not a direct quote, that they were looking for highly qualified blacks. In other words, you had to be a super negro for us to admit you to the school. And that reeks of racism. That same criteria wasn't there for whites that wanted to go, but, that was to make the white churches feel safe. It was that they weren't just going to let anybody black go to school with my white daughter up there at Southern, they went on to look for the most highly qualified blacks.

Similarly, six of the ten participants call attention to Evangelical Christianity, the election of President Donald Trump, and white supremacy as having racial undertones and connections that have affected Christianity as a whole. In conducting research for an academic article, PP10 details findings associated with evangelicals:

> I discovered a seething and great distrust toward white evangelicals and so-called classical evangelical theology among learned biblical scholars and parishioners in the African American community. . . . I found documentation of several racist underpinnings that had historically been a part of long-standing predominantly white denominations. Specifically, I investigated further and discovered that there are theologies that had been developed and practiced for decades by the Presbyterian Church, the Southern Baptists, and others; that are really rooted in racism, or highly impacted by it. The Southern Baptist, 25 or 30 years ago or more exposed this fact and they made their public apology. Presbyterians as well.

PP7 augments this, stating, “I’m cautious saying that because of the treatment that Christianity has received under these Evangelicals. What I see as Christianity and what they view, and what has been accepted as Christianity, is two different things.” PP5 furthers the illustration when pairing social justice and the Southern Baptist Convention,

> Isn’t the Southern Baptist Convention meeting this week? Social justice is not heresy. Right now, the Southern Baptists are meeting and there’s gonna be a plenary session that talks about the dangers of social justice, right? Turn on Fox News. You mention social justice, they immediately attack, immediately call it heresy. Talk to your white ministerial friends and watch them take a step back when you start talking social justice.

PP10 further details frustration with the evangelical church’s methods of evangelism:

> Some white evangelicals are good people with good intentions, but don’t understand what I’m talking about here, but truly are willing to do whatever needs to be done. But I am appalled at times that you look that there are some who are willing to pour millions of dollars and hours of labor into communities overseas but they rarely put a nickel in what’s around the corner or downtown or whatever. Believe me, I’m not a victim. I don’t have a victim mentality. I don’t think you owe me. I’m just talking about a reality. This is the biblical missiological principle—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the Earth. If you bypass Jerusalem to get to the uttermost parts of the Earth, how does that work? All in the name of discipling the nations? That just doesn’t work. If you can contribute and be a wiser, more strategic part of helping to disciple your Jerusalem then together we can touch and invest more effectively in the nations of the Earth. We can do powerful and eternally transformational things.

Inversely, PP6 details the outcomes of evangelism efforts by African American churches in white communities:

> It didn’t matter what we did in the neighborhood, how we interacted. We went door to door introducing ourselves. We were there four years and the extent of being able to engage the community was, if we came outside providing some type of activity, providing some type of giveaway. But from a worship perspective or doing service in the confines of Sundays or weekdays, South Bend was quite unique, because it was the element of I’m not coming. You’re not of us, you’re not from us. You don’t belong here.

While addressing the current racial implications, PP3 necessitates the historical narrative: “So this whole idea of evangelical Christianity has been popular and become front and center in our country since Trump has been president, but I would suggest that this separation of who we are and how we worship has been in play since I’ve been

moving around in the church and probably much longer than that." PP5 questions, "How did society get to the point where that is considered by the majority culture acceptable behavior? We got to connect dots. All that ties back to white supremacy. . . . It came from white evangelical churches teaching the curse of Ham."

PP4 ties the intersection of racism and Christianity to the election of Donald Trump:

> I think just recently when I look at the election of Donald Trump and conservative white Christians who support him. And I believe Donald Trump to be a racist, and to have that support of the moral majority and conservative white Christianity. . . . No matter what Trump does or what he says about blacks or women, no matter how much he lies, they support him. And I think for some people that does cast appall on Christianity because it says that Christianity is beholden to right wing politics as opposed to being held to the high standards of morality and justice, and the prophetic words of the prophets of the text.

PP9 agrees, noting that he ties the support from the desire of superiority for the white race:

> They see Christ as a Christ that want white people to be superior. That is the reason why the Evangelicals have embraced Donald Trump. They feel that Donald Trump is their white hope to save the white race. So, regardless of his sins, and his whatever he does, he is sent by God to save the white race.

PP10 refers to a conversation he once had with a white pastor concerning race:

> He asked me during one of our discussions on race, "Why is everything about race?" I looked at him strangely and said "Sir, I don't need to remind you," as he's an MBA from Harvard, "I don't need to remind you. We didn't make it about race. We didn't do that. Okay, I don't want to accuse all white people, but that was done by key white people in this country and in that sense, they made it about race. And we're still dealing with the aftermath." "They said we would be slaves. They said this. Multigenerationally, the impact of that has been racial. Most polity and policy decisions are made based upon race. We've still got laws in the book based on race. You see, it's got nothing to do with intelligence or marriage or anything. It's race." And so, coming to me as if I'm just playing the race card, my response is that, multigenerationally, the present condition and climate culturally in this country has been created in large part by this racist ideology or the ignorance about its impact that is continues to this day. In other words, my references to race or racism as a culprit is not a card I display to avoid dealing with the real issues. It is a major real issue. We keep trying to get away from it, but all the way from the President of the United States and what's going on in our country right now, around the world, there's this phobia, and there's this sensitivity. So, it is still a problem. It is still a problem, and we keep saying it's not a problem.

Furthermore, three of the participants directly reflected upon the depiction of Jesus and

its correlation to racism. PP7 shares, "Of course seeing and knowing that the ethnic backgrounds, certainly the skin color of Jesus as brown, but yet still is displayed unapologetically as a white man in a seminary that's an academic environment that should know better. That's racism." PP3 adds, "I came into the faith, the knowledge of Christ, and began to learn the true Christ and not the Christ that's presented to us." PP1 contributes this as one of the outlets of his affirmation for James Cone,

> Because he made the claim that each person interpreted the Christian faith from their own identity, and that Christ is black, because Black people have faith in, in Christ who has to be black, not because he has to be Black generally, but he's Black for you as a Black person. And for a woman, he has to be a woman. And for an Asian, he has to be an Asian. And, and because white people made him white, right? That's just fine, but you can't make him white for everybody.

PP10 adds,

> Often in various ministerial leadership roles racial prejudice was obvious. The gerrymandering, the redlining of districts, the duplicitous standards. I just don't get it. I don't get them. How we all supposedly are citizens of the kingdom of God, we all love Jesus, we all espouse these things. However, some fundamental factors and aspects of the Gospel were really being tainted.

PP9 concludes that the issue of race is a sin issue:

> When you learn more about God, when you understand how trouble started, why we are where we are today, and you learn that it has nothing to do with just race. It has something to do with sin. Sin is the cause of all of this, and it has always been a problem, even for the Jews when you learn what the Jews had gone through from the Arabs and all of that, you understand that this is a sin problem.

PP10 agrees and believes that it is the charge of African American pastors to lead the discussion. He says,

> Racism is a spiritual problem that only can overcome through a healthy genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. As an African American pastor, I believe we have the calling from God to lead that discussion, not only through forgiveness but through saying, "Hey, this is the issue as we understand it, as we see it. And here are some recommendations and suggestions, even some imperatives on how to deal with it."

PP5 discusses self-investigation and racialization of racism in the Body of Christ:

> It forces you to come to grips with the fact that this same God you believe in, there's some people across town who process this God in such a way that not only is this acceptable behavior to them, they sometime even reward and celebrate people who engage in it.

PP10 adds,

> I found myself trying to get into the mind of how a person could say, on the one hand, that they had given their lives to Jesus Christ. He's Lord of their lives. They've been transformed by the power of Christ, and on the other hand, they hold to these views. That's just untenable to me. What did the Great Commandment and the Great Commission mean to them theologically?

PP1 concurs, yet asserts that this behavior and its constituents are not consistent with true Christianity, saying,

> I then began to see that it's a difference between Christianity and churchianity. Churchianity is what the Europeans developed after the early church. And churchianity has political associations associated with it, that perpetrates a racial philosophy. That's what I finally discovered that the white church was doing and what I also discovered through [James] Cone and his analysis, that white theology was doing.

Racial reconciliation. A major emphasis on race and racism's effects on Christianity was identified as racial reconciliation. Though all participants defined racial reconciliation in their own lens, the concept of pairing attitude with action permeated throughout. PP8 says that "racial reconciliation would be atoning for past wrongness, in a legislative and an attitudinal way. It all starts with our attitudes. Because that will impact how one group treats another and how one group thinks about another." He further emphasizes that the legislative piece will "enforce the reconciliation" similar to, "the Disability Act. That's legislative. There would not be curbs to take a wheelchair, there would not be bathrooms, public bathrooms that a wheelchair could get to had that not been for legislation."

PP2 states that racial reconciliation is the "attempt to respect and to view others with equal dignity . . . an attempt to try to have a dialogue, bring about understanding, dispel myths, bring down barriers, and to see each other as human beings created in the image of God." PP6 shares that racial reconciliation begins with "honest dialogue" and "says I can respect your differences and really still be able to have a positive encounter and interaction with you, though we are as different as left and right."

Specifically referencing the black-white dynamic, PP5 shares, "Some would argue that there has never been real, true conciliation between blacks and whites in America and in the church. Therefore, you can't have reconciliation." PP3 contends that racial reconciliation is "justice in its truest sense and justice can't happen without repentance."

Similarly, three participants associate racial reconciliation to reparations. Racial reconciliation is defined by PP7 as follows:

> In short reparations. I don't think that reconciliation can appropriately happen without reparation. We say reconciliation but reconciliation requires repentance, and reparations. You gotta say you're sorry and you also need to pay for what you did, and that has not happened. So, we just wanna do the reconciliation part. We wanna just get in the circle singing kumbaya, we are the world, and then you walk away still not speaking to me and still treat me like I'm the scum of the earth and not worthy of the same consideration and rights as you are. So that's not true reconciliation. So, I think reconciliation takes place when there's true repentance and a payment in some form, to overcome the damage that's been done. Which has happened for every race by the way except for black people.

PP1 adds that reconciliation requires a four-step process:

> First of all, the white man has to experience, he has a confession, redemption. And these institutions have to commit to redemption. The second step is the institutional and the populational group of white folks need to apologize. They have to apologize based upon a confession of guilt. I'm talking about . . . . Now, this the biblical understanding of reconciliation. Then when they have apologized, then Black folk have to come to forgiveness. And once Black folk come to that point of forgiveness, then you have to have reparations. In other words, they got to give us back what they took. You can't be walking around talking about, "Those were my ancestors that did that 200 or 300 years ago," and the system is still in place and you benefiting from it. You got to do like they did the Jews in Germany. They paid them folks. You got to do like they did the Japanese over here. They paid them folks. They got to do like they did Europe. They went over there and rebuilt Europe after they bombed it. They, they have refused to reparate Blacks and Native Americans. So, it cannot be any reconciliation without reparations. You can't just say, "Forgive me," and that's it.

PP4 shares that "reparations after slavery were given, but they were given to the slave master, that's how crazy the system is. The slave master was given reparations, not the formerly enslaved." PP1 further adds that while reconciliation is a multistep process inclusive of reparations, payment does not necessitate money:

> I didn't say reparations equals money. I said putting back in what you took out. Okay, and it's four things that they white man took from us. Took our dignity, took our ability to have an income, took our ability to progress and have, took our

> opportunity, and took our spirit. So, for me, reparations is going to include all of those.

PP4 agrees, while stating that money can be a part of process; however the goal is wealth. He says,

> Reparations is not just about money, it's about wealth building, home ownership. If you look at the home ownership rates in our city and they usually say home ownership is the first rung, first tier, to how to build wealth and pass something down. Home ownership rates because for a number of reasons, redlining, banks not lending to black people, we haven't had those opportunities. So, reparations is fixing the systems that have been put in place to hold us back . . . it's not about money, it's not about writing every black person a check so they can buy a Cadillac. I hear all that foolishness, no. It's about owning and controlling the land, it's about being able to educate our own children, it's about finding a sector in society that we control. We don't control any major sector in the economy other than being a consumer, and the thing we call church, which we build, and some people still attend. . . . When you say money, I say wealth and wealth is a much broader term than money. Wealth is land, wealth is businesses, wealth is proper education. We have to build wealth.

PP1 further provides an example to illustrate this stance, stating,

> Okay, let's say if I come into your house and I take your car and I asked you to forgive me, but I'm going to keep the car. That's like I took your car and I had five, now you got to ride a bicycle. And then every time you pass by my house, you see your car sitting in my yard. Every time you pass by, it's going to make you mad. Ain't no reconciliation. But you don't hear them talking about reparations. You hear them talking about forgive and forget. That don't work. That ain't no reconciliation. When, Zacchaeus decided that he wanted to follow Jesus, he said he was going to give those people back five times what he took. He said he was going to give those people back five times what he took. That's reparations.

PP4 adds, "There's not racial reconciliation without reparations. Acknowledging, we're repairing the damage that was done over the last 400 years. So, reconciliation for me is not Kumbaya, it's not holding hands, it's not having joint church services, it's repairing the damage." Ultimately, PP5 asserts that racial reconciliation cannot happen without Christ by stating,

> It means we're at the table of brotherhood, sisterhood, kingdom, family; where the agenda of worshiping God, loving other people in the name of God, discipling other people in the things about God, meeting needs, ministering to one another in the name of God becomes the driving forces of who we are and what we do. As opposed to, "When I look at you I see your race, and that trumps everything else about you. And I respond to everything you say or do on the basis of your race." There's been a lot of that in the history of Christianity in America and reconciliation means race no longer is a driving factor.

PP10 coincides, however he asserts that he may have to provisionally settle for what he can get:

> I think that's only possible through relationship with Jesus Christ. However, when living in a lawless society, I know sometimes we have to settle for whatever the level that we can get on the human level or the civil level. How that looks for me is, A, I try to be civil, and then allow that to become the leverage for presenting the gospel, and then building relationships, the discipleship and camaraderie and partnerships.

While in agreeance, PP3 indicates that more is required than a verbal shared belief or passive action:

> And so what needs to happen, is first, there's gonna have to be this idea that ministers that think that not as they should be, that God intended for them to be, that we should turn away from that we have to turn away from the systems that we have constructed, that we have now so reconciliation would simply mean we have to make this right. Don't tell me that just because we come together and have church or just because we walk the streets together or have a bike ride together that everything is all right. It's not all right as long as I'm ministering in an area where people are poor and walking the streets and I have to feed them because they can't have jobs while you minister in an area where you have all that you need and more and you're telling me, "Let's just praise the Lord together."

PP9 indicates that "we have come a mighty long way. I don't feel that we are still there, and I don't know if we will ever get there. . . . It seems like we are digressing, as opposed to going forward."

Multiethnic Churches

The final subcategory within the second major theme was multiethnic churches. Three participants noted that the function of the multiethnic church negatively affected the Black church and community; relatedly, four of the participants indicated that persons should be able to attend church wherever they see fit. Figure 2 demonstrates the perceived impact on the Black church and community.

Negative perceptions towards the multiethnic church took various forms. Two of the three noted the negative impact it has on the struggling Black church. PP4 noted, "It is negative, it is part of the reason the Black, quote/unquote, Black church is struggling." PP8 agreed, noting that, he advocates for the separation of black and white

churches. He asserts that frequently when African Americans join a predominately white church, a tipping point exists where they assimilate to white religious customs, abandoning their own:

> So, in a white church, where African Americans will join a white church, the order of service, the style of worship does not change, ever. The African Americans assimilate into the white religious customs and norms in relation to worship . . . . I would like to hold onto that and not dilute that. So, from a black to Christian standpoint, I do not promote the joining of the races as in relationship to my religion and Christianity.

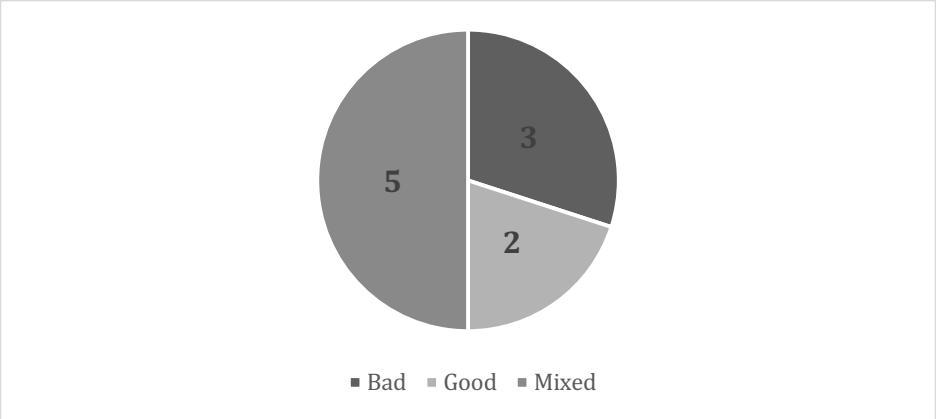

Figure 2. Effect of multiethnic churches on the Black church and Black community

While PP2 falls in the mixed view category, he notes that multiethnic churches stray away from social justice and political issues: "Some churches, in an attempt to try to attract more of a diverse congregation tend to shy away from social issues and political issues, to try to kind of ignore the role to make sure they don't offend anybody." Though PP7 disagrees and views the multiethnic church as a positive, he emphasizes that we need to do more than worship together:

> Some people make an issue out of, well we better all worship together. I don't believe that. I mean we need to work together as Christians who ought to work towards social justice and homelessness, and housing, definitely hunger and education. That's the things that we have to collaborate about, but because we have different ways that we hear, and different things that appeal to us I think people

need to be able to be in their environment that best represents and relates to their experience.

PP9, too, has mixed views regarding multiethnic churches, however he purports that the Black church continues to be "home" for Black church congregants:

> Up here you have that multicultural churches, but guess what? When there is a racial issue, guess what happens? Guess where our people who go to these other churches, guess where they come back to? Guess where they come back to asking for help when it's dealing directly with a racial problem? Guess where they come back to. You can't get away from it. You cannot get away from it. You can go where there is a melting pot, and there's nothing wrong with that. To each his own. But when you have a specific problem that is dealing with your black race, you come home. You come home because something was said or done that you didn't like, and you couldn't do anything about it. But when, like during the Castile incident, people came home. People came to those meetings throughout the Twin Cities. Those meetings were in Black churches around the Twin Cities from other members going to other multicultural churches. They came home.

PP4 agrees, adding that while there may be some preferential positives associated with attending a multiethnic church, they generally do not address Black issues or Black sensitivities with care. He provides an example:

> Now interesting enough I've had a lot of 'em leave there and come back to my church. The big multicultural church here, I mean they're huge and I have black folk leaving there. Before that big one, we had another one here, and I don't know if you ever seen the picture of this, like on the highway this big tall Jesus thing that they built, and black folk ran up there. Well, until when Barack Obama ran for president, and the pastor got up and said, "We will never vote for him, he's this, this, this . . .", and you got all these black folks sitting there going "Oh, s**t." So, all of sudden [laughs] it's like they just got slapped. Because even though Pastor Bob, and you call him by his first name, is a nice guy, he comes right out of the Word, and we're only in here for an hour, and he preaches these nice, you know Ted Talk series sermons, Pastor Bob does not have a dual stream of consciousness . . . all these black folk were sitting there like stunned.

PP1 upholds this thought while stating that African Americans attend whatever church they like to, and still contact him when their blackness is under assault:

> Black folk go to church when they want to, but I have not seen the pastor of the [Redacted] Church over at a school advocating for a Black child. He wasn't at the Mike Brown situation. I don't see him advocating voting for Black folk. He supports Donald Trump. I can't say. . . . And when those Black folk die, they don't. . . . They want me to come do the funeral. Why can't he do it? When they get sick, he may get a chance to go see them in the hospital, but when they get sick, they call me. So, the multiethnic church to me is a microcosm of an entertainment center. They have all the equipment and trappings of a theater that attracts people. But when it comes to dealing with nitty-gritty personal issues, they don't have the resources or the skills.

On the other hand, two participants assert that having the option of the multiethnic church is a positive contribution. PP5 says that the multiethnic church is biblical and a great option for families wanting to be in a multiracial context:

> I'm grateful to have that alternative there for those who want to pursue interracial church because they think it's biblical. And it is biblical. It's giving them an alternative. For those who want their kids raised in a multi-racial context, as opposed to a mono-racial context, it's providing an option for them there. So, I don't have anything at all negative to say. I know a lot of black pastors hate that idea or thought. I always say people have a right to go to church where they choose, and whatever meets their needs spiritually. That's between them and God, and the Lord healed me, so I celebrate it. I like options in everything, so they got they options.

PP7 agreed, calling multiethnic churches needed and an avenue to receive the gospel in a format that matches one's preferences, while not dismissing the responsibility of addressing social ills:

> Multi-ethnic churches are needed, and people who feel comfortable in certain situations to be able to go there I think that if I were considering the church season we're in, we're in the Pentecost, and what fascinates me the most about Pentecost is that people can hear the word of God in their own language. . . . Like blue grass, you should be able to hear the gospel in blue grass. If you like R & B, and that kind of beat then you could hear it better that way. If you like folk songs and folk singing then that's what you need to give you a better idea and reach you, and touch you, in ways you could hear the gospel. There's some places I feel more comfortable in than others, I don't think there's anything wrong with that. But when it comes to addressing the social ills of our day, as Christians we need to do that. People should hear the word of God their own way and it just so happened in Pentecost.

PP10 describes the multiethnic church's effect on Black churches and communities as "positive and negative." However, in his response, he draws attention to the leadership of the multiethnic church:

> The expectation here still pretty much means different ethnic group, assimilating under leadership that pretty much European or euro-sensitive/oriented. The impact that has on the Black churches, a lot of the history and contributions of black people will never be tapped into with the emphasis needed or deserved. Mainly the apologetic issues that black people have, are not going to be addressed or they're going to be . . . what I've seen is they've been marginalized in the name of discipling the nations, or God doesn't see color, which blows me out of the water. How in the world God doesn't see color? He made trees green. He made flowers yellow and purple and blue. But he doesn't see me? What? What're you talking about? Often these are sincere statements made to minimize or alleviate the race issues. But they often do the reverse.

PP4 supplements this assertion by describing what he defines as a typical multiethnic church:

> A multiracial church is a church that has white pastor, or white polity, or white lead, and black folk go. You rarely find a multiracial church that has black pastor, and black polity, and white people come. It rarely works that way. Now, it may in some few places, but it's always us integrating with them. Now, I understand the service is only one hour, and you can drink coffee in the sanctuary, and they got a playground area for the kids, I got all of that, and that they got the lights in this I got all of that . . . . The bottom line is this, the only people in this country who want to integrate are us. Nobody else does that but us, nobody else does the integration thing but us. So, we integrate the White Church because we just believe it's somehow better, and what it does is weaken our institutions. . . . So, the multiracial churches that are usually multiracial because of us, [laughs] they ain't multiracial 'cause white folk ain't came to us, and it's not like there's a sign on the door at my church that says white folk can't come, it's not there, they just don't. They never have, and they never will, it's us.

PP10 adds,

> There's still a number of persons who do not get that my "A" is somehow not equal to the "A" that a white person makes. Black pastors are still going to find that most whites are not going to come to sit under their leadership as quickly as blacks will go and sit under a white person's leadership.

Additionally, PP6 argues that the success of the multiethnic church has a lot to do with resources and the opportunity to gather resources at the expense of others. He says,

> It has more to do with [Lawndale] having relationships with people and they benefited from the fights that we've had. They benefitted from the struggles that led to bring resources and services where we fought the fight. But because they had the position and the seat at the table, they were the ones who were able to benefit from the apples falling from the tree. So, they got the land. They got the properties. They did the development. They have been able to now partner with other Caucasians who have brought in the medical things that our communities have long than without. And as a result, our people will go there because of the services that they provide and not necessarily for their ability to fully engage them.

Theme 3: Expectations of African American Pastors

The third major theme to emerge from the data was expectations of African American pastors. Within this theme, participants described the relationship between the traditional role of pastor and the added responsibilities of being an African American pastor of a Black church.

Identity

The first subcategory was identity, which included a merged identity of African American and pastor. Within this subcategory, two participants identified themselves as being more Black than Christian. PP8 shared that his blackness over Christianity would be visible in his politics:

> From a political standpoint, my Christianity would say I would vote for the best candidate. My blackness tells me I would vote for a black candidate before I'd vote for a white candidate, 85 percent of the time. I mean, something's got to be seriously wrong with the black candidate for me not to vote for them, just because they're black. And it really doesn't matter what their religious bent is, I would vote for them because they're black. Or what their moral compass is. I would vote for them. Because they're black.

PP4 concurs, adding that his blackness shines through his Christianity via the lens in which he views Scripture:

> You can't get through it without being in Ethiopia, and Egypt and Africa. But the book has been cast that it's somebody else's book, somebody else's story, and of course if it's your story, you got a God who wants to give you land 'cause he made the whole earth. But yet he gives you land where there's other people already on it, and then says go wipe them out. That's cool if that's, if that's you, your people, your story . . . but if you're the other people you go wait a minute, [laughs] here we are chilling on the land, you say this is your God, he's big, he's huge, he made the whole world, he wants to give your little nation some land, why you coming over here messing with us? And then not only am I gonna give you land, but I'm gonna give you land with other people on it, and I want you to kill 'em all, don't let the livestock live, don't let anything go in there, take the land. And, so I'm reading this as a black person not as a Christian 'cause Christians just read it and don't even think about it. It's the Bible, they just read . . . but I'm reading it as a black person.

Conversely, the remaining eight participants struggled to split their identity as an African American pastor into two, African American and pastor. PP7 shares that "if someone wants a distinction between being an African American and a pastor, I can't. All of this is inextricably tied to my identity. A pastor, a black man, a Christian, all that is inextricably tied to who I am." PP10 insists that his blackness not be minimized, but avows Christianity goes beyond that: "Unashamed as I am to be black, and 'in godly sense proud of that,' that is not all there is. It's not all there is." PP1 describes that the decisions he has to make on a daily basis are unified "as a pastor and a Black person." PP9 affirms "You have to balance it."

PP3 said that carrying the identity of Black pastor allows him to speak up for others who may not have the authority to do so without consequence:

> It gives me the freedom to do and say some things that, and on behalf of some people, that could not. People tease me and say that I should be a politician and I always say, "No, because I need to be able to hold onto my microphone and say what needs to be said prophetically when it needs to be said." Second thing is, I recognize and realize. . . . Let's say I have a member who works at the local bank, and he or she believes like I believe and wants to work with me, but they can't stand on the steps of city hall, and up on the steps of the state capitol and say the things that I say because on Monday morning, they gotta go to work at that bank, and that bank holds both their car note and their mortgage. So, that gives me opportunity to speak for them.

PP5 says that the role of a Black pastor is all that he's ever been interested in: "I don't know nothing else. I don't think I could make a living doing anything else. It's the only thing I'm interested in. I have no other passions or interests." PP6 shares how this identity has opened his eyes, saying, "Being a pastor exposed me to the possibilities and potential of . . . . And sometimes because what I do has enabled me to have opportunities that I had probably would not have had at this stage in this point of my life." PP10 shares that being an African American pastor influences his ministry by drawing an importance in embracing differences:

> The way that's influenced me, in terms of my ministry is, (1) we honor the difference but we don't deify it, and (2) we structure ministry that contextualizes that, and yet at the same (3) it helps to lift people into what I want to call this fuller understanding that God has, that God loves the world . . . the whole world, warts and all.

Preaching and Uplifting the Black Family

The second subcategory in the theme of expectation of African American pastors was preaching and uplifting the Black family; within this subcategory, participants spoke of two facets: discussing race from the pulpit and building up the community and the Black family. Eight of ten participants said that they had addressed race related issues from the pulpit on a consistent basis; the remaining two participants do not shy away from confronting race related issues, but do so in a different format.

For PP6, race is "something we deal with on a regular, being the church, the racism is there pretty much every single Sunday." When discussing race and the pulpit, PP1 shares that he has preached on race issues a number of times:

> I can think of several times. One time was when Rodney King and "Can't we just get along?" in LA created the LA Riots? He got beat up and they showed the video. That particular situation was really like, kind of like Mike Brown. I preached about that and actually some of my church members in the United Methodist Church got mad at me, because I preached about it, that I confronted the congregation. And then the Oklahoma City Bombing. . . . I would preach sermons about the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to preaching on the Rodney King riots, PP5 admits to addressing every major racial event, "many times, I've confronted race relations from the pulpit. The first one I recall was when Mandela was in prison. . . . Whenever there is a major racial incident . . . I even preached on Ferguson." PP4 concurs, sharing, "I do it all the time, it's like every other sermon. I pastor predominantly African-American church and my skew of faith and Christianity is uplifting our people." PP8 states,

> I preach about it a lot. I talk about it a lot. If you look at neighborhoods around this country, the gentrification is happening, slowly but surely it's happening. Less and less, but more African Americans are being pushed out of areas which they lived in, and they can never come back in.

PP7 agrees, and adds that he speaks about race issues every Sunday:

> All the time. Anybody that knows me knows I do that every Sunday, because I'm just concerned about the disparity that exists, in our nation. And I think the church has a responsibility to speak to it. So, I look at educational disparities, college disparities, health disparities, the prison ratio and those disparities, and how we deal with, address clients, I deal with that. Almost in every sermon, that's weaved into what I present to my congregation. I think you need to; you have to. Things keep happening and you gotta keep saying it so that we can encourage people to vote and do what we can to change this thing around.

PP2 states, "In the course of preaching sermons, I will address issues." A specific example he provides address race and faith head on:

> And you know just addressing this whole issue of Christianity being just a white man's religion. You know? Just understanding that Christianity is a faith that African Americans have embraced since we came here, and it is relevant to our community, relevant to our needs, relevant to the issues that we're facing. And so, you know, trying to exhibit that, preach that, teach that has been something that I've tried to do.

Conversely, PP6 discusses why he prefers to address race issues in the context of a Bible study versus the Sunday morning pulpit:

> My discussions of anything that is racial has always been in the setting of a teaching format on what we consider our Bible study, because I've always had the persuasion that the Sunday morning time is more geared toward the spiritual enrichment that speaks more to some of the other ills that our entire congregation may identify. Because the way I serve may not necessarily be directly impacted by, and the time restraints of a Sunday morning service not giving me the opportunity to really speak to or deal with or have feedback in relation to whatever that particular issue is. So those were always things that we did on a midweek, and those things were always something that we invited others who were either having expertise in that particular area that could come alongside us and be able to navigate the conversation based on the issues. Also be able to be an extra voice, whether it is a voice support or whether it is a voice to say based on what has transpired here are additional ways with our spiritual and Christian beliefs that you can approach it and handle it.

PP10 adds that in addition to speaking about race related issues from the pulpit, he is challenged to discuss other pertinent matters, such as abortion:

> We have a negative growth rate as a people because of abortion. We're the only ethnic group in America that is not growing. Abortion, the vast majority of the time, is the reason why the African American community is vanishing. Black Lives Matter, I understand, was started by a black lesbian "feminist." So, I've had to kind of at least talk a little bit about it and say, "Hey, Black lives do matter, but unborn babies matter too, so do Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddists, and atheist's lives matter, people matter." That isn't to discredit "what you're trying to say or do" but it is to distinguish the motivation for what you're doing. Part of this has nothing at all to do with Christ, and I'm kind of keen on this.

PP9 specifically speaks about preaching the Philando Castile incident:

> This is what happened with Philando's death. There had been, according to the white officer that did the shooting, there had been a break in over in that community the other week. Apparently, or supposedly, it was a black person with a wide nose. Here comes Philando through the community with a wide nose. So, the officer concluded that this was, in the car not a lineup, not someone walking, not someone . . . . He said he saw this wide nose of a black person, and because he had a broken taillight or whatever, he pulled them over. So apparently this was the guy because he was black and he had a wide nose. This had to be the guy or it could be the guy that did the break in or whatever last week. I dealt with that from the pulpit. I preached that everything started because of the wide nose, according to the officer. But you know I brought it out how he was labeled the one because of the wide nose. You've got to be honest with this stuff, and I was honest with it.

Dealing with the fallout from the same incident and tragic death, PP9 details the need to adjust sermons and focus in the immediate aftermath following:

> We had to change messages to address this issue, because people were hurting. To see that man on video, to see that going down live and then to relive it, that was just devastating. So, we had to address it Sunday after Sunday to calm the people, to bring comfort to the people, as well as to plainly address it. More members started coming to church. They start coming back to church. People were hurting and we came together.

Similarly, each pastoral participant agreed that they spoke intensively concerning the incidents that took place not far from their local assemblies. PP3 describes the importance of speaking of those instances for the community:

> But in that instance, you can imagine, like where Alton Sterling was killed, is probably, oh man, about three miles or so . . . about two miles or so from our church, right, almost walking distance, man. So, people lived in that community, around that store where he was killed, so emotions were really raw during that time, and, I don't care how many verses of Amazing Grace you sing that could be you or somebody you love in that same situation.

In discussion the importance of preaching in the Black church, PP10 brings forward the importance of contextualization. PP10 states, "From a theological perspective, there are theological issues that are apologetic issues that do not share the same priority, and so as a black pastor I have to think about that." PP3 adds that people tend to ask him why he continually talks about "black stuff":

> There's this thing that I'm sure you probably heard before, "Why do you always talk about all that black stuff?" And I always make a joke of it and say, "Hello, 'cause I'm black." Right. It's my context. It affects my world view. It is how I do my business.

PP10 consequently affirms,

> We don't share the same apologetic issues, and the culture demands a contextualized application of the gospel. Preaching and teaching of the gospel and living of the gospel that that will not look like what many traditional classical evangelical, in some cases many whites, will think as even high priority issues but it's central to what will turn the nation around.

PP3 further asserts that the responsibility in preaching for the African American pastor includes the building of the community and people:

> We could preach about every Sunday what we view as injustices. But this is about also building us up, building our confidence and trying to convince us to build our community. And so, you know, we just decided that we are not ashamed to say that it's cool to be both black and Christian and we are not ashamed to say that we are going to be who we are, both in our anatomy and in our faith. . . . We are espousing a liberation theology and are trying to lift up, as we say, "We are unapologetic about

> lifting up black people," that does not mean that I hate you or I or I want what you have. I'm not trying to take . . . I'm just trying to help those people that are in my sphere, in my employment, right, that have real needs and you know, need to know about a God who wants them to live better than they're living.

PP2 shares a potential struggle of preaching along the lines of building up the people:

> As a pastor, we, of course try to bring about healing in our own congregation . . . it's a struggle because, you know, of course there's a pull to build our community, to help our community, to speak truth to power. But also, we have white people who have joined our church who we love. They love the Lord, and they want to be a part of this church. And so, I think preaching and teaching presents a potential struggle. It's something that we have to contend with each Sunday.

One topic of interest that three of the participants zeroed in on involved the importance of discipling the Black family. PP2 shared that the African American pastor has to be intentional about the developing and discipleship of the Black family:

> I think we have to have a role in building the black family, rebuilding the black family. Um, making sure that values that are biblical are communicated and taught. Making sure we speak out against injustice, and engage social justice in a responsible, biblical way. I think that mission has not changed. We still need to speak truth to power. But I think there's a great need for discipleship, particularly with black families, marriages, relationships, parenting and being able to stand up when injustice happens and equipping our people with what they need to stand up in a world with racism and sexism.

PP5 agrees and adds that while the Black church is older than the Black family, "much attention is to be put on the uplifting of black families." PP8 contributes that it may require changes from tradition to be able to serve the family due to societal changes:

> The early services now, if you a pastor, you have to do an 8:00 service. Because the families in this church, their children are in sports. Well, what the society does now is, the sports games and our practices are all on Sunday. Those games start around 11:00. So, if you have 10:00, 11:00 service, those parents gonna take their kids to the games and miss church. So, if you want the kids in service, you gotta start an early service, so they can get some biblical training, and then they can go on to their thing. It's changing, it's changing tremendously.

Still, PP2 asserts that his wholistic approach to pastoring is greatly impacted by being an African American, from the pulpit and beyond:

> The fact that I am an African American really informs and fuels most of my pastoral ministry. Just understanding being Christ centered but sensitive to the culture of our community and what it means for me to be a pastor in this context in terms of preaching and teaching. But also helping to address cultural issues that affect how we live our Christian lives and how to respond to those cultural challenges biblically and Christianly is a challenge.

Leadership beyond the Pulpit

The final subcategory from the major theme of expectation of African American pastors is leadership beyond the pulpit, which looks at the role of the African American pastors in which they serve as all things to all people. There was a common expectation in how participants saw the leadership responsibilities of the African American pastor expanding beyond the pulpit. PP5 shares that the leadership in and beyond the pulpit is not for the faint at heart:

> And it looks easy, just like for us watching Steph Curry, it looks easy. But when him and Michael Jordan stay in the gym two and three hours afterwards, to perfect that skill, people don't see that. We care not to see what it takes. We just see people in their glory. We tend not to quantify and really appreciate quality in that glory.

Furthermore, he asserts that while the African American pastor functions in the traditional sense of pastor, unlike other groups, the African American pastor is expected to be more:

> Expectation. From my observation, conversation, not all, but in much of white evangelical America the pastor takes on more of a role of what we might call a chaplain, counseling, making hospital visits and of course, those are our responsibility too. They're not expected to be a community leader and sometimes the decision-making initiative doesn't always rest with him, or maybe with a powerful board, a body of elders or deacons, executive council. Black church pastors, we're expected to lead. Period.

PP8 details his responsibility for the congregation and community by looking back at the African American pastors that preceded him:

> Looking at the leadership that the pastor, my pastor and other pastors, gave to the community, as well as to the congregation. That kind of shaped what I should do and what I should be about. not just as a pastor, not just as a preacher in the congregation. Because I had a spiritual responsibility, a moral and social responsibility, to the community as well and my voice transcended just the pulpit. and that shaped me deeply as it relates to my importance as a pastor.

PP1 provides a four-prong approach to being an African American pastor:

> I can say that being an African American pastor means that, one, you have to have the soul for it. Two, you have to have love for Black people. Three, you have to have a knowledge of the culture. And four, you have to have a deep commitment to Christ and know the Bible, because these folks are Bible believing people.

PP5 adds that a number of the struggles of pastoring in African American communities is

that one is called to serve the entire community and not just one's own church: "Just dealing with the day-to-day struggles of the people that we are called to serve who many never set one foot in our sanctuaries for worship experience, but we still recognize them as a child of God."

PP10 discusses a commitment for African American pastors to address suffering:

> I do think there's some merit to what Dr. Carl Ellis and others are talking about, that you're going to end up ministering more, and at least being sensitive to a theology of suffering rather than trying to win the whole world with Jesus. Don't get me wrong. That's one of my frustrations as a black pastor, sometimes we get so caught up in our stuff and our pain that we are not fulfilling the Great Commission. We're not doing that. We are still trying to survive.

Similarly, PP2 shares,

> As an African American pastor, I'm able to deal with a community that has been oppressed and still dealing with systemic racism and helping them navigate that kind of world and still hold their faith, trust in Jesus and believe in the word of God while living in a situation where they deal with institutional and systemic racism is part of my ministry.

PP7 details the requirement of addressing social justice and race issues for an African American pastor, saying, "It goes hand in hand. The way I was brought up, what I've been exposed to, makes me believe that you can't be a Black pastor, and not be involved with civil rights and social justice and address racism, head-on." PP4 adds, "[The former pastor of] the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery said his father taught him, 'Son, when you see a good fight jump in it,' and, I haven't forgotten that. So, we've been part of struggles across this country."

One commonality among the participants is being directly affected by the loss of Black life in a confrontation with police. All participants indicate that their leadership in response to those situations, which prompted congregational and community suffering, went beyond the pulpit. PP5 says, "You don't have the luxury of ignoring Ferguson as a white pastor would. Some pastors say absolutely nothing. I don't think an African American can have that luxury." PP1 details that after the Michael Brown Jr. incident,

part of his leadership strategy was to go protest: "I joined the protestors down there and we protested, and I encouraged my church. This was about protecting Black youth and sustaining Black folk through, what we call now racist, police brutality." PP7, too, was involved in the protests and stated that his church became a hub for the efforts:

> We all were heading down to the park, where people were gathering to protest, and the park was near my church. They didn't have the equipment necessary to address all the people, and they asked me, can they use my church? And I said of course, and before I knew, they had thrones of people falling behind me coming towards my church. From that moment on we became somewhat of a ground zero for the ministers and others who was coming down to protest. So, I was out there, doing what we can to be present as ministers, and doing what we can to try to encourage a peaceful protest in addition to being angry and hurt by had occurred.

PP3's church also participated in protest, in addition to his focus of ministering to the Sterling family outside of the church walls:

> Also, as a pastor, community person, I found myself ministering to Alton Sterling's family in ways that were just very real. "We don't have enough to eat," and helping to arrange for the funeral and those kinds of things. I guess it took me from the local parish priest, to really trying to reach people that, in some instances, if they walked up to me today, I wouldn't even remember who they are.

While PP4 shares that he has experience protesting, he is of the thought of focusing on the next step:

> When Sam DuBose was shot you know, I was like at that point like numb to it because I didn't wanna go back through the same motions that we go through as a people. You know, the marches, "no justice, no peace, no racist, police." "What do want? Justice. When do want it? Now." I'm like we gotta take this to another level. Of course, that was done, we did that, the marches, and the protest and the chants, but we were always working on how we change policing. How do we change the system? . . . So, we were trying to dismantle their armed police force, we said, "Look, what you need are security guards on campus with a whistle, a radio, because we got City of Cincinnati police who can be here in two minutes. And we have already fought them and won and changed how policing is done. So, my goals in the group that I work with, we were trying to change the system, and I really didn't personally engage a lot in the marches, and the other stuff that we do 'cause I think as a people we gotta play the game and take that next step, you know?

Similarly, PP2 discussed attending meetings with city officials: "There were meetings with the police officers where you know, we were trying to make sense of it all and see what steps could be made moving forward to minimize this type of event happening again." In response to the death of Laquan McDonald, PP8 describes his initial response

and actions as follows:

> Disappointment and outrage is what I felt and I displayed to this congregation. I called directly to our political officials, the mayor, the chief of police. I sought out ways in which I could help the families of the victim, and where was support the church could bring to that, both for the family and for this community, in the north side, where our church is located. I sought to assist the organization that was taking the lead in the vocal advocacy, which was Black Lives Matter.

PP5 shares that he was initially contacted about the Christian Taylor incident before becoming public, but was truly engaged when questioned on next steps from the youth in his congregation:

> But when young people begin to text my wife and I wanted to know, (a) what are you gonna do about it? Again, different set of expectations. Once it went public that question was not, "Should we do anything about it?" The question was, "What are you going to do?" And when we, kind of, pushed back to say, "We hurt with you. We hate it happened, but if you on somebody's property damaging their stuff, that's a risk you take." Their thing was, "Yes, but did he have to be shot? Did he have to be killed?" Couldn't you find a way to arrest him and short of killing him? And we got asked some pretty tough questions, that I couldn't answer 'cause I didn't know all the answers.

While PP6 details that "anger" was his first response after becoming aware of Laquan McDonald's death, he took up the mantle of hosting "discussions for healing amongst community members, city officials, and faith leaders." He details that in spite of the efforts, he's not as optimistic as he had originally hoped:

> I would say our initial response was we met, we talked, we discussed we cry, we marched, you know, all of that. But we really didn't see a lot of the changes implemented that were things that we thought would be beneficial in our community. These issues that were raised at all of these meetings we were having, whether it was our local meetings or the meetings with faith leaders and the powers to be in Chicago because the powers in Chicago really didn't have a respect for pastors that warranted that kind of push, I would say.

PP9 agreed that his role was to "bring the community together," but admitted that "it was personal" and his involvement within the community increased as a result.

Relatedly, PP1 shares that one of the responsibilities includes teaching about blackness beyond the four walls of the church:

> Teach all the time about the issues that Black folk face in terms of trying to deal with Christianity. So, these are some of the situations that I've had to deal with. Matter of fact, I've had to come through most of the situations that have happened

in history. Since 1948.

PP7 adds, "As a black pastor, I should teach my members to love one another, love the world and do our part to speak truth to power. To do our part, feed the hungry, to clothe the naked and uplift the community." PP4 agrees and speaks of the responsibility of educating others, including people of different ethnic backgrounds: "One of our jobs is to educate them, especially those who wanna hang and fight with us. Also, educate them along the way as we educate our people. That's a continuous teaching educating time, method that we have to use."

Another commonality shared among a few participants is their understanding, and in some cases acceptance, of liberation theology and its relationship to serving and uplifting the Black community as part of the "African American pastor's responsibility." PP10 details his understanding of liberation theology via the role of uplifting Black people:

> I understand better from a theological standpoint why James Cone and others wrote supporting Liberation Theology. In those days that we had this great conflict over what it actually meant to be Black. There was this pervasive fear that somehow our liberation was at hand, and as young kids, and teenagers, we had the question of whether or not we really truly were ashamed of being Black, and how Christianity played into that.

PP1 describes how Cone and liberation theology played a major role in his seminary education:

> The main revolutionary event in my seminary education is when I had an opportunity to invite and meet James Cone, the liberation theologian from Union Theological Seminary . . . becoming a friend of his changed my whole concept of Christianity.

As a component of liberation, PP4 contends, that as part of the Black community,

> there are two things we have to do in the black community, and whether or not it's the Christian community, let's just say the black community. We've got to raise black consciousness and raise black wealth. We gotta build consciousness and black wealth, and because if you do one without the other you'll just have some conscious brothers and sisters who can talk with game, but don't have the where with all to get anything done. And if you just build black wealth, you'll have some wealthy black people in communities who are not conscious to help their other brothers and sisters. That's where we are right now.

Accordingly, PP9 describes that the role of an African American pastor

> is more than just leading them to glory. His role is also trying to support them, lead them in the community, in this racial fight. He is a counselor for the sick. He is a father for the fatherless. He's all of that. He wears so many hats. We do so many things as an African American leader.

Additionally, PP6 shares an experience of the responsibilities of the Black pastor expanding beyond the pulpit into doing all that encompasses "what serving these people is." He says,

> I've always heard the conversation and the comments being given. You know, man, that's, that's too much. You have to do all that?! And it's like, "No, I don't. I don't have to do all this. I do this because this is what serving these people is." I was in the emergency room till 4:00 AM this morning, I think I got in about 5:00 AM, I left home last night about 9:00 PM. And while in there, having to deal with a brother who had a particular perspective about the pastor and what he does and versus what he don't do. And I was explaining to him, you see where I'm sitting? I have a family at home and even though I'm sitting here because it's my mother (of the church), I do this on a regular. I do this on a regular where people will call us, sometimes before they call whether it's an elected official. I've had people who will call us when they should have been called 9–1–1. So, at the end, our sense of being engaged and involved is higher because the people in our community feel that you are a part of our family. They engage you in that way where you are helping make decisions about where they live, making decisions about end of life. We just had to do that a couple of weeks ago where a member who's been with us 20, at least 22 to 23 years that I've been there decided, "It's enough, pastor. I've been through enough and though they're saying all these other things they want to do, I need my family to understand I'm done." And they want you to be the mediator, and to you this is a family member, she's like a mother. But I have to be able to, as her pastor and her shepherd, honor her wishes because I can't be in agreement with her and I'm trying to get her to go in a different direction than what she feels is her right. What she feels is her belief and her decision to make. So, having the ability to be engaged and involved in that way, I think is something that is unique to us as African American pastors because in our culture, our people have always looked to us in that way that's beyond just the sermon. That's something I think that is unique to our culture.

Though extensive, PP3 summarizes by sharing one of his favorite sayings: "There's nothing like serving in the hood." There's nothing like being black because every day there is something happening, something moving, somebody you got to deal with and I often say this would never happen in downtown First Church, right?

Theme 4: Advice to Pastors

The final theme was advice to pastors, in which participants offered their most important words of advice. There was one subcategory within this theme: advice to non-African American pastors. Three participants held that the best advice they could offer related to positive relationship with God and His people. They contend that pastors will be held accountable for the treatment of and transparency with others. PP9 clarifies,

> Listen, don't think that you can do or say anything to God's people. Listen, be real with God's people, and be real with God. Be real with God. Just because He called you, doesn't mean He won't test you. Be real. Yes, sir. Listen, He will protect you from others, but when He calls you, He sets you aside, you belong to Him. Ask David. He does it out of love.

In agreement, PP1 shares three things a pastor must do to balance out this treatment and grow in the process: "From my own experience that, one, love. Two, be honest. Three, don't be a know-it-all. Grandma, Aunt Jane, Uncle Ben, all those folks in that church can teach you much, much about Jesus, life, and being a pastor." PP10 adds, "We're not little Messiahs, so we must see the season that we're in, in relationship to the purpose of God, work to do that and prepare the next generation of leaders to pick up from where we ended."

Also, two participants advised to remain true to one's calling. PP7 described it as "fulfilling your assignment," saying, "Stay focused. Just don't get distracted. Fulfill your assignment. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news to the poor, heal the sick, to set the captive free. . . . That's our role, that's our marching orders." PP2 adds, "Make sure you know what God has called you to do and remain true to that. There will be others trying to pull you in different directions in ministry but remain true to what God has called you to do." He later continues, "Know that you're there to preach the Word, you love people, make disciples, and be true to that calling and you'll have God's blessings on your life." Two additional pastoral participants further emphasized prayer,

study, and time with God. PP10 states, "Prayer, spirit of discernment, wisdom, faithfulness and hard work are indispensable." PP5 exclaims,

> Guard your prayer time, devotional time and study time. Prioritize that beyond everything else. As Acts 6:4 says, give attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Don't let community engagement, denominational involvement, ministerial friendships and relationships, golfing . . . . Don't let those kinds of things squeeze out your time to spend with God. Time spent with God is never wasted. That is by far, the most important thing you could do for your family, your congregation, for your health, your sanity, and so on.

Subsequently, prioritizing family was stressed by two pastors. PP5 states that "the next priority to your relationship with God, would be your relationship with your family . . . . Water your relationship with your wife. . . . Date your children if you can once a month. . . . Major in learning your family, ministering to your family." PP8 agrees in not only prioritizing your family, but honestly communicating that to your congregation. He shares,

> When my wife and I got married, I was not a pastor. Every year, we spent Thanksgiving with my family, and we spent Christmas with her family. When I became the pastor, the first thing I did was explain to them was that I will not be at the church for Christmas. And they said, why? Because I'll be with my wife and family, I spend Christmas with my wife's family. They said, but that's an important time for the church and pastors. And I said, "No, no. Many of you go to your family for Christmas, because that's important to you. And I want to be with my family." I have never been at church for Christmas and I've been pastoring since 1982. I've never been home, been here for Christmas. [laughs] But I put that out, upfront. Then it's just common, they're like, oh okay. They know I'm not going to be here. Because that's the way. But you have to set that in stone from the beginning.

Advice to Non-African American Pastors

Four participants said that the best advice they could offer to non-African American pastors is to take note of the difference between the African American experience and others. In this way, the participants underline the challenges of African American life and the corresponding differences due to context, history, and lived experience. PP8 explains,

> Don't assume you know what it means to be black or African American. I run into those people. I don't think they do it intentionally, but you get this fake, "I know what you're going through." H*** no, you don't know what I'm going through.

> Because the history and values that I bring along, many of my white counterparts just never had. They don't have that experience. They didn't have to go through it at all. So, you can't assume that you understand.

PP6 agrees, noting, "There are some things about our experience that you will never relate to. Respect that. Don't pretend or create something you think will help you, or I, feel like you're really concerned about an issue and its impact on me." PP2 encouraged that non-African American pastors "take time to learn the history of African Americans so you can have a greater appreciation for where they've been and where they're going." PP9 offers perspective in that the African American experience affects the approach of African American pastors. PP9 shares that "even though we have the same roles, our approaches are different. We approach everything differently. I have to approach it with the resources or the mindset that I have. We achieve the same thing, but we approach it differently."

In addition, two participants chose to encourage involvement in and provide clarity surrounding the phrase "social justice." PP1 explains that non-African American pastors "need to get involved in some of the social justice issues that's going on in the black community, and they need to make Christ real instead of just from a pulpit." PP3 concurrs, adding, "Social justice is not heresy . . . it is the approach to life to ensure that we work to improve the quality of living for those who ordinarily would not have such assistance. Now, if I would have given you just colloquial way, I'd just say it's our job to make it right. What we see is not right." He further illustrates his stance:

> So, when we read the story about the ten talents. I gave one, five, one, two, and one, whatever the denominations were, the numbers as I read it, he's saying that the servant said that the one with the one talent that buried it, he said to the master, "I knew you were a hard man who reaped where you didn't sow." That means he was thief and he was taking from people that needed stuff. And so, people can be religious, but they see, "if I put a grocery store over in this community or if I make sure that monies are distributed equally, if I make sure that the children are educated equally, then that's going to take away from me." That's greed, and that's what I think a lot of dominate culture Christianity breeds. They lack theologically. I think they see it economically and socially.

Finally, six participants advised to form meaningful, consistent, and healthy relationships with African American pastors. PP2 said,

> Connect with a pastor that's African American and try to engage in conversation that will help you have a greater appreciation for their background, their culture, so that you can you know, be of service and see them as persons of humanity and dignity.

PP5 specifically notes that non-African American pastors should come to the table: "Seek to understand before you're understood. Seek dialogue in dealing with African American pastors over a case of monologue. Meet and exchange at the dinner table before you try to exchange at in a public forum or pulpit." PP4 describes it as seeking out relationships with clergy to be "part of a circle of people." PP1 emphasizes that non-African American pastors "organize their churches to provide inner denomination and cross-cultural dialogue." PP3 concurrs, adding, "Join us in a true sense. Don't try to tell me what's best for me. Let me tell you what's best for me. You're not living in my shoes." PP10 declares, "The advancement of the kingdom will require healthier relationships, not just doing more work and having more events and spending money to do a bunch of stuff like that. We've got to improve the health and depth of our relationships."

Summary of Research Findings

In sum the results of this study found four major themes: African American experience, racial tensions and reconciliation, expectations of African American pastors, and advice to pastors. Within the first major theme were three subcategories of the African American experience: streams of consciousness, Black identity, and Black church. In the subcategory of streams of consciousness, five participants identified streams of consciousness as a reality of the Black experience. The second subcategory was Black identity. Within this subcategory, six participants noted that that there is an immense pride in being an African American, which has heavily influenced their personal and pastoral lives; at the same time, seven participants also noted that the

challenges of being an African American were merely a part of day-to-day life. The third subcategory of the first major theme of African American experience was the Black church. Within this subcategory, there was one prominent contributor to the African American experience that all participants detailed differing perspectives to as describing what the Black church meant to the Black community: four positive and six mixed or negative.

The second theme that emerged from the findings was racial tensions and reconciliation, which had three main subcategories: racism, effect on Christianity, and multiethnic churches. Within these subcategories, participant pastors explained how these categories were viewed historically and from personal perspective.

Within the subcategory of racism, participants defined and shared personal experiences of racism. The definitions of racism were summarized as prejudice and power by three participants, falsehoods by two participants, indirect actions by two participants, and ethnic groupings by three participants. From a historical perspective, participants also addressed the effects of segregation and integration. The second subcategory was effect on Christianity. While participants acknowledge the effect of race and racism throughout American history, its effect on Christianity provided a unique perspective. Participants' offered that racism led to a number of African Americans leaving Christianity, in addition to recognizing past racism in religious denominations, organizations, and Christian individuals. All participants shared their perspectives on racial reconciliation and the multiethnic church. Three participants noted that the function of the multiethnic church negatively affected the Black church and community; relatedly, four of the participants indicated that persons should be able to attend church wherever they see fit.

The third theme to emerge from the data was the expectation of the African American pastor. Within this theme, participants described the relationship between the

role of pastor with three specific responsibilities specifically tied to those who are African American: identity, preaching and uplifting the Black family, and leadership beyond the pulpit. In the first subcategory was identity, which included a merged identity of African American and pastor. Within this subcategory, two participants identified themselves as being more Black than Christian; the remaining eight participants struggled to split their identity as an African American pastor into two, African American and pastor. The second subcategory of the theme of the expectation of the African American pastor was preaching and uplifting the Black family; within this subcategory, participants spoke of two facets: discussing race from the pulpit and building up the community and the Black family. Eight of the ten participants said that they had addressed race related issues from the pulpit on a consistent basis; the remaining two participants discuss race related issues but in a different format. The final subcategory from the major theme of expectation of African American pastors is leadership beyond the pulpit, which looks at the role of African American pastors as they serve as all things to all people. All participants detail their responses to instances where Black lives were ended after a confrontation with police. Three participants share their participation in protests and three participants share thoughts/inclusion on liberation theology.

The final theme was advice for pastors, in which participants offered their most important words of advice. There was one subcategory within this theme: advice to non-African American pastors. Three participants held that the best advice they could offer to pastors relates to positive relationship with God and His people, two participants advised to remain true to one's calling, and prioritizing family was stressed by two other participants. In advising non-African American pastors, four participants suggest that non-African Americans take note of the difference between the African American experience and others. The remaining six participants advised to form meaningful, consistent, and healthy relationships with African American pastors.

Evaluation of Research Design

This section evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the research design. The study used a phenomenological approach to the research, employing in-depth interviews to explore the perceptions of pastors regarding their personal life and pastoral ministry as related to the intersection of race and faith. Ten African American senior pastors were interviewed in-person or live, over a video conference application, allowing for confidential conversations that were easily recordable for transcription. The one-to-one nature of the interviews allowed myself and participant to form a friendly bond. In some instances, it was as if the participant used the entire interview to "invest" or "sow" into me, similar to a mentor-mentee relationship.

This research design also provided the best framework for interpreting race and faith from their personal and pastoral perceptions. My role as African American clergy, who has a police officer and a pastor as parents, afforded me beneficial insights into the conversation and resulting information from participants. In addition, my direct experience with the Michael Brown Jr. incident allowed for direct reference into some of the challenges faced as a result of similar incidents in which participants often narrated. Furthermore, my experiences prompted a desire to not only understand how pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith, but also understand how those perceptions have affected their personal lives and pastoral ministries, their response to present attempts of racial reconciliation, and their approach to ministry.

However, at the same time, in the processes of conducting, analyzing, and evaluating the research, I was aware that the similar experiences and empathy could potentially form a bias in the interpretation and understanding of this phenomenon. Also, the qualitative research methodology itself presents potential limitations, rooted in the process of analysis, which mainly rest with my thinking and decision making. Therefore, a possibility is unveiled for limitation based on my assumptions, interests, perceptions,

and personal biases. For these reasons, a strict research protocol that affirms the trustworthiness of the findings was developed to neutralize these factors and to assure reliability.

One challenge in this research design was found in the attempt to conduct two interview sessions with pastors. While I was able to have multiple touches with each interview participant, the vast majority completed the actual interview in one session for the sake of time and accessibility. An additional challenge in the design was not being able to observe, face-to-face, all interview participants. Even though using the video software proved to be an effective method, face-to-face interviews would have allowed for a more detailed observations and improved questioning throughout the interview process.

In conclusion, the interviews that formed the foundation for the data collection stage of this project provided rich, thick data that gives insight into tenured African American pastors' perceptions on how they have experienced, process, and deal with race related happenings in light of their faith. The data provided several categories that emerged from the research. The similarities and connection in the data have now been highlighted and contrasted. Thus, many possibilities of applicability and conclusions have emerged. In the next chapter, those conclusions are delineated and expounded upon, providing direct answers to the research questions which have driven this study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The concept of lived experience is not foreign in the area of research, with contributions dating over fifty years. Max Van Manen suggests "lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research."[1] Wilhem Dilthey claims that what breath is to the body, lived experience is to the soul by asserting that "lived experience is the breathing of meaning."[2] Similarly, Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality clarifies how specific aspects of one's identity can make them invisible.[3] This theory works to fight against doctrine that would erase the distinct experiences and objections that are resultantly deemed as groundless by the dominant culture.[4] This approach encompasses how identity is formulated by way of the world, culture, and families.[5] The overarching theme uniting these parallel channels of research is that lived experience is a method or instrument to capture the essence of intersectional identities.

Race has always been at the forefront of the intersectionality phenomenon.[6] In

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[1] Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 36.

[2] *Wilhem Dilthey: Selected Works*, vol. 5, *Poetry and Experience*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frijhtof Rodi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[3] Jaison K. D. McCall, "The Double Consciousness of Blackness and Christianity: Towards a Biblical Intersectionality," *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 16, no. 2 (2019): 329.

[4] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 146.

[5] McCall, "Double Consciousness of Blackness and Christianity," 329.

[6] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 146.

fact, race intersects with all other aspects of living.[7] In addition to race, areas such as gender, class, sexual orientation and more have been under the intersectionality microscope. On the other hand, religion, specifically Christianity, has not been fully investigated under the same lens even though race is deeply tied to the American and Christian experience.[8] While it has been argued that the concept of intersectionality has been widely mishandled, a biblical approach to intersectionality can support the understanding of the complexity of lived experience.[9] Nonetheless, a gap in the literature on African American pastors is apparent. While many studies have looked at the phenomenon of lived experience, none have examined this phenomenon from the perspective of African American pastors. Specially, by focusing on the experiences and perspectives of tenured African American pastors who continue to pastor Black churches in Black communities despite having endured major racially tense situations, it was theorized that significant connections and similarities would be revealed, as well as effective leadership lessons and perspectives on addressing complex contextual issues.

While peer-reviewed literature has addressed the Black church, few researchers have looked at the phenomenon of its leader from the perspective of those leaders who have successfully navigated the treacherous waters of expectation from both churches and community. Furthermore, literature has failed to address the foundational notion of practicing African American pastors' (themselves Christians) perception of Christianity and its corresponding influence on their lives and understanding.

This research uses a phenomenological approach, a systematic means of

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[7] Antonio Pastrana Jr., "Black Identity Constructions: Inserting Intersectionality, Bisexuality, and (Afro-) Latinidad into Black Studies," *Journal of African American Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (June 2004): 82.

[8] Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6, Kindle.

[9] McCall, "Double Consciousness of Blackness and Christianity."

uncovering phenomena of lived experience,[10] with the purpose of gaining an understanding of how living in an intersecting social existence across the lines of race and faith impacts the lives and leadership of African American pastors. Ten African American pastors of predominately African American churches, located within a fifty-mile radius of a national incident where a Black life was ended in a confrontation with police, were selected to participate in this study as subject experts.[11] These pastors were individually interviewed to identify common themes and establish best practices for understanding this phenomenon. Hence, this study examined how the intersectionality phenomenon is perceived, processed, and affects the lives of Black Christian pastors. Accordingly, this chapter presents a summary of the study and important conclusions drawn from the data presented in chapter 5. Implications and applications of the results, and future research recommendations are also included within this chapter.

Research Questions

The central questions driving this research study were as follows:

1. How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?
2. In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature on the intersectionality phenomenon, a concept developed by Crenshaw, as well as previous works on the American Black church, and Christian responses to racism and injustice by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, Raphael

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[10] See Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*.

[11] For a listing of referenced incidents, see Jasmine C. Lee and Haeyoun Park, "Fifteen Black Lives Ended in Confrontations with Police. Three Officers Convicted," *New York Times*, last modified October 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/17/us/black-deaths-police.html.

Warnock, Esau McCaulley, and Eric Mason, provides important context for this study.[12] Furthermore, literature detailing the study of lived experience is essential to the study's foundation. Lived experience can be succinctly stated as "life as we live it,"[13] however lived experience encompasses the perceptions, feelings, and context of an experience.[14] Essentially, the aim of lived experience research is to lend understanding to how life is experienced versus observed.[15] Therefore, it is imperative to understand from the study participants versus the observation of such. Robin Boylorn asserts that the utility of lived experience research is that "separate life experiences can resemble and respond to larger public and social themes, creating space for storytelling, interpretation, and meaning-making."[16] As this study centered on the elements of race and faith, John A. Garcia et al. emphasize that race, itself, can be a lived experience.[17] While the literature on African American pastors and their lived experiences are minimal at best, the findings confirm existing knowledge concerning individual elements of the study.

The study's findings extend knowledge in the research area of identity development, particularly relating to the African American experience. Furthermore, the

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[12] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 146; Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness*, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 117–53; Esau McCaulley, *Reading while Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020); Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 145–82.

[13] Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-Giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 39.

[14] Virginia Eatough and Jonathan A. Smith, "Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, ed. Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton-Rodgers (London: Sage, 2008), 181.

[15] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 184.

[16] Robin Boylorn, "Lived Experience," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 490.

[17] John A. Garcia et al., "Race as Lived Experience," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 12, no. 2 (2015): 349–73.

research area of pastoral leadership is contributed to by focusing on expert pastors' perceptions of which factors they deem of the greatest importance in comprehensive leadership in complex times. The study's findings contribute to the research area of racial reconciliation, by concentrating on pastoral perception of race relations historically and during present day. Notably, conducting and analyzing in-depth interviews of expert pastors addresses a gap in the literature and provides important insights into the lived experience of African American pastors and race issues that they have had to navigate over the course of their lives and ministries. The insights derived from this study prove valuable in helping other African American pastors navigate race related occurrences, as well as non-African American faith leaders invested in racial reconciliation, or to others who may be interested in gaining comprehensive understanding of the African American experience.

The findings were analyzed and interpreted within the framework of lived experience through the lens of African Americans. The pastors who participated in the study faced similar race related experiences, personally and pastorally, as each participant could have responded negatively, but found ways to navigate and in some cases directly address and affect those situations. The findings from this study are discussed and interpreted in relation to the two research questions. The themes that arose from the interviews are elaborated and discussed in detail.

Description Statements

The tenured, expert pastors stated that they have an immense pride in being African Americans as well as being pastors. Furthermore, they hold a massive appreciation for and responsibility to the Black church and Black community. Lincoln and Mamiya propose a number of challenges for the Black church including the response

against racism.[18] One of the most essential components of this foreshadowing is the recognition that the Black church will continue to be challenged considering how it responds to racism. As the undershepherd of the Black church, the responsibility to lead in addressing challenges fall to the Black pastor. Conscious of the impact of racism on the Black church, Lincoln and Mamiya were trailblazers and advocates for the success of the Black church.

The responsibility of African American pastors to serve the Black community emerged as a prominent theme in the works of Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al.[19] Floyd-Thomas noted that the Black pastor is typically "a critical interpreter of the Black experience."[20] Implicitly (and in some instances, explicitly), the pastors identified their engaging of community issues, via preaching and being active in social justice efforts, has enabled them to better serve their congregations. Furthermore, it has allowed them to rationalize internal conflicts relating to race matters and their authority as both African Americans and Christian leaders. Essentially, the African American pastor is expected to address social ills affecting the Black community through their ministry.[21] A common perception among the pastors was that their faith in God and their calling to the office of pastor also paired with the calling to serve the African American community

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[18] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 394–404.

[19] Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 127.

[20] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*.

[21] See Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 126–29; Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 163–82, Kindle; George Barna and Harry Jackson Jr., *High Impact African-American Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 46–66; Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 3; Jeffrey L. Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 8; William A. Jones, "The Theologian as Pastor," in *What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?*, ed. Forrest E. Harris Sr., James T. Roberson, and Larry D. George (Nashville: Townsend Press, 1995), 91.

specifically.[22]

Research Applications

Before discussing the applications from these themes, a brief discussion on intersectionality, culture and Christianity is warranted to provide the context of the discussion to follow. First, culture should not be uplifted above Christ. However, biblical Christianity is universally God's agenda that can take on the identity of any culture.[23] Besides, the cross in itself is an intersection that represents an entity dependent on the two dimensions of biblical fellowship: vertical and horizontal.[24] Although the term intersectionality cannot be found in Scripture, religion is not immune from the effects of intersectionality. Paralleling Crenshaw's intersectionality view of race and gender, viewing race and religion separately as though they do not intersect results in adverse action. When Christianity does not openly and overtly oppose racism, and when antiracism does not incorporate opposition to Christ's cause, both identities of the Black Christian ultimately lose. Dafina Lazarus Stewart and Adele Lozano argue that how African Americans understand "ourselves as people of faith is deeply informed by how we understand ourselves as people of color."[25]

Second, the literature suggests that intersectionality is best positioned as a method to understand similar to that of lived experience. Vasti Torres, Susan Jones, and Kristen Renn suggest that intersectionality brings together "both the parts and the whole

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[22] Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*, 157.

[23] Carl F. Ellis, *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African American Experience* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 151.

[24] The vertical aspect of fellowship concerns relationship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. The horizontal concerns the relationship with one another as man. See Tony Evans, *God's Glorious Church: The Mystery and Mission of the Body of Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), loc. 1441, Kindle.

[25] Dafina Lazarus Stewart and Adele Lozano, "Difficult Dialogues at the Intersections of Race, Culture, and Religion," *New Directions for Student Services* no. 125 (2009): 24.

of the self as well as the individual in context."[26] The biblical approach to intersectionality is to view all image bearers as *imago Dei*, loving each person for who they are holistically, the same way in which Christ first loved us (1 John 4:19). Diane Goodman and Bailey Jackson II assert that "an intersectional lens opens up exciting ways to broaden and deepen our understanding of social identities and social inequalities. In particular, it allows racial identity to be examined with greater breadth and depth."[27] If intersectionality is best positioned as a method to understand, then its usage should be limited to that purpose for the benefit of the Kingdom.

All pastoral participants described their experience as African American pastors as a merger of their faith and race infused with complexities, challenges, and triumphs. As the study was framed by two central research questions, four major themes arose from the collective interviews to address those questions: (1) African American experience, (2) racial tensions and reconciliation, (3) expectations of the African American pastor, and (4) advice to pastors. These themes are discussed in relation to the research questions and relevant literature.[28]

African American Experience

The first theme to emerge from the data was African American experience, and within this first major theme were three subcategories: (1) multiple streams of consciousness, (2) Black identity, and (3) the Black church. Research question 1 asks,

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[26] Vasti Torres, Susan R. Jones, and Kristen A. Renn, "Identity Development Theories in Student Affairs: Origins, Current Status, and New Approaches," *Journal of College Student Development* 50 (2009): 585.

[27] Diane J. Goodman and Bailey W. Jackson III, "Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching about Racial Identity from an Intersectional Perspective," in *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: Integrating Emerging Frameworks*, ed. Charmaine L. Wijeyesinghe and Bailey W. Jackson III (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 236–37.

[28] A more detailed discussion of these topics and themes are found in chap. 5.

"How do African American pastors perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?" Each of these sub-themes address a component of the African American experience relative to the study.

The last subcategory, the Black church, provides unique insight into the perspectives of African American pastors regarding the African American experience and its current relevance to the Black community. This matter does not appear to have been recently discussed in the literature on African American pastors or the Black church. On the other hand, the impact of streams of consciousness and Black identity have been recognized extensively throughout similar lines of research.[29]

Multiple streams of consciousness. The majority of the pastors in this study align with the literature first articulated by W. E. B. DuBois surrounding double consciousness.[30] Cited by five participants, streams of consciousness described the relationship between the comprehensiveness of perspective, and experiences, as related to race and faith in the participants. With regard to multiple streams of consciousness, Thomas Hoyt Jr. asserts that African Americans possess a double burden where they understand the plight of all human beings on one hand and on the other, their understanding is compounded by slavery, discrimination and racism.[31] He further asserts

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[29] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Seattle: Amazon Classics, 2017), 4, Kindle. Also see Warnock, *Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 13–96; Dwight N. Hopkins, *Heart and Head: Black Theology, Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 10; Fredrick L. Ware, *African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 107–20; Andrea C. Abrams, *God and Blackness: Race, Gender, and Identity in a Middle Class Afrocentric Church* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*; Sernett, *African American Religious History*; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*.

[30] Double consciousness was coined by Du Bois in 1903's *The Souls of Black Folk* as the contesting identities of "an American, a Negro; two Souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 4.

[31] Thomas Hoyt Jr., "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition," in *Stony the Road We Trod: An African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 25.

that these prompts provide "a solidarity that transcends even membership in the Christian religion."[32] Tony Evans asserts that "Black evangelicals, to varying degrees, live in two world and possess a double-consciousness—partaking of the black heritage, history, and experience while at the same time imbibing the biblical and theological influences coming from the white evangelical world."[33]

When asked to detail their responses to instances of racially related events, a number of pastors referenced nationally recognized events in the past: Rodney King and the LA riots, as well as the O. J. Simpson trial. Referencing the King incident, one pastor commented, "White people said, 'why didn't he just lay down?' and Black people said, 'why do they keep beating him?'" Similarly, one pastor describes a twenty-first century killing of an African American by police that was not highly publicized nationally. He shared, "Our city divided . . . . And white people said 'why did he run?' Black people said, 'why did they shoot him.'" Four participants commented on multiple streams of consciousness being in play in other instances of African American being killed in confrontations with police.

Black identity. The literature states that the remedy for double consciousness among African Americans lies within the attainment of a "true African Americanness—or, in other words, the forging of a place of cultural belonging and sociopolitical integration for black people in the United States."[34] Similar to the literature,[35] a few

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[32] Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition."

[33] Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 210.

[34] Abrams, *God and Blackness*, 174–75.

[35] See Floyd-Thomas et al., *Black Church Studies*; J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Abrams, *God and Blackness*; J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988).

participants identified that race was a social construct and only one true race exists: human. Regardless, approximately half of the participants tied their identity to being Black. Black identity, cited by six participants, included carrying an immense pride in being an African American which has heavily influenced their personal and pastoral lives. Tony Evans highlights,

> When Jesus went through Samaria, He did not give up His own culture. He did not stop being a Jew to reach a Samaritan, but neither did He allow His culture to prevent Him from connecting with her [the Samaritan woman] or meeting the spiritual need in her. While remaining culturally competent, He maintained His unique cultural identity. He just didn't let who He was to stop Him from being what He was called to be.[36]

Dwight N. Hopkins clarifies that the affirmation of blackness is critical as a means of grasping the theological significance of Black culture and Black racial identity.[37] Yet, African Americans possess "the spiritual undergirding of a people with a unique and unprecedented social experience."[38]

Furthermore, seven participants identified that the challenges associated with being African American were a daily part of life. However, the related literature speaks directly to *imago Dei* (Gen 1:27). Millard Erickson states that it is necessary to look at the original state of man to fully grasp what it means to be human.[39] Pastoral participants agree with Fredrick Ware's assertion that Black is not the same as *imago Dei*. But due to

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[36] Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 61.

[37] Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 262.

[38] Samuel D. Procter, "The Substance of Things Hoped For: The Faith Epic of African Americans," in Harris, Roberson, and George, *What Does It Mean to Be Black and Christian?*, 1. Proctor says, "From 20 slaves who disembarked at Jamestown to 30,000,000 African American citizens in 1992, from physical bondage for 244 years to positions of trust and responsibility in the highest levels of government, religion, education, business, industry, sports, arts-entertainment, medicine, and jurisprudence, there is a record of endurance, forbearance, and spiritual discipline that is unparalleled" (1).

[39] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 458–60.

the *imago Dei*, dignity and value should be associated with blackness.[40] Instead participants indicated that these challenges associated with blackness cause one to work harder to be accepted; however, one may never be approved.

The Black church. The literature speaks in depth concerning the Black church. Expectantly so, the Black church also emerged as a component of the African American experience, with all participants detailing different perspectives of what the Black church means to the Black community. DuBois argued, "The Negro Church of today is the social center of Negro life in the United States, and the most characteristic expression of African American character."[41] Conversely, this study is almost balanced with approximately half of the participants remarking that the Black church does not mean as much as it once did to the Black community.

One interesting thing of note is the perception held by a few participants detailing the importance of the Black church as the sole place (or thing) of ownership for the African American community. One pastor describes this relationship by saying, "I'm black in America, and we don't control anything, other than the Black church." In comparison, another pastor detailed an account of ethnic ownership throughout the country to display the lack of wealth opportunities provided for African Americans.

While participants questioned the effectiveness of the Black church, approximately half of the respondents still identified it as a pillar of the Black community. Two pastors specifically listed the Black church as one of the four entities necessary for the developing of the Black community: Black school, Black bank, Black press, and the Black church. Another interesting note associated with the Black church is its comparison and relationship with the Black family, as literature states and one

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[40] Ware, *African American Theology*, 111.

[41] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 142.

participant identified that the Black church is older than the Black family due to slavery.[42]

Research question 1 asks, "How do African American pastor perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?" According to the first theme and three subthemes, pastoral participants identified the entirety of the African American experience is directly affected by this intersection. Specially, having multiple streams of consciousness, a joined-multifaceted identity, and the Black church have directly impacted their being.

Racial Tensions and Reconciliation

Research question 2 asks, "In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?" In the course of the interviews, the theme of racial tensions and reconciliation arose in response to and as a bridge from this central query. To aid in the illustration of this theme, three subcategories were identified: (1) racism, (2) effect on Christianity, and (3) multiethnic churches.

Racism. The literature speaks of racism as America's *national sin*,[43] which makes it little surprise that each participant detailed a specific incident in which they personally experienced some form of racism. Surprisingly, some of the pastors indicated that their sharing of their encounters of racism is few and far between. However, this is in line with literature where being Black is having your experiences, reality, and history

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[42] See Sernett, *African American Religious History*; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*; Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016); Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

[43] Examples of this perspective or essential framework can be found in J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 43; Jim Wallis, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2017); Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*; Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*.

often ignored and ridiculed.[44]

All of the participants provided their own definitions of racism; of those, three cited prejudice and power, two cited falsehoods, two cited indirect action, and three cited ethnic groupings. While literature disagrees, so did the participants, on whether anyone could be racist.[45] One participant said you have to be Black in order to understand racism. Some participants detailed incidents from their early childhood to integrating into high schools, media bias, and a recent traffic stop. One commonality associated with the sharing of these experiences was the desire to have others actually listen to their experiences, which is in line with literature which states that eradicating racism that can apply to "anyone who has ears to hear" including the need to be quick to listen and slow to speak on race when you do not experience or comprehend the concerns.[46]

While some participants were able to provide a more historic lens to racism, inclusive of segregation and integration, two participants argued that integration actually had negative effects on the Black community. One participant declared that "integration killed the African American communities . . . . It eliminated Black teachers, Black schools, Black ingenuity." One the other hand, three participants stated that a form of segregation is still active today. It is commonly referenced that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. asserted that Sunday mornings were the most segregated time in America.

Effect on Christianity. Pastoral participants confirmed Ligon Duncan's assertion in the foreword to Eric Mason's *Woke Church* that "racial tensions in our

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[44] Anthony G. Reddie, *Working against the Grain: Re-Imagining Black Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 139, Kindle.

[45] David A. Anderson, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 18.

[46] Jarvis J. Williams and Kevin M. Jones, *Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2017), 45–49.

churches and our nation would be in a significantly better state if the Reformed community in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had simply rightly applied the second great commandment."[47] Participants acknowledged the effect of racism on American history while asserting that the effect on Christianity was a number of African Americans questioning or removing themselves from the faith.

Six pastors call attention to Evangelical Christianity, the election of President Donald Trump, and white supremacy as having racial undertones that have negatively affected Christianity. From the defending of slavery to organizing the Religious Right at the end of the twentieth century, participants along with literature detail frustration from historical and modern perspectives. One participant declares, "What I see as Christianity and what they view, and what has been accepted as Christianity, is two different things."

Moreover, the literature speaks to wide usage of the term social justice to address a number of these contests. Ken Wytsma posits that justice is often easily ignored throughout the experiences of others if one's faith does not specifically address it.[48] The topic of social justice was wired into the responses of the participants with one saying "social justice is not heresy."

Multiethnic churches. The final subcategory in the theme of racial tensions and reconciliation is multiethnic churches. Three participants noted that the function of the multiethnic church negatively affected the Black church and community; relatedly, four participants indicated that persons should be able to attend church wherever they see fit. Even so, only two participants labeled the multiethnic church's effect on the Black church and Black community as positive. Subsequently, two individuals highlighted that

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[47] Ligon Duncan, foreword to Mason, *Woke Church*, 16.

[48] Ken Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017), 102.

the multiethnic church is one of the reasons in which the Black church is struggling. Correspondingly, the literature suggests that fear exists surrounding the components of the African American identity and culture being sacrificed in tandem with multiethnic churches.[49] Pastoral participants echoed that sentiment, and some called it a reality.

However, among the mixed perceptions was the notion of choice; that people should be able to attend church wherever they like. Yet in still, pastors indicated that more should be done across ethnic lines beyond the church walls. Furthermore, one pastor indicated that when a racial issue exists, the Black congregants return "home" to the Black church. Derwin Gray asserts that "just because America is becoming more ethnically diverse doesn't mean that local churches magically will become ethnically diverse along with it."[50] The findings agree and also assert that the agenda of the Black church must be present in the landscape of the multiethnic church for it to be more than the ethnic makeup of who is in the pews.[51]

Research question 1 asks, "How do African American pastor perceive the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience?" According to the second theme and the three corresponding subthemes, pastoral participants find that racial tension and reconciliation efforts compound their lived experience. Explicitly, personal experiences of racism, race(isms) effect on Christianity, and multiethnic churches contribute to the makeup of their lived experience. Furthermore, these contributors to lived experience carry over as influence into the pastoral ministries of these pastoral participants.

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[49] Mason, *Woke Church*, 24.

[50] Derwin Gray, *The High Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 3.

[51] The findings of this study, in line with previous literature, explain that the agenda of the Black Church prioritizes the Black community.

Expectations of the African American Pastor

Research question 2 asks, "In what ways has the lived experiences of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?" The third theme to emerge from the data is the expectations of the African American pastor, which is directly addressed with this inquiry. Within this theme, participants described the relationship between the traditional role of pastor and the added responsibilities of being an African American pastor of a Black church. From this theme, three subcategories were birthed: identity, preaching and uplifting the Black family, and leadership beyond the pulpit.

Identity. There is not much literature that speaks directly to the identity of an African American pastor. Essentially, a comprehensive inventory speaking to the merged identity of African American and pastor is nonexistent. However, when analyzing the intersectionality phenomenon, Renn speaks to racial development not being fully understood apart from other significant social identities.[52] The participants in this study mirrored this sentiment by not being able to separate the two identities. In fact, one participant shares that "if someone wants a distinction between being an African American and a pastor, I can't. All of this is inextricably tied to my identity." Still, some of the participants were able to identify as more Black than Christian or more Christian than Black, but neither Black or Christian exclusively. One pastor describes his daily decisions as being made "as a pastor and a Black person."

Research indicates that the Black church and Black community, where the African American pastors labor, are environments in which one's identity is shaped by the social context.[53] Similar to fields, such as higher education, churches can also be

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[52] Kristen A. Renn, "Creating and Re-Creating Race: The Emergence of Racial Identity as a Critical Element in Psychological, Sociological, and Ecological Perspectives on Human Development," in Wijeyesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development*, 24.

[53] Jan E. Stets and Richard T. Serpe, "Identity Theory," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed.

contexts "in which identities are tools for shaping, reinforcing or challenging contexts, norms, and practices."[54] Otherwise stated, the Black church and Black community, as social contexts, both shape and are shaped by the identities of the pastor. One participant identifies his responsibility of speaking up for congregants and community members who may not be able to speak for themselves.

Preaching and uplifting the Black family. The second subcategory under the expectation of African American pastors was preaching and uplifting the Black family. Here, participants spoke directly of discussing race from the pulpit and building up the community as well as the Black family. All participants contend that they address race related issues as part of their ministry; eight participants do so from the pulpit and two do so in different formats. However, it is important to note that the action of addressing race related issues is prompted from the expectation of doing so, according to literature and the participants of this study. One participant indicates that he does not have the luxury of ignoring Ferguson as a white pastor would. He says, "Some pastors say absolutely nothing. I don't think an African American can have that luxury." Another participant states, "The church has a responsibility to speak to it."

Furthermore, participants identified addressing the importance of being contextually appropriate in their preaching. One participant shares that African Americans tend to have different apologetic issues than the dominant culture. Literature details that similar contextualization is strongly affected by culture.[55] In the same way,

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John DeLamater and Amanda Ward (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2013), 34.

[54] Meghan Pifer and Vicki Baker, "Identity as a Theoretical Construct in Research about Academic Careers," in *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, ed. Malcolm Tight and Jeroen Huisman, International Perspectives on Higher Education Research 9 (Bingley, England: Emerald Group, 2013), 115–32.

[55] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

one pastor indicates that he always talks about "Black stuff" because it is his context and "affects my worldview." Essentially, preaching and teaching for the African American pastor has a strong emphasis on building the community and the people. Literature shares that this has historically been a role filled by the Black pastor.[56] However, one participant shares a struggle with doing so consistently in the company of white congregants.

One thing to note is that three participants highlighted the importance of discipling the Black family for the African American pastor. Literature suggests that discipleship involves the multiplication of self through the growth of young leaders.[57] Gary Bredfeldt suggests that disciple means student or learner.[58] The responses of these participants are in line with Bill Hull, who teaches that the calling of every pastor is to be a disciple who makes disciples.[59] According to the literature and participants, discipleship is essential to the building and rebuilding of families.[60]

Leadership beyond the pulpit. The final subcategory to the major theme of expectation of African American pastors is leadership beyond the pulpit, which looks at the role of African American pastors in which they serve as all things to all people. The participants of this study identify that there was a common expectation in that they

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[56] L. H. Whelchel, *The History and Heritage of African American Churches: A Way Out of No Way* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2011), 237; Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*; Warnock, *Divided Mind of the Black Church*.

[57] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 179. See also Trevin K. Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship: Leading Christians to Understand Their Historical and Cultural Context* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018); Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Pastor: Leading Others on the Journey of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); Max Anders, *Brave New Discipleship: Cultivating Scripture-Driven Christians in a Culture-Driven World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015).

[58] Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 26.

[59] Bill Hull, *Conversion and Discipleship: You Can't Have One without the Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 218.

[60] Wax, *Eschatological Discipleship*, 7.

viewed their responsibilities extending beyond the pulpit. One participant identified that beyond serving as a chaplain and counselor, African American pastors are expected to be a community leader and be a definitive decision maker. Another details the responsibility of communicating last wishes for a member of his church to her family, concerning desire to stop fighting for her life. As the result of similar situations, excessive and extensive expectations from congregants often add to the lofty expectations that pastors place upon themselves.[61]

This was also clear in the responsibility that pastoral participants placed upon themselves, in addition to congregants and community members, to be active in responses to race and social issues. All participants shared the commonality of being directly impacted by the loss of Black life in confrontation with police, with their churches being in close proximity. While a number of pastors described their participation in protests, in addition to work within the walls of the church, literature suggests that confessional beliefs and convictional beliefs should be in alignment with one another.[62] Some pastors detailed being involved in the political aspects of their local communities and influencing decisions affecting public office and policing.

This theme also addresses racial identity theory through, both, how an individual constructs one's identity in response to an oppressive and racialized society and the process of overcoming internalized racism to achieve a self-affirming racial identity.[63] Some agree with the notion that to be a Christian is to be one who is striving

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[61] Laura K. Barnard and John F. Curry, "The Relationship of Clergy Burnout to Self-Compassion and Other Personality Dimensions," *Pastoral Psychology* 61, no. 2 (2012): 149.

[62] Steve Wilkins and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22–24.

[63] Kevin Cokley, "Critical Issues in the Measurement of Ethnic and Racial Identity: A Referendum on the State of the Field," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 54, no. 3 (2007): 225.

for liberation.[64] One pastor argues that the role of an African American pastors "is more than just leading them to glory. His role is also trying to support them, lead them in the community, in this racial fight."

Research question 2 asks, "In what ways has the lived experience of African American pastors influenced their pastoral ministry?" According to the third major theme and the three matching subcategories, participants identified that complex expectations are resultant of their lived experience, specifically as African American pastors. The fruit of this multifaceted identity of African American pastor consists of the responsibility to preach to and uplift the Black family merged with the mandate of leading beyond the pulpit.

Additionally, pertaining to research question 2 is the advice that pastoral participants offer to other pastors.

Advice to Pastors

The final theme to emerge from the data was advice to pastors, in which participants offered their most important words of counsel. A common perspective was that the best advice for pastors surrounded relationships: relationship with God, relationship with others, and relationship with self.

When addressing pastors in general, three participants honed in on keeping a positive relationship with God as the forefront of their advice. Two participants advised pastors to remain true to their calling and fulfill their assignment. Two additional participants prioritized prayer, study, and time with God as their words of wisdom to other pastors.

A surprising finding in advice to pastors was prioritizing your family, which was stressed by two participants. Considering that the study did not directly address the

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[64] Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 16–17.

pastor's family, this welcomed addition adds a unique perspective to the pastoral ministry under the guise of race and faith.

Advice to non-African American pastors. One subtheme arose under this final theme of advice to pastors: advice to Non-African American pastors specifically.

Four participants identified that their best words of wisdom to non-African American pastors is to be cognizant of the difference between the African American experience and others. One participant says, "Take time to learn the history of African Americans so you can have a greater appreciation for where they've been and where they're going."

The most common words of wisdom provided by the participants was this: they advised non-African American pastors to form meaningful, consistent, and healthy relationships with African American pastors. One pastor says, "Join us in a true sense." The literature suggests that true reconciliation efforts will be spearheaded through relationships, which will enable Christians to reach the ultimate goal of glorifying God.[65] There must be a true commitment to seeking out interracial relationships.[66] Martin Luther King Jr. contended, "There comes a time when silence is betrayal."[67] Another pastoral participant indicates, "The advancement of the kingdom will require healthier relationships, not just doing more work and having more events and spending money to do a bunch of stuff like that. We've got to improve the health and depth of our

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[65] Mason, *Woke Church*, 89; Evans, *Oneness Embraced*, 307–8.

[66] George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division: A Unifying Alternative to Colorblindness and Antiracism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022), 45–46, 159. Yancey argues for a mutual accountability model that seeks a win-win solution between races and ethnicities. He asserts that the answers to racialized problems cannot be known until collaborative conversations are had with each other. He proposes the following steps: (1) define the racial problem, (2) identify what we have in common, (3) recognize our cultural or racial differences, (4) create solutions that answer the concerns of the racial out-group, and (5) find a compromise solution that works best for all.

[67] Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam," in *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard (New York: Warner Books, 2001), 133.

relationships."

Implications of the Findings

From the perspective of lived experiences, this study is unique in that it focuses on (1) African American pastors and (2) the intersection of their race and faith. A common pattern among these expert pastors is that they all experienced race-related issues prior to becoming a pastor. Through this experience, they have been able to relate to their parishioners in an authentic way that prompts expectation to address those same issues. They all have become, with time, more active in roles beyond the pulpit in their respective communities, similar to some of the roles outlined in broader literature on the African American Church.

The overall essence of the pastors' experiences is that despite the challenges associated with being an African American pastor, they were ultimately able to relish in their calling of serving more than the congregation, in addition to identifying different avenues to lead in response to the needs of their communities which they identify as their responsibility.

The findings from this study can potentially promote positive change in multiple areas. First, an understanding of the multiple streams of consciousness possessed by African American can bleed beyond understanding in religious contexts to aid in professional and social settings. Virtually all participants acknowledged personal race related issues or confrontations which has an effect on them in the present day. Furthermore, they have detailed an outright frustration with instances of racism in religious settings. Despite this, a number of participants viewed their experiences as prompting their dedication to the African American community, and as an instance that provoked them to be even more committed to their faith, or their interpretation of it. Furthermore, racial reconciliation and sensitivity efforts can be positively affected due to understanding of the phenomenon of African American pastors (see Prov 4:7).

The aforementioned perceptions and experiences that the participants shared appeared throughout the literature on lived experience and the Black church. The pastors in this study identified these perceptions organically, however stressed a constant need to contextually update items pertaining to pastoring. Nonetheless, participant pastors would benefit from continued outlets for dialogue and consistent support (relationally and financially). Additionally, honest dialogue concerning racism, reparations, and Evangelical Christianity must be addressed among Black and White Christians.[68]

Increased understanding of the intersectionality phenomenon that supported the complexities of these tenured African American pastors and facilitated influence as to how they lead in their congregation and communities may not only reduce the number of pastors who become more culturally bound and not culturally based,[69] but may also increase the potential for greater efficiencies in pastors to be successful and fulfilled in ministerial and community work. The development of these common understandings in younger African American pastors should provide for a more rewarding Christian and cultural experience but could potentially be of benefit to their families and church culture in which they serve.

The methodological implications of the present study include increasing the use of qualitative research, specifically in-depth interviews, in research on expert clergy who have experienced racial tension and/or trauma. This study helped to advance the qualitative research methodology by revealing, through interviews and close analysis, African American pastor's perspectives on race and faith, which could lead to a detailed account of the contextual differences between religious clergy of different communities

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[68] Maria Teresa Davila, "Discussing Racial Justice in Light of 2016: Black Lives Matter, a Trump Presidency, and the Continued Struggle for Justice," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 45, no. 4 (2017): 761–92.

[69] James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 54.

and ethnic groups. This is the first study to do so. As to the theoretical implications of this study, the intersectionality phenomenon continues to be a useful theoretical and interpretive framework on a case-by-case basis, as the participatory pastors in this study communicated two separate identities merged into a singular identity they now carry. It is important to note that a number of the participants stated that they were not able to separate the two identities.

In terms of practice, these findings should be of interest to Christians and non-Christians alike, involved in or concerned with the African American communities across the United States. Learning about the history of the Black church, its importance to the Black community, and the complexities of its leader can help them thrive in their efforts to contribute to the liberating of these communities. As King asserted, "Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."[70]

Limitations of the Study

Through this phenomenological method, this research was limited to a small sample size of ten participants, all of whom were senior pastors located within a specific proximity to a nationally recognized event where a black life was ended in confrontation with police, which may affect the generalizability of the study. The study may also be limited by the participants' memories, which may interfere with their ability to reflect accurately on prior experiences. Basic assumptions were made in this research. It was assumed that the research questions would illuminate the lived experiences of African American pastors and that participants would answer interview questions openly and accurately. Idealistic or inaccurate responses, as well as incomplete information, would limit the study.

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[70] Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," in *I Have A Dream: Writing and Speeches that Changed the World*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 88.

Transferability

The limited size of participants could be seen as a potential constraint on the possibility of generalizing the findings to other pastors and/or contexts. However, transferability, not generalizing, is the intended goal of phenomenological research, and this study particularly.[71] Themes do not allow generalizability of data to an entire population.[72] Transferability is the way in which a reader is to determine if, and to what extent, a phenomenon in this context can be transferred to a different context. Michael Patton labels this "context bound extrapolations," which he defines as "speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical, conditions."[73] Knowing this, the intention of this study was to focus on the transferability of the findings, allowing rich, thick descriptive language that emerged from the interview process to create a relatable picture of the participants and their context. This descriptive language within this qualitative account allows for broader context and application to extrapolate, allowing readers to relate the information to their own specific context in ways they consider appropriate.[74] Particularly, the results of this study are highly transferable to other African American pastors beyond the geographical restrictions presented in that even though the occurrences that have garnered national attention may not directly impact their ministerial assignment, the experiences of race and faith are often the same.[75]

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[71] Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 51.

[72] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 87–88.

[73] Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 489.

[74] Thomas H. Schram, *Conceptualizing Qualitative Inquiry* (Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2003).

[75] Pastors located in these areas may be experts in dealing with the nationally recognized events that have affected race relations in the country; however, a number of the experiences detailed throughout the participant responses indicate race-related incidents are more common than not.

Regardless of the bounded nature of this study, many of the findings will still be applicable to the reader as "the general lies in the particular."[76] Readers will be able to learn through the experiences of others when an applicable narrative presents a model they can relate to or can follow.[77]

Recommendations for Future Research

This research leaves ample room for further exploration. It is recommended that future research explore the themes highlighted in this study through a methodological approach that continues to seek an understanding of lived experience and honors the voice of participants. Moreover, the participants described experiences attributed to intersectional identities. To examine these themes in future research, addressing the intersectional identities associated when considering research questions and methodology would be judicious.

Additionally, this study has important implications that can be used to study other populations and other intricacies of lived experience. First, the purpose of this study focused specifically on African American pastors. The development of a survey instrument that could extend this research into a mixed methods study will allow for analysis to a larger sample size instead of limiting to specific areas. The study could seek to determine if the results of this research are more generalizable to a larger population.

Another future research avenue can be found in researching African American pastors who do not pastor predominately African American churches. A study with this focus may provide valuable insight into the possible differences or nuances of expectation in relation to cultural and ethnic make-up of the church community.

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[76] Fredrick Erikson, "Qualitative Methods of Research on Teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, ed. Martin C. Whittrock (Old Tappan, NJ: MacMillan, 1986), 152.

[77] Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (Old Tappan, NJ: MacMillan, 1991), 199.

An added research opportunity can be found in examining the intersection of African American Christians, absent of the responsibility of pastor. As this study indicated that pastoral participants encountered race related incidents prior to their appointment as pastor, it would be of benefit to find if congregants mirror the responses of their local pastors. A mixed-methods study of Black Christians in similar areas would produce insights that could be used as the baseline in this area of research.

One more potential future research opportunity would be to conduct a similar study with ethnically diverse pastors in the same geographic areas. This would give a portrayal of the local community and the religious polity in the area. Furthermore, it could provide a baseline or an introduction to racial reconciliation efforts once differences and commonalities are identified.

Also, it may be of interest to conduct future research that looks into the multiethnic church and its relationship with Black and White pastoral leadership. The findings in this study point towards conflicting opinions surrounding the multiethnic church, assimilation, and the church's relationship with the Black community. While this study highlights an African American pastor's perspective, it may be of interest to do so with White pastors to compare and contrast.

Plus, a longitudinal study may be of interest for exploration five, ten, or even more years down the line. The findings of this study compared to the findings of a future study could generate discussion and illustrate progress in areas such as racial reconciliation (or ethnic conciliation). An additional research opportunity would be to engage how the concept of racial battle fatigue[78] impacts the lived experience of African

[78] Racial battle fatigue is a concept coined in 2008 by William Smith. It was originally used to highlight the experiences of African American men in America. The concept has since progressed to illuminate racially and negative charged experiences of all people of color (ethnic groups) in the United States. See William A. Smith, Man Hung, and Jeremy D. Franklin, "Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men: Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, and Environmental Stress," *Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 63–82.

American pastors or other specific ethnic groups.

Moreover, further research could examine how the themes uncovered in this research can be used to think critically about the identity of African Americans collectively.

Finally, advancement in exploration of a redemptively appropriative intersectionality would be of benefit as demonstrated in the application of the principal of inverse consistency to intersectionality. Hesitation exists concerning the development of Crenshaw's coined term *intersectionality*, especially post "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Faith." Intersectionality, as a concept and its resulting development, has key elements that contradict directly with God's Word. Consequentially, I propose a scholarly exploration of a redemptively appropriative intersectionality, consonant with classical evangelicalism and orthodox Christian doctrine, under the language of two terms: *redemptive multiconsciousness* and *a hermeneutic of multiconsciousness*.[79]

Summary and Conclusions

In sum, pastors have previously been studied. However, the specific differences possessed by African American pastors have not previously been explored. Our differences are no accident.[80] Hence, as Crenshaw has demonstrated through her work on intersectionality,[81] one's lived experience is shaped by one's multiple identities, sometimes in ways that are not seen through the lens of a single identity. "Each person

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[79] These prospective terms were developed through dialogue and consultation with John David Trentham, Timothy Paul Jones, and Kevin M. Jones.

[80] Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 53.

[81] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* no. 1 (1989): 139–67; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241.

has his or her assumptions, experiences, and perspectives prior to engaging in racial discourse. Moreover, each person's own racial narrative (among other things) shapes his or her own understanding of racial discourse."[82]

Although every human, regardless of ethnicity and other particularities, traces their bloodlines back to one common set of parents, Adam and Eve, experiences do differ. No one is purely objective or neutral in the race conversation.[83] As lived experience is used to understand how life happenings are experienced differently and uniquely, it also incorporates who people are, the social context through which experiences take place, validated perceptions, feelings, and senses of self as equally important components of the human experience.

> God's vision for his people is not for the elimination of ethnicity to form a colorblind uniformity of sanctified blandness. Instead, God sees the creation of a community of different cultures united by faith in his Son as a manifestation of the expansive nature of his grace. This expansiveness is unfulfilled unless the differences are seen and celebrated, not as ends unto themselves, but as particular manifestations of the power of the Spirit to bring forth the same holiness among different peoples and cultures for the glory of God.[84]

That's the vibrancy of the gospel. Therefore, lived experience should be honored, and God is the sole source of the content of Scripture to which all experiences should be submitted (2 Pet 1:16–21).

While the findings of this study are viewed through participant perceptions, the themes showcase the multitude of factors that encompass the human experience of being an African American pastor in a predominately African American church. Ten pastors were interviewed who had been able to remain in one location for a minimum of ten years within a fifty-mile radius of where a Black life was lost in a confrontation with

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[82] Jarvis J. Williams, *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity: A Biblical Theology of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 155.

[83] Williams, *Redemptive Kingdom Diversity*, 154.

[84] McCaulley, *Reading while Black*, 106–7.

police. The interviews allowed the pastors to speak freely about their own perceptions of how they dealt with, encountered, and learned from their intersections of race and faith. This study allows for Christians and non-Christians alike to begin exploring what it means to be an African American pastor when the elements of this undertaking are not the default, or dominant, Christianity.

Also, this study illuminates how African American pastors who participated in this study internalized and reflected upon their interactions within this context. John Onwuchekwa argues, "Experience isn't the best teacher. Someone else's is. You get to learn the same lesson without experiencing the same heartache."[85] As one pastor stated, "I am always interested in the Black man's point of view." It is hoped that these insights will benefit the body of Christ as they strive to truly see one another as the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–27), and be represented in their differences, joined together for the glory of God (Rev 7:9).

[85] John Onwuchekwa, *We Go On: Finding Purpose in All of Life's Sorrows and Joys* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 2–3.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How would you define race? Racism? Racialization?

2. Can you provide an example of how race has impacted your personal life, positively and negatively?

3. Could you describe an event or incident where race and/or racism has directly intersected with your view of Christianity?

4. How would you describe or detail a potential personal struggle of being more Black than Christian or more Christian than Black?

5. What do you believe is the difference between serving as an African American pastor versus serving as a White pastor?

6. In **2015,** the death of **Christian Taylor** in a confrontation with police took place less than fifty miles from your church. Can you detail how you responded to this event and its aftermath as both an African American, and as a pastor?[1]

7. How did this event, if at all, affect your community, church culture, attendance, worship, finances, and more?

8. What impact, if any, did this event have on your view of the Christian community?

9. How would you define racial reconciliation, and in light of your personal experience, what does racial reconciliation mean to you?

10. In the aftermath of this event, what was your experience with non-African American pastors and how does that experience make you feel? Could you detail how your experience then compares to your experience with non-African American pastors today?

11. Could you describe one specific happening in your pastoral ministry where you've had to discuss or confront race related issues from the pulpit?

12. Can you share an instance of how being an African American has influenced your pastoral ministry?

13. Can you describe an occurrence where your race has affected the way in which you practice leadership?

14. What do you believe the Black church and Black church leadership means to the Black community?

15. How would you describe the effect of multiethnic churches on the Black church and the Black community?

16. As compared to non-fulltime ministerial positions, how has being both, an African American and a pastor, impacted and influenced your life?

17. What do you wish people knew about the experience of serving as an African American pastor?

Wrap-Up Questions

1. In your experience as an African American pastor, what do you see as the most effective ways you have learned to lead, pastorally and personally?

2. FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, what do you perceive is the most important thing that Christian leaders need to know about the life and responsibilities of an African American pastor?

3. What is one piece of advice that you would share with other African American pastors concerning from your own experience? Non-African American pastors?

4. IF YOUR EXPERIENCE(s), as an African American and a pastor, were written as a book, what would you title the book and why?

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ABSTRACT

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Chair: Dr. John David Trentham

This study uniquely aims to ascertain how African American pastors, serving in predominately African American churches, perceive how the intersection of race and faith has impacted their lived experience. Furthermore, in the aftermath of prominent national cases where black people were killed in confrontations with police, this research highlights their personal and pastoral responses. Specifically related to Christian education, this study serves to inform issues associated with vocational preparation and racial reconciliation efforts among Christian schools and ministries. While African American Christians must wrestle with dueling identity consciousnesses of who they are as Christians considering cultural context, they must also reconcile whether their experiences have contributed to making them who they are and if those experiences have hindered or helped them in their pursuit of holiness. This struggle magnifies in the Black pastor, who is both African American and the undershepherd of God's flock. Whereas the Black pastor, historically, serves in functions beyond the pulpit, the social justice lens surrounding today's climate often results in the African American pastor at the forefront of race related conversations. The appreciation of the lived experience of Black pastors can ultimately aid in understanding the whole being, prompting further dialogue surrounding the gospel and social justice.

Chapter 1 introduces the research problem and defines key terminology. Chapter 2 examines the existing literature that addresses or has implications related to the

research problem. Chapter 3 is an initial summative exercise in applying the principle of inverse consistency to Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. Chapter 4 delineates the research design and methodology of the study. The population, samples, delimitations, limitations, instrumentation, and procedures for the study are communicated, in addition to answering why a phenomenological study approach was selected. An analysis of data and a discussion of findings is presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 summarizes the dissertation conclusions and provides recommendations of the study.

Keywords: African American pastors, Black church, race, faith, pastoral leadership, intersectionality, inverse consistency, lived experience, social justice.

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