Erasing the Dividing Line Between Race and the Protestant Church: A Phenomenological Comparative Research Study

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Abstract

This comparative phenomenological study researched how church leaders impact race relations in emerging multicultural Protestant churches, by analyzing the lived experiences of church members in multicultural churches. This study explored the strategies pastors use to manage race relations through the lens of transformational leadership theory. This comparative study compares the experiences of church members in an urban and suburban church setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at two multicultural churches in the Rochester, NY area. The first location included a suburban multicultural church setting with at least 50-75 members. The second location was a larger, more established congregation in an urban multicultural church with 75-100 members. During data analysis, transformational leadership theory assisted the researcher with emerging themes. Prevalent themes were coded and analyzed at the culmination of data collection. Results from the study reveal faith leaders profoundly influence race relations. The research gathered from interviews determined that there were minimal differences in the strategies pastors used to manage race relations. The comparative analysis revealed that participants value similar leadership qualities regardless of race, gender or geographical location of their church. After the data were analyzed, a series of recommendations were made to improve race relations for pastors in multicultural Protestant churches. Recommendations for aspiring multicultural church leaders were cited based on participant preferences. Church members recommended making intentional connections with members by asking, learning, and listening to their unique experiences.

Document Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Education (EdD)

Department
Executive Leadership

First Supervisor
Dr. Guillermo Montes, Ph.D.

Subject Categories
Education

Erasing the Dividing Line Between Race and the Protestant Church:

A Phenomenological Comparative Research Study

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree Ed.D

in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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St. John Fisher University

August 2024

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the views of any

specific committee members, faculty, or St. John Fisher University.

Dedication

First, I would like to thank my loving family, pastor, mentors, and incredible cohort members for believing and supporting my journey every step of the way. I would also like to dedicate this work to my late Godfather who encouraged me to pursue my Doctorate. I am beyond grateful for the amazing connections God has placed in my life through this program. All of the encouragement and support have pushed me to the most incredible part of this journey. I hope it will make a difference in the lives of the next group of scholars interested in improving race relations in the faith community. Most importantly, I would like to thank God for giving me the desire to apply for the DEXL program. Without God, I would not have the faith or courage to complete this amazing journey. I am where I am because of the unfailing grace of God and I look forward to the next steps in my faith journey.

Over these last 2 years, this work has increased my level of appreciation for church leadership and their dedication to the ministry. I have a greater amount of respect and admiration for pastors managing the nuances of church culture. I truly appreciate every church member for their willingness to engage in difficult discussions and unpack their experiences with me.

I am forever grateful for the lessons I've learned and the wisdom I received from my committee members. Thank you for believing in this work when no one else understood the importance of my research. Your structured feedback, openness, and support helped me finish my dissertation successfully. I look forward to sharing my process and future research with the next group of scholars in the DEXL program.

Biographical Sketch

Janee M. Slade serves as the Assistant Director of the Talon Academy and Success Initiatives at SUNY Brockport. Professionally, Ms. Slade works with underrepresented first-generation college students at SUNY Brockport through persistence and success programs. Ms. Slade also serves men of color at SUNY Brockport to promote engagement for underrepresented males at Brockport. Prior to her career at SUNY Brockport, Ms. Slade worked at the Rochester Education Foundation as the Director of College Access Initiatives serving Rochester City School students with college readiness and financial aid programs. Ms. Slade is the founder of the Called-Out Assembly of Prayer where she is a minister, community advocate, and intercessory prayer leader.

Ms. Slade graduated from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania in 2010 with a Bachelor's degree in media communications and a minor in sociology. Ms. Slade went on to pursue her Master's degree in human resource development in 2016. After graduating from the Rochester Institute of Technology's Human Resource Development program she developed a strong passion for helping companies develop and retain top talent. Training, developing, and teaching have always been a strong passion for Ms. Slade, which led her to the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher University. Ms. Slade completed her Doctorate in Education in 2024 under the leadership and direction of her committee members, Dr. Guillermo Montes and Dr. Marlowe Washington. Ms. Slade is looking forward to fulfilling her mission to support the people of God and foster unity in the body of Christ.

Abstract

This comparative phenomenological study researched how church leaders impact race relations in emerging multicultural Protestant churches, by analyzing the lived experiences of church members in multicultural churches. This study explored the strategies pastors use to manage race relations through the lens of transformational leadership theory. This comparative study compares the experiences of church members in an urban and suburban church setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at two multicultural churches in the Rochester, NY area. The first location included a suburban multicultural church setting with at least 50-75 members. The second location was a larger, more established congregation in an urban multicultural church with 75-100 members. During data analysis, transformational leadership theory assisted the researcher with emerging themes. Prevalent themes were coded and analyzed at the culmination of data collection. Results from the study reveal faith leaders profoundly influence race relations. The research gathered from interviews determined that there were minimal differences in the strategies pastors used to manage race relations. The comparative analysis revealed that participants value similar leadership qualities regardless of race, gender or geographical location of their church. After the data were analyzed, a series of recommendations were made to improve race relations for pastors in multicultural Protestant churches. Recommendations for aspiring multicultural church leaders were cited based on participant preferences. Church members recommended making intentional connections with members by asking, learning, and listening to their unique experiences.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Approximately a half-century after the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. coined

Sunday morning as the most segregated hour in America, congregations still struggle to

accomplish racial integration (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Despite these challenges, religious

leaders have worked toward racial reconciliation to bridge the racial divide in multicultural

religious spaces (Edwards, 2021). Multiracial churches have become the catalyst to pursue unity

and create an open forum to address racial conflicts (Cobb et al., 2015). Ethnographic studies

have reported, pastors who experience personal injustice are more likely to address racial

reconciliation in their church (Okuwobi, 2019). Furthermore, multicultural church leaders have

become more prone to using religious platforms to address racial injustices in society (Driskill &

Jenkins, 2019). A compelling amount of research has shown multiracial churches provide a

platform for individuals to transcend social and ethnic differences (Martinez & Dougherty,

2013). Okuwobi (2019) suggests that multiracial churches embrace a variety of beliefs,

strategies, and leadership styles. Multicultural ministries aim to provide intentional worship

environments with people of diverse cultures in a cohesive church environment (Halliday, 2012).

The growing diversity of neighborhoods across the United States has placed a central

focus on the importance of multicultural churches (Dougherty et al., 2015). Within the last 20

years, the United States has become more racially diverse due to changes in immigration laws

and significant shifts in public policy (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). A steady increase in

migration has led to an emphasis on multiculturalism in the Christian faith (Halliday, 2012).

Halliday (2012) asserts that the church has always been a culturally diverse organization influenced by migration.

According to a National Congregation study the percentage of people attending multiracial churches has increased from 15.3% to 19.7% from 1998 to 2012 (Oyakawa, 2019). A later study conducted in 2019 revealed a slightly higher increase of 24% in racial and ethnic diversity in predominantly White congregations (Dougherty et al., 2020). The developments in the study indicate the critical role multiracial churches have in establishing social capital across racial-ethnic groups (Oyakawa, 2019). Studies from the Religious Leadership and Diversity Project have concluded that White members who attend multiracial churches show less distance toward Black members and less tendency to stereotype other races (Oyakawa, 2019). A growing body of research suggests religious institutions are the largest voluntary organizations in the United States (Edwards, 2021). Recent research has substantiated these claims suggesting congregations make a significant impact on the attitudes and perceptions of race relations in the United States (Park et al., 2020). Despite this influence, multiracial churches have not fully challenged racial attitudes that support racial inequality (Edwards, 2021). Similar claims suggest religious platforms that address racial injustice have not been fully recognized by church leaders due to comfortable church culture (Delehanty, 2016). In the next portion of this paper, a thorough review of the history of race relations in the United States will be examined.

History of the Racial Divide

Throughout the history of the United States colonization through evangelization has been a dominant tactic to spread the Protestant faith in the western hemisphere (Kidd, 2019). Racial divisions and denominationalism created continuous religious tension as early as the 16th century (Kidd, 2019). Other claims have suggested institutional racism has shaped the state of the church

today (Tisby, 2019). The social construct of race did not come to fruition until the late 17th century (Tisby, 2019). Racial concepts developed through the intentional pursuit of social, political, and religious influence to determine who is enslaved and who is not (Tisby, 2019). Perkins (2018) substantiates these claims when he asserts that the only race is the human race, which frames race as a social construct meant to isolate human beings. Early European settlers laid the foundation of light skin superiority, leading to a race-based stratification system in society (Tisby, 2019). European ideologies of race have remained a dominant influence in societal structures (Edwards, 2021). More importantly, these concepts have impacted the direction of integration in multicultural churches today (Edwards, 2021).

Slavery and the Protestant Church

For most of the 17th century slave conversions were prohibited due to the association of freedom with Christianity (Gerbner, 2019). Conflicting views of slave conversion suggest Christian slaves would be more obedient in comparison to their unconverted counterparts (Gerbner, 2018). Gerbner (2018) coined the term *Protestant supremacy* which suggests early slaveholders in the 17th century constructed a hierarchy based on one's Christian status. Unconverted slaves were considered heathens and stripped of rights and privileges that were freely given to Christian slaves. Gerbner (2018) further suggests Protestant supremacy was the predecessor of *White supremacy* during the colonial era in the United States. The influence of Protestant supremacy maintained a system of superiority for White slaveholders, suggesting Protestants were superior due to their religious affiliation. The cognitive dissonance of Christian slaveholders' views of slave conversion gradually led to the integration of White and Black members in religious institutions.

Slaveholders began to question if slave converts should be considered enslaved, which led to the evangelism of Black Americans in the early 18th century (Sensbach, 2019). Edwards (2021) found that as evangelism grew, Black Methodists and Baptists were welcomed into White congregations as inferior members of the church. In spaces where Black members were not permitted, slaves were relegated to start their own congregations under the authority of White pastors (Hine et al., 2006). Although White pastors accepted Black congregants many resources were withheld from Black members. Perkins (2018) noted that "the Black church in America came about because segregation was practiced in the North and the South" (p. 70). As a result, Black church leaders began to organize unofficial covert Black religious organizations (Perkins, 2018). Abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass began to lead the charge to address the injustice of slavery and segregation throughout institutions in society (Kiereini, 2021).

Kidd (2019) explains this led to the emergence of abolitionists seeking to spread anti-slavery rhetoric across the United States. Furthermore, White Christian critics questioned the moral status of the slave trade. Abolitionists claimed chattel slavery contradicted the moral Law of God. Nat Turner's revolt erected polarizing views of slavery in the United States. This slave revolt would result in close to 100 casualties of White slaveholders in the state of Virginia (Drexler-Dreis, 2014). Furthermore, the heightened suspicion of converted slaves perpetuated moral issues for Christian slaveholders (Drexler-Dreis, 2014). Baptists became divided over the moral issue of slavery at the Triennial Baptist Convention in 1858. As a result, slaveholders were barred from official Baptist missionary appointments. As religious opinions about slavery began to shift, the political landscape became influenced by antislavery rhetoric. Abolitionists who participated in the World Anti-Slavery Convention banned slaveholders from receiving resources

to fund pro-slavery churches (Ritchie, 2016). Racial tensions continued to propagate the cultural landscape of the United States at the inception of the reconstruction era (Tisby, 2019).

Separate and Unequal History: White Historical Perspectives

Following the end of the Civil War, the federal government gave southern states the power to reconstruct a segregated society (Peart, 2000). The implementation of Jim Crow laws encouraged and reinforced the continuum of White supremacy in the United States (Tisby, 2019). Southern White supremacists adopted the idea of the *lost cause* which suggests that civilization prior to the emancipation proclamation should remain the status quo (Tisby, 2019). Furthermore, the lost cause belief system suggests the confederacy is a needed staple in society to further economize the institution of slavery in southern states (Tisby, 2019). Southern White churches adopted traditions such as *Confederate Memorial Day* which celebrated Confederate heroes who supported the longevity of Chattlel slavery (Tisby, 2019).

The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was founded by Nathan Bedford in Pulaski, Tennessee along with five other White men to organize pranks and create mischief (Tisby, 2019). The intent of the organization did not involve the spread of hate and violence toward Black people (Tisby, 2019). Nonetheless, the mission of the organization abruptly shifted to organized crime, vandalism, rape, and lynchings of Blacks in the South (Tisby, 2019). By the mid-20th century, The KKK began to wreak havoc in northern cities such as Chicago, where a growing number of Black families sought freedom from racism in the south (Keating, 2014). A display of burning crosses became prevalent as civil rights activists worked to ameliorate race relations in the United States (Keating, 2014).

Similar claims suggest the Klans' views of racial superiority are based on biblical principles which emphasize a strong stance on White nationalist ideologies (Forsell, 2020).

Further research suggests the KKK considers White supremacy as a religious mandate (Richard, 2012). It is also important to note, the Klan sought to accomplish Pan-Protestantism which implies the unification of White native-born Christian Americans who supported race wars (Forsell, 2020). Furthermore, the Klan developed a religious order to spread their interpretation of Protestantism (Tisby, 2019). Recent research states an estimated 40,000 members of the KKK ascended to the pulpit to promote romanticized views of White supremacy in Protestant churches (Tisby, 2019).

The organized efforts of the KKK have created a residual impact infiltrating the racial divide in religious institutions today (Tisby, 2019). The practice of lynching and racial violence became the norm after the Reconstruction era. Despite the horrific killing of hundreds of Blacks, many religious institutions remained silent on the issue (Tisby, 2019).

The influence of film quickly impacted the mission of the KKK when the film *The Birth of a Nation* premiered in 1915 (Forsell, 2020). Subsequent to the film's popularity, ex-minister William Joseph Simmons led a 19-man March to Stone Mountain to display a burned cross (Forsell, 2020). It is evident the KKK aimed to respond to the perceived threats from Catholic and Jewish religions coming against their religious nationalist views (Richard, 2012).

By the end of the 19th century, the emergent theory of social darwinism claimed that individuals who were fit and strong would thrive against all odds (Hine et al., 2013). This theory was equally applied to individuals and races (Hine et al., 2013). Inequities in race and class were projected as, *the survival of the fittest*, rather than systematic racism. The rationale of this theory further influenced a racialized society, leaving immigrants and Black Americans at the bottom of a segregated society (Hine et al., 2013).

A Separate and Unequal History: Black Historical Perspectives

Many Blacks throughout the Reconstruction era were prohibited from owning property and gaining equal access to skilled trades (Hine et al., 2013). Racial tensions forced Black families to search for opportunities in the Northern states to confront systematic racism in the South (Carden & Coyne, 2013). Blacks who migrated to the North would achieve independent wealth due to the fact Black affluence was embraced in segregated communities (Hine et al., 2013). Nonetheless, discrimination existed for Black families regardless of race or class. As a result, the Black elite formed their own institutions to promote their own interest. Therefore, the Black church became a prominent independent resource for the rising success of Black communities (Hine et al., 2013). The African Methodist church set roots and began to flourish across segregated communities due to the exclusion of Black ministers in prominent Protestant denominations. Despite this racial dichotomy among churches, sparse populations of Black members accepted the second-class treatment in White congregations (Hine et al., 2013). The unfair treatment of Black members in White congregations would gain greater attention in the South as the United States began to evolve (Livingston et al., 2017).

The African Methodist Episcopal Church served as an establishment to facilitate equal rights and challenge the concepts of White supremacy at the cessation of the19[th] century (Bynum, 2008). Publications such as the Christian Recorder and AME Church Review provided a voice for the Black community serving as the campaign for racial justice (Bynum, 2008). Moreover, these publications encouraged Black independence from systematic racism (Bynum, 2008). Therefore, the Black church became its own separate entity, free from limitations imposed by predominantly White communities (Bynum, 2008).

Black methodist preacher, Reverdy Ransom became a pioneer of racial reconciliation for the Black faith community (Bynum, 2008). His teaching would challenge views of racial injustice by asserting the pursuit of equal rights for African Americans is the duty and responsibility of the people of God (Bynum, 2008). Ransom's ideas of socialism encouraged outreach and social welfare programs to meet the demands of the industrial revolution in the United States (Bynum, 2008). In later years, the work of Ransom would be challenged by laws perpetuating segregation throughout the United States (Bynum, 2008).

Racial inequality continued to prevail at the close of the 19th century with the passing of the Jim Crow laws (Tisby, 2019). The origin of Jim Crow came from a minstrel character in the mid-19th century who portrayed the most egregious forms of racism during stage plays and other forms of entertainment (Tisby, 2019). Jim Crow laws affirmed racial order and encouraged the notion of separate and unequal for White and Black people in politics and religious spaces. More specifically, Jim Crow banned the integration of baseball teams, cemeteries, prison systems, and schools (Tisby, 2019). Racially homogenous neighborhoods in the south led to the continuum of disproportionate resources among Black and White communities (Ruef & Grigoryeva, 2018). Nonetheless, the fight to integrate communities would weigh heavily on faith leaders in segregated neighborhoods (Keating, 2014). After the reconstruction era commenced, White southern evangelicals developed a sense of superiority over Black members (Peart, 2000).

Despite receiving proper doctrinal training during slavery, White members perceived Black pastors as practicing an inferior form of Christianity (Peart, 2000). As a result, White parishioners were led to include Black ministers in worship services. (Peart, 2000). Nonetheless, Black members were kept separate from Whites during church services. As a result of the persistent discrimination of White clergy, Black leaders fled to the North to seek the support of

northern White denominations (Peart, 2000). Black church leaders came to the realization racism in the church was pervasive throughout the north and southern parts of the United States (Tisby, 2019). The next section of this paper will examine how the civil rights movement impacted race relations in faith communities.

Closing the Racial Divide

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 enforced the integration of non-religious activities (Finkelman, 2018). Despite the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act, church members were not mandated to integrate their services (Finkelman, 2018). Dougherty and Emerson (2018) assert that voluntary religious organizations greatly influence racial homogeneity. The complicated history of American race relations has consequently led to the division of race among denominations and congregations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Despite the efforts of the civil rights movement, White Christian extremists actively fought against integration strategies which led to the preservation of segregation in society (Oyakawa, 2019). Jerry Falwell was a prime example of White religious extremists during the Civil Rights Era (Hine et al., 2013). Falwell shared messages indicating Black citizens descended from a cursed generation of servants (Hine et al., 2013). White politicians began to echo the sentiments of White religious leaders which perpetuated segregation in faith communities (Hine et al., 2013).

Despite these divisive messages, White religious leaders began to change their approach to segregation through a message of racial reconciliation (Peart, 2000). Peart (2000) found that religious leaders came forward to resolve racial tensions and shed light on racial injustice during the civil rights era. Tom Skinner, a Black evangelist preached messages urging the importance of racial reconciliation for White and Black members. Skinner gained notoriety among many White members leading to a following of 60% Whites during his crusades. Skinner's educational

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background won the support of White evangelicals which led to the credibility of his racial reconciliation message. Billy Graham also spread a message of racial reconciliation throughout the 1970s (Kidd, 2019). Graham's words affirmed the message of Martin Luther King Jr., stating Sunday is the most segregated hour in America. Graham's close relationship with Dr. King led to the shift of the Southern Baptist Convention's approach to racial segregation (Kidd, 2019).

White ministers such as Jerry Forshey advocated for the desegregation of churches in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1950s (Keating, 2014). More specifically, he worked to integrate the Methodist church after many years of remaining segregated after the Civil War. (Keating, 2014). The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. joined forces with Forshey to forge a religious bond and work together to challenge racial inequality (Keating, 2014). This mission was supported when organizations such as, *Operation Breadbasket* were founded among religious leaders to address economic disparities and employment gaps in the Black community (Kryczka, 2020).

Another movement that greatly influenced race relations in the United States was the Promise Keeper's movement (Peart, 2000). The Promise Keepers was an organization that supported a mission to create racially diverse organizations through the inclusion of diverse music styles and intentionally hiring diverse staff (Peart, 2000). Racial equality messages from prominent White leaders encouraged a formal apology from the Southern Baptist Convention in 1995 for their role in systematic racism (Peart, 2000). The historical strides toward racial reconciliation can be seen through the intentionality of church leaders and the conformity of their followers (Perkins, 2018).

Problem Statement

Church leaders continue to face challenges managing diversity efforts across racial lines (Edwards, 2021). Further research has shown the ethnicity of leaders in multiracial churches fails

to mirror the diversity of the congregation (Barron, 2016). More specifically, emerging multicultural church leaders are often overwhelmingly White (Barron, 2016). Despite integration efforts of church leadership, the scales of power and influence often lean toward White cultural preferences (Barron, 2016). Although there is an overwhelming amount of cultural capital in multicultural institutions, the majority of diverse churches remain in gentrified communities (Perkins, 2018). Furthermore, research indicates White church leaders have greater access to social capital in comparison to Black clergy seeking to build multiracial churches (Munn, 2019). A growing body research has shown pastors of color are not given independence to lead diverse organizations and often face barriers accessing resource-rich networks (Munn, 2019). Edwards (2014) denotes that White leaders are perceived as charismatic and more esteemed by the majority. As a result, White pastors have seen more congregational growth and access to social capital (Edwards, 2021).

Congregational growth in multiracial churches has sparked the attention of scholars and church leaders due to the low rates of multiracial churches across Protestant communities (Oyakawa, 2019). As a result, pastors seeking to diversify their congregation are faced with growing challenges as they transition into a multiracial church (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Research has pointed to the idea that segregated churches across all major U.S. territories are directly related to segregated communities (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). In addition, church leadership may miss opportunities to integrate their congregation through the process of ethnic understanding (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019).

The imminent resistance to change for predominantly Black churches has raised issues for church leaders aspiring to grow in diversity (Perkins, 2018). The Black church has developed an independent platform that perpetuates separate racial denominations which alienates non-

Black racial groups (Edwards, 2021). The comfort level of programs and church traditions have led to the slow progression of multicultural churches (Delehanty, 2016). Furthermore, the fear of changing traditions inhibits steps toward reframing the church's vision for a multicultural church (Perkins, 2018). Resane (2020) asserts that many pastors who desire to lead multicultural churches continue to live monoethnic lives. Therefore, leaders may lack the accountability to shift their cultural views and intentionally immerse themselves in different cultural groups (Resane, 2020). Moreover, evangelical leaders play a significant role in addressing the ongoing racial tensions in society (Perkins, 2018). More specifically, the majority of White evangelicals do not take an affirmative stand against racial discrimination (Edwards, 2021). As more pastors of color lead multicultural churches, the stride to make diversity work has become increasingly more difficult (Edwards, 2021).

Diverse church leadership plays an integral role in the establishment of multiracial congregations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Dougherty and Emerson (2018) report that Black-led multiracial congregations are rare and challenging for leadership. Further research has shown White pastors remain the most dominant race in the pulpit of multiracial churches (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). In addition, congregations that have been in existence for several decades present more challenges when shifting towards a multiracial church (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018).

An interracial Protestant study revealed that White people fail to recognize their structural dominant position and often use their prominence to exert cultural control in multiracial congregations (Edwards, 2019). This has been defined as *White normativity*, which is the systematic dominance of White cultural preferences that support European societal beliefs and practices (Edwards, 2021). Further research suggests that racial identity for Black people is

not one aspect of identity but an overwhelming aspect that faith communities fail to address (Edwards, 2021).

Theoretical Rationale

How can church leaders effectively manage diversity in multicultural faith communities? Further claims in the literature suggest leaders who transform the organization by motivating the congregation towards change will result in high levels of sustainable growth and member achievement (Ferrari, 2017). Recent literature has shown transformational leaders can accomplish significant change by focusing more on the essence of character rather than cultural differences (Christian et al., 2022). Transformational leaders who compel their members through the power of their vision and personality can inspire followers to change expectations, transcend cultural norms, and motivate them toward collective goals (Ferrari, 2017). Effective leaders of multicultural churches can shift power structures to avert homogenous patterns in faith communities (Halliday, 2012). Pastors of multicultural churches are faced with challenges to unify multiethnic perspectives in relation to worship, theology, and identity (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Therefore, pastors who intentionally pursue cultural transformation by rejecting the status quo will create spaces for diversity by challenging individualistic views (Delehanty, 2016).

The role of transformational leadership has gained more attention from scholars seeking to improve diversity and inclusion in various institutions (Scott & Klein, 2022). The inception of transformational leadership began in 1978 with sociologist James Burns (Northouse, 2022). Burns defined transformational leadership as the process in which leaders seek to understand the motives of their followers to maximize the goals of the organization (Northouse, 2022). A more refined definition of transformational leadership was later constructed by Bass in 1985, which explains transformational leaders are focused on the needs of their followers to support

organizational goals (Northouse, 2022). Bass further explains transformational leaders are equipped with the skills to motivate their followers beyond their own self-interest to accomplish organizational goals (Northouse, 2022). More importantly, this leadership approach focuses on the attitudes, emotions, and values of their followers to promote holistic change (Northouse, 2022).

The role of transformational leadership and social change has gained more attention from scholars seeking to improve diversity and inclusion in various institutions (Scott & Klein, 2022). This leadership theory has received more attention in the past 30 years due to the expansion of the workforce and diversity and inclusion trends (Northouse, 2022). Rapid cultural changes in society and globalization have put a greater emphasis on the importance of transformational leaders (Christian et al., 2022) The imminent changes from the pandemic have sparked more interest in this progressive leadership approach (Christian et al., 2022).

Another point of view states that transformational leaders can transcend the status quo of the organization by engaging the needs of their followers through intentional relationship building (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019). Moreover, transformational leaders are concerned with the goals, motives, and human needs of the individual (Northouse, 2022). A case study revealed an effective transformational leader will place themselves at the forefront of change and develop their followers to support the new mission and vision of the organization (Keita & Lao, 2020). The transformational leader ascribes to raise the conduct and ethical aspirations of their followers to influence change in the organization (Scott & Klein, 2022).

A transformational leader has been seen as someone who can effectively communicate the future vision of the organization with an attractive appeal to its followers (Northouse, 2022). More importantly, transformational leaders present a compelling vision that followers can easily

connect with (Northouse, 2022). A leader who can erect change can communicate a new direction of shared values and norms to cultivate change (Northouse, 2022). In what ways can transformational leaders promote change in culturally homogenous churches?

Historically, transformational leaders during the civil rights era have framed a meaningful motivational message to foster collaborative change (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007). Most notably, Bishop Randle Witcher has been defined as a seminal transformational leader in the 20th century in upstate New York (Turner, 2022). Bishop Witcher broke barriers in the Church of God through his message of social justice and unrelenting stride toward racial integration (Turner, 2022). Bishop Randle openly addressed racial issues while ascending through the ranks of ministry as a district overseer in 1959 for Black churches in his district (Turner, 2022). The literature denotes that his idealized influence and ability to shift power structures in the church played an integral role in addressing systematic racism (Turner, 2022).

Four components of an effective transformational leader are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Northouse, 2022). These components are present when leaders act as role models and communicate a clear mission to facilitate desired changes in the organization (Scott & Klein, 2022). Transformational leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. conveyed messages to his followers that involved a strong sense of community, racial justice, and political activism (McGuire & Hutchings, 2007).

Transformational leaders are often paralleled with the traits of a servant leader (Northouse, 2022). Both leadership approaches place the needs of their followers before their own to benefit the greater good. Transactional leadership is unlike servant and transformational leadership, which focuses on elevating the needs of followers to advance their own agenda (Northouse, 2022). Charismatic leaders have been compared to transformational leaders based on

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their ability to influence their follower's perception of their character (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019). These character traits are demonstrated through idealized influences (Northouse, 2022). Idealized influence refers to the leadership qualities that followers deem as highly esteemed and worthy of loyalty and support (Northouse, 2022). Transformational leaders have used this influence to achieve a newly recognized vision of diversity and inclusion by exhibiting a combination of these qualities (Momeny & Gourgues, 2019). Other qualities of transformational leaders are described as the ability to share a compelling vision with the organization to ensure followers are vested in organizational changes (Carter, 2009).

Inspirational motivation can be described as the process in which leaders set standards for high performance by communicating the importance of their vision with followers (Northouse, 2022). Turner (2022) notes that followers become inspired when a sincere connection is established beyond a religious setting. This inspirational quality can move skeptical followers toward loyalty and engagement in organizational goals (Northouse, 2022). When followers perceive they play a vital role in the new direction of the organization they are more inclined to commit to proposed changes (Northouse, 2022). This quality will be paramount to the success of pastors seeking to inspire cultural change (Christian et al., 2022).

Transformational leaders will also embody intellectual stimulation which involves the leader's ability to encourage followers to be creative and move away from comfortable patterns (Christian et al., 2022). An example of this quality may be a pastor soliciting feedback and ideas to accomplish a new challenging goal. As a result, followers may become more inclined to engage in progressive changes when their perspectives are embraced by leadership (Northouse, 2022). This quality is essential as it relates to empowering and entrusting followers to recognize their own abilities (Northouse, 2022).

The third quality of an effective transformational leader involves individualized consideration. For example, a leader who shows consideration for the individual needs of their followers can transform the cultural climate of the organization (Northouse, 2022). Research has shown leaders who acknowledge the individual needs of followers produce higher performance outcomes. Moreover, this selfless quality has been seen as a motivational tool that drives collective performance outcomes (Northouse, 2022).

It is evident, an effective leader in a multicultural church can improve race relations with the traits of a transformational leader (Scott & Klein, 2022). Abrupt societal changes from the pandemic have shown the advantages of transformational leadership theory (Christian et al., 2022). The resistance to change can impede many aspects of organizational processes (Christian et al., 2022). Leaders who subscribe to this approach should focus on the inward changes of their followers to pursue external organizational results (Christian et al., 2022). Ultimately, faith leaders attempting to sustain diversity over time can strongly benefit from the concepts of transformational leaders (Carter, 2009). The concepts discussed in this leadership style suggest transformational leaders can adopt strategies to erect change and steer followers toward a new vision (Carter, 2009). In essence, the literature suggests pastors can successfully challenge complacency by focusing on the prescribed qualities of transformational leaders (Christian et al., 2022).

Statement of Purpose

Over the last decade multicultural church leaders continue to gain prominence in the United States (Edwards, 2021). However, research has shown pastors leading interracial churches face the most challenges with diversity and inclusion (Edwards, 2021). Further research has shown middle-class African Americans are in greater demand due to their consistent

financial contributions to multicultural churches (Edwards, 2021). Nonetheless, Black pastors leading multicultural churches are presented with more challenges than their White counterparts (Munn, 2019). On the contrary, White pastors capitalize on their abundant access to resources which leads to the imbalance of resources for Black pastors leading multicultural churches (Munn, 2019).

Religious institutions may be the driving force that confronts systemic racism in the United States (Edwards, 2021). Multicultural liberal Protestant movements have increasingly utilized social justice movements to advocate for social change (Krull, 2020). Liberal pastors aiming for diversity often place a central focus on social justice (Krull, 2020). One of society's most effective agencies for civic engagement is Faith Bath Community Organizing (Delehanty, 2020). Although religious institutions play a critical role in civic engagement and racial reconciliation, research suggests this does not happen organically in multicultural churches (Delehanty, 2020). Congregations do not become diverse without the implementation of structures and systems that promote diversity (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). Therefore, the intentional efforts of church leaders will determine the sustainability of interracial churches (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to assess if there is a relationship between church leadership practices and the lived experiences of Black and White members of interracial churches. The study aimed to investigate how leaders impact the lived experiences of Black and White members in their congregation. The processes and procedures multicultural church leaders use to improve race relations in Protestant churches were analyzed in this study.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do multicultural church leaders influence race relations among Black and White members?

2. How do these experiences vary in an urban and suburban setting?

Significance of the Study

Increased migration in the United States has led to the influx of multiracial churches over the past decade (Munn, 2019). This pattern will more than likely continue as the United States becomes more ethnically diverse (Munn, 2019). Since congregations are the most substantial voluntary institution in the United States, they play a critical role in shaping attitudes and perceptions regarding race relations (Perkins, 2018). Religious organizations are fundamental to many people's racial and social identity (Edwards, 2021). Moreover, a place of worship can become the impetus for belonging and acceptance to create opportunities for racial reconciliation and ethnic transcendence (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). It is important to note that multicultural churches have been understudied and more research is needed to verify how pastors attract members (Edwards, 2019).

The study provides insight for emerging multicultural pastors looking to sustain and maintain diversity in their churches. The data collected from the study provides support for pastors looking to attract members of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Definitions of Terms

Congregations – A place or gathering designated for worship. (Merriam-Webster, 2024).

Faith-based community organizing – A regional community organizing coalition whose members are exclusively religious institutions (Delehanty, 2020).

Multicultural churches –- a congregation where less than 80% of the population share the same racial background (Emerson & Kim, 2003).

Monoethnic- of a single ethnicity (Yourdictionary.com, 2024).

Racial reconciliation -the elimination of racial conflict through a shared faith in a religious setting where internal unity is embraced and political differences are avoided (Oyakawa, 2019).

*Interracial churches-*congregations where African Americans and Whites are the two primary groups in the church (Edwards, 2021).

Protestant supremacy- The belief that Christian identity made slaveholders superior based on their religious status. (Gerbner, 2018).

*Social capital-*Relationships in which individuals develop and access resources through partnerships and networking opportunities (Perry, 2013).

Social justice- a catalyst for social change to address racial discrimination and racial inequities of marginalized communities in society (Krull, 2020).

Social movement- An organized group of individuals seeking to address a social problem in society (Oyakawa, 2019).

Racial justice- A call to action which confronts racial discrimination issues (Oyakawa, 2019).

Religious racial integration- The process in which the individual considers themselves belonging to the institution regardless of race or ethnicity (Marti, 2009).

Transformational leadership- "an exceptional form of leadership that drives followers to accomplish change and transforms their attitudes and perceptions which moves followers to accomplish more than what is expected" (Northouse, 2022, p. 185).

White normativity- is the reinforcement of normalized White cultural practices and

location with the racial stratosphere that reflect White perceptions of life, society, and the world

around them (Edwards, 2021).

Chapter Summary

In essence, the ethnic landscape of the United States will continue to mirror the racial

composition of emerging multicultural churches (Dougherty et al., 2020). Recent research has

shown multiracial churches will continue to expand as the United States becomes more diverse

(Edwards, 2021). Therefore, it has become critical for pastors to understand the processes

involved in managing racial diversity (Edwards, 2019). In Chapter 2, several studies will be

identified to examine how pastors have successfully maintained diversity in their congregation.

Chapter 3 will outline the research design methodology of this study. Chapter 4 outlines the

findings of the study and Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the findings, limitations of the study

and recommendations for the future.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

As the United States becomes more diverse it will be critical to foster racially inclusive institutions in society (Edwards, 2019). The increase of immigrants to the United States has resulted in the emerging growth of multicultural churches across the United States (Halliday, 2012). By the year 2050 over half of the U.S. population will represent Black and Brown people (Ohio State University, 2023). Therefore, church leaders will be more accountable to understand the strategies needed to maintain multicultural churches (Edwards, 2019).

The polarizing topic of race and religion will be discussed through the lens of multicultural pastors in various empirical studies. Most of the studies were drawn from the Religious Leadership and Diversity Project (RLDP) and the National Congregations Study (NCS). The RLDP is a multi-method study of head clergy who lead racially diverse churches in the United States (Edwards, 2019). A multiracial church can be defined as a congregation where no specific racial group represents more than 80% of the church (Edwards, 2019). The homogenous nature of churches in the United States has placed an undue burden on pastors aspiring to plant multicultural churches (Wright et al., 2015). According to the NCS in 2007, 80% of churches represent one racial group (Wright et al., 2015). Moreover, 80% of Black members are spread across seven different Black denominations (Wright et al., 2015). This polarizing effect of race and religion will be examined throughout the literature to determine if there is a correlation between leadership and the success of multicultural churches.

To fully explore this body of research, a search was conducted using the St. John Fisher University Lavery library database. Several studies were found in the sociology of religion database using terms such as, multicultural churches and church growth. The sociology of religion database yielded 9,511 scholarly articles. In addition, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* was used to find similar articles. Topics included, racial reconciliation, diverse church leadership, and racial inequality, which yielded 678 articles. The selection of articles was narrowed down and selected based on their peer-reviewed scholarly ranking. A total of 43 studies were identified and 25 studies are included in this literature review. A total of 18 studies were eliminated from the literature review due to the lack of empirical evidence on the topic of multicultural church growth, social justice, and racial reconciliation. Two articles were used to inform the introduction but they were not used in the literature review. Two books were used in the introduction and summary to support the background of the emerging topic. A systematic review of the literature was conducted to identify meta-analytic studies. However, there were no meta-analytic scholarly articles found.

The research conducted included multiple searches in Lavery library's general search bar. These searches led to specific journals such as, *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Religions, and Communication Studies*. These four journals were chosen because they were considered Quartile 1 or 2, according to the Scimago institution's ranking. Most of the studies were ranked 5 stars based on their Scimago ranking. The studies were all ranked at least or 4 or 5 stars due to their recent published date in the past 10 years. One study was considered 3 stars because of the quartile 2 journal ranking. Searches included a combination of the following terms: multicultural church leadership, racial reconciliation, evangelical church leaders, and social capital. Several articles were chosen to determine how

successful pastors grow multicultural churches. Other studies were selected to examine the experiences of church members in multicultural Protestant churches. Key researchers in the field were identified in the *Sociology of Religion* journal. Key researchers in the field were identified as, Emerson, Yancey, Dougherty, and Korie Edwards.

The growing body of research on the topic of racial reconciliation, role strain theory, racial inequality, and social capital will be reviewed and synthesized in this literature review. In the next section of the literature review topics such as congregational growth, multicultural churches, and racial reconciliation are explored. Several experimental studies have been synthesized to analyze the rate of growth in multicultural churches today.

A succinct review of quantitative studies was explored from the *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*. These articles explored experimental methods of multicultural church growth trends over the past 35 years. The following quantitative studies were chosen based on the evidence-based approach from survey data. Few investigations have evaluated church growth with a mixed methods approach. The following mixed methods study was reviewed to evaluate its function in the current body of literature.

Racial Perceptions-Experimental Studies

A study involving Black church growth trends in the United States was conducted to explore the continuum of church growth across several Black denominations (Barnes, 2014). This study was chosen to understand how the Black church impacts larger religious institutions in society (Barnes, 2014). A *new millennium Duboisian mode of inquiry* can be defined as the process of predicting, describing, and explaining social phenomena (Barnes, 2014). This mode of inquiry was used to investigate how the Black church has shaped emerging congregational trends (Barnes, 2014). Statistical data were drawn from the 2009 Pew Research Project which reported

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the frequency of church attendance across various racial groups (Barnes, 2014). The study revealed a higher number of Black members were attending services more frequently. To understand church growth trends, it is of equal importance to investigate church attendance through the Duboisian mode of inquiry. This mode of inquiry seeks to understand how Black cultural patterns influence the social engagement of church members (Barnes, 2014).

Statistical data were analyzed and prepared by the U.S Department of Commerce to assess Black denominational trends in the United States from 1989 to 2001. Recent research has shown a significant increase in the number of Black denominations within the last 30 years (Barnes, 2014). Moreover, the increase of Black megachurches may be associated with a decline of smaller Black congregations (Barnes, 2014). Although research has shown megachurches are predominantly White, there has been a steady increase of Black members attending predominantly White churches. Denominational shifts and trends associated with member fluctuations have led to further experimental studies in the literature (Barnes, 2014). These trends may influence the direction of future research as we seek to understand why Black members join multicultural churches.

An internet-based field experiment was conducted to determine if racial segregation was more prevalent in four denominational religious sects (Wright et al., 2015). The four denominations included in the study were Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Catholic, and non-denominational churches (Wright et al., 2015). The information obtained from the nationwide audit aimed to measure how newcomers were welcomed into new congregations across the United States based on perceptions of their racial identity. (Wright et al., 2015). Researchers sent 3,120 emails to randomly assigned churches from a list of 436 congressional districts (Wright et al., 2015). A total of 65 congressional districts were selected to ensure the

data collected were well dispersed according to the rural, urban central city, suburban, and small-town locations (Wright et al., 2015).

The experimental design of the study was particularly effective due to the analysis of email responses from church members. Characters were used with racially assigned names for racial manipulation purposes (Wright et al., 2015). A key manipulation in this experiment was the perceived race used for email signatures (Wright et al., 2015). For example, signatures for White newcomers were assigned as Greg Murphy or Scott Taylor (Wright et al., 2015). Black signatures were presented as Jamal Washington or Tyrone Jefferson (Wright et al., 2015). Quantitative measures included if email responses were answered by the pastor, church secretary, or another representative of the church. Secondary qualitative measures were considered, such as the warmth of email, tone, and quality of email (Wright et al., 2015). All these variables were used to analyze the data collected.

The results of this experiment were clear. For example, the rate of email responses varied significantly by perceived race and ethnicity (Wright et al., 2015). Emails with White-sounding names received a 63.5% response. In comparison emails with Black-sounding names generated a 58.9% response. Emails with a Hispanic-sounding name received a slightly higher response rate of 59.1%. The lowest email response rate included Asians with a 53.8% response rate. The study ultimately found a statistical significance in the response rate of newcomers based on their perceived racial identity (Wright et al., 2015).

Future research may benefit from an analysis of White church attendance and social norms in predominantly White churches. Data from the newcomer study included findings on response rates on perceived race, but there was little information provided to determine who sent the emails and their roles in the church. More studies are needed to measure how pastors

strategically welcome newcomers into their congregations. A thorough review of the literature has shown no comparable experimental studies exist to evaluate how perceived race impacts newcomer experiences. Furthermore, studies observing in-person interactions with church members of different racial backgrounds would be beneficial for future research (Wright et al., 2015). The methodologies used in the study effectively measured how racial bias impacts the status of racially homogenous churches aiming for diverse outcomes. The following study will examine recent multicultural church trends.

Church Growth Trends

Very few quantitative studies have explored diversity trends and their relationship with church attendance (Dougherty et al., 2015). A longitudinal study was conducted over the course of 19 years between 1993-2012 to determine how racial diversity impacts church attendance over time (Dougherty et al., 2015). Data were taken from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America which supports the growth of multiracial churches in their denomination. The sample included 11,096 churches spread across 1,694 counties. Diversity was measured using an entropy index which measures the level of evenness in groups over time (Dougherty et al., 2015).

After data collection procedures culminated, several findings emerged from the longitudinal study. The study found there was a negative relationship between changes in congregational diversity, and changes in church attendance were not consistent over time (Dougherty et al., 2015). Furthermore, as congregations build a longer history, patterns were established that impeded sustainable diversity. Ultimately, the study found the process of becoming more diverse contributed to the gradual decline in church attendance (Dougherty et al., 2015). These findings are not aligned with later quantitative studies throughout the literature.

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A study conducted by Dougherty and Emerson (2018) examined growing multicultural trends across churches in the United States. Data from the NCS were used to review the racial compositions of churches spanning from 1998 to 2012 (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). The NCS specifically collects data on racial diversity in congregations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Recent immigration changes in our society have led sociologists to study how these factors impact the rate of growth in multicultural churches (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018).

The NCS conducted a study in 1998 to measure the number of multicultural churches in the United States (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). As a result, a 15-year study commenced analyzing what was racially changing in congregations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Congregations were identified using a hyper-network sampling technique. This sampling technique used a vast representation of various congregations in a specific region. The participants were selected from the General Social Survey database (GSS). The sample included 4,701 congregations, 1,234 participants in 1998, 1,506 participants in 2006, and 1,331 participants in 2012 (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Each participant specified where they worshiped, and the frequency of their church attendance (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018).

Racial diversity was measured using a binary variable to distinguish homogenous congregations from multiracial congregations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). An entropy index can be defined as an interval-level variable which measures evenness within populations (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). This measurement tool was used to compare the racial composition of churches over time. This sampling technique used a vast representation of various congregations in a specific region. Seven variables were used to analyze the data which included religious tradition, race of clergy, membership composition, congregation size, worship size, theology, and founding date of the church (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018).

After the data were collected several notable trends emerged from the study. In 1998, 12.7% of congregants were affiliated with multiracial churches (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). This number climbed in 2006 to 15.1% and reached 18.3% in 2012 (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Denominations included Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Pentecostal Protestant, and Black Protestant. All four Protestant denominations reflected steady increases in diversity throughout the study. Nonetheless, Catholics showed higher proportions of diversity than any other denomination. A later congregational study introduced similar findings (Dougherty et al., 2020).

Church Growth Recent Trends

A similar study attempted to capture the rate of multicultural church growth across the United States from 1998 to 2019 (Dougherty et al., 2020). This study was an extension of the previous research mentioned. Congregational data were taken from the NCS database to examine 20 years of diversity trends via in-person surveys from the GSS database (Dougherty et al., 2020). This study analyzed the continuum of diverse congregations beyond the NCS data, ending in 2012 (Dougherty et al., 2020).

Five variables were used to collect congregational data which included, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Pentecostal Protestant, Black Protestant, and Roman Catholics (Dougherty et al., 2020). Statistical significance was assessed to determine change over time with bivariate logistical measures. This method was used to understand the relationship between progressive racial changes across denominations (Dougherty et al., 2020). After the data were measured and analyzed patterns and themes emerged.

Church Growth Conclusions

The statistical data revealed a steady increase in racial diversity between 1998 to 2019 (Dougherty et al., 2020). The preponderance of data reflects diversity trends will not reach a plateau in the coming years (Dougherty et al., 2020). In addition, the rate of diversity in the study from 1998 to 2019 tripled within the last 20 years (Dougherty et al., 2020). Although the rate of diversity is increasing in the United States, more experimental studies are needed to measure the key indicators that drive growth in various denominations. Therefore, the future direction of research should measure the strategies used in these congregations that support sustainable diversity. Although the study mentioned that data collection were drawn from various denominations, little information was provided on congregational size. More studies are needed to understand the strategies that new and emerging congregations employ to improve diversity.

Racial Inequality Perspectives-Experimental Studies

Other statistical studies have investigated the perceptions of race and inequality among multiracial and monoracial churches (Cobb et al., 2015). More specifically, this study explored how racial inequalities were perceived differently among Hispanics, Blacks, and White members of multicultural churches (Cobb et al., 2015). These perceptions were analyzed using survey data taken from a national representative sample from the GSS and NCS. The GSS sample included 3,000 participants across religious denominations (Cobb et al., 2015).

Dependent variables included respondents' explanations of socioeconomic disparities between White and Black church members (Cobb et al., 2015). Survey questions measured if respondents associated racial discrimination with insufficient resources, lack of education, and low motivation among Black people (Cobb et al., 2015). Independent variables included race and ethnicity in both monoracial and multicultural churches (Cobb et al., 2015). Political views were

measured using a 7-point Likert scale starting at 1 meaning extremely liberal and 7 meaning extremely conservative views (Cobb et al., 2015). Researchers analyzed statistical data using logistic regression to measure the relationships between race, congregational diversity, and explanations of racial inequalities (Cobb et al., 2015). After the data were analyzed, researchers identified several findings (Cobb et al., 2015).

The primary results of the study found race and religion concomitantly influence racial attitudes within places of worship (Cobb et al., 2015). Furthermore, the study found Black and Hispanics were more likely to perceive racial inequalities as a systematic structural issue in society (Cobb et al., 2015); whereas, White respondents failed to identify racial inequities as structural, but recognized racial inequalities as a lack of personal motivation. The study also found White perceptions of racial disparities did not change for White members attending a multicultural or non-multicultural church (Cobb et al., 2015).

Accumulating research within the last 10 years has pointed to the increasing number of multicultural churches led by Black pastors (Dougherty et al., 2020). Despite the growing number of emerging Black leaders in multicultural churches, the influence of tradition has created stagnant growth within the Black church (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). A closer look at the compelling traditions in the Black church will be explored in the following experimental studies.

Similar experimental studies have reported how Black tradition may reinforce racial homogeneity in religious institutions (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). An experimental study was conducted to examine the influence of "Black reltrad" within Black denominations (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). The term reltrad can be defined as a categorization scheme that accounts for all Christian traditions (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). Furthermore, the term can be used to differentiate the traditional from nontraditional categories across Mainline Protestant denominations (Shelton

& Cobb, 2017). This categorization scheme was first introduced in an article entitled, *Social Forces* published in 2000 by a group of sociologists – Brian Steensland, Jerry Park, Mark Regnerus, Lynn Robinson, Bradford Wilcox, and Robert Woodberry – which explained social and political views were associated with specific Protestant affiliations (Smith et al., 2018). Black reltrad seeks to distinguish traditional liberals and conservatives (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). The study aimed to understand the consequences of polarizing denominations among Black churches (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). Similarities and differences were measured across nine different Christian denominations. These categories included Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Mainline Protestants, historically White evangelicals, non-denominational Protestants, Catholics, and "other" included denominations not listed (Shelton & Cobb, 2017).

Survey data were extracted over the course of 4 decades spanning from 1972 to 2014 from the GSS database (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). Religious attitudes were measured by additive scales concerning sexual morality beliefs and practices (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). The sexual morality index included four variables such as premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexuality, and sex among teens. Measures were coded on a scale from 0-3 (0 not wrong at all to 3 always wrong). Independent variables included income, education, sex, region of residence, and the year the participant responded to the survey (Shelton & Cobb, 2017).

The results of the study found Mainline Protestants' beliefs were more liberal, however, they were in direct contrast to conservative Protestants (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). The most liberal group showed African American Catholics as having the highest degree of liberal views (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). The findings also reported differences among African Americans concerning engagement in politics (Shelton & Cobb, 2017). It is of equal importance to investigate how racial views are reflected in Christianity (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). The following study

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explored how racial perspectives of injustice were uniquely viewed in American society (Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

Unlike the Shelton and Cobb (2017) earlier study, this study investigated how White and Black Christians view the importance of Christianity in relationship to their American identity (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). This body of research focused on racial attitudes toward social justice issues between White and Black members in society (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Survey data were evaluated to determine how various racial groups interpreted their Christian identity in concert with their identity as Americans (Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

Data were collected from the most recent wave of GSS research in 2014 using a personal survey interview design and full probability sampling design (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Full probability sampling is a technique that ensures all members of a population have an equal chance of being selected (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Dependent variables were measured to determine how racial attitudes toward racial inequality determined statistical differences between Black and White racial groups (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Independent variables measured how respondents viewed being Christian as truly American (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Results from the study found that 29.5% of White respondents believed discrimination was a driving factor for racial inequality (Perry & Whitehead, 2019); whereas, 57.6% of Black Americans believed that discrimination was a reason for racial inequality (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Furthermore, the study found that respondents who believed being Christian was very important to being an American, mostly agreed with the notion Black Americans' lack of motivation was the cause of their lack of resources (Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

Another perspective in the literature explored how racial groups within American Christianity viewed equal opportunity (Park et al., 2020). Survey data were extracted from the

National Asian American survey database to fully investigate racial attitudes towards equal opportunity (Park et al., 2020). The sample included 6,400 Blacks, Asians, Latinos, and Whites. Survey responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale starting from strongly agree to disagree (Park et al., 2020).

Data collected revealed women tended to be more liberal than men regarding equal opportunity (Park et al., 2020). The study also found White evangelicals showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (Park et al., 2020). The results of the study indicated White evangelicals were not supportive of social structures providing equal access to opportunity (Park et al., 2020). Nonetheless, White evangelicals have attributed their ideology of racial inequality to their religious beliefs (Park et al., 2020). Findings from this study affirm other themes throughout the literature which point to a highly racialized structure in American society (Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

The findings of these studies are affirmed by earlier claims in the literature which suggest White normative views are pervasive throughout many institutions (Edwards, 2021). Edwards (2021) described White normativity as the reinforcement of White cultural practices and the preference of White social norms in society. Perceptions of race and inequality may be the driving force for the racial divide among multicultural religious institutions (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). In essence, polarizing views of racial equity may impact diversity and inclusion across religious institutions (Park et al., 2020). Later studies have revealed that racial injustice is seen and experienced differently across racial lines (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). A growing body of research suggests racial reconciliation can be used to eliminate conflict through shared faith which allows churches to avoid disparaging discussions on racial conflict (Oyakawa, 2019). The

studies discussed in the following sections explored the current views of racial reconciliation in literature.

Racial Reconciliation and Church Leadership

Various studies have shed light on the perceptions of racial reconciliation and church leadership in multicultural churches today (Oyakawa, 2019). The study investigated how head pastors framed racial issues in their prospective churches (Oyakawa, 2019). Historically, the racial reconciliation frame emerged at the inception of the civil rights movement (Oyakawa, 2019). Racial reconciliation emphasizes community, and individual responsibility to resolve racial issues (Delehanty, 2016); whereas the racial justice frame focuses on open dialogue between opposing views to resolve racial issues (Oyakawa, 2019). The following studies have uncovered how racial reconciliation is demonstrated or suppressed in multicultural churches.

Social justice issues were explored using data from the Religious Leadership and Diversity Project (RLDP). The nationwide study provided data for pastors who lead multicultural churches in the United States. Interviews were conducted after the Ferguson, MO riots because of the fatal shooting of Michael Brown (Oyakawa, 2019). The interviews were strategically conducted after the riots commenced to analyze how pastors handled racial division within their congregation (Oyakawa, 2019).

The interview sample included 54 evangelical church leaders of multicultural churches in geographically diverse areas (Oyakawa, 2019). Researchers addressed the question; what patterns exist to address how multiracial church pastors lead concerning politicized racial issues? The studies found the majority of pastors who were confronted with racial justice issues did not want to address these issues openly during services (Oyakawa, 2019). Further conclusions from the data suggested pastors can lead simultaneously with racial reconciliation and the racial

justice frame in mind (Oyakawa, 2019). Nonetheless, the racial reconciliation frame proved to be the most dominant frame throughout the interviews (Oyakawa, 2019). Out of the 54 interviews, five pastors openly expressed ideas that aligned with the racial justice frame (Oyakawa, 2019). This suggests the prevailing dominance of the racial reconciliation framework discourages collective action and social change (Oyakawa, 2019).

Overall, the collection of studies revealed effective methods to discern how racial reconciliation is understood through the lens of church leadership. However, the study's small sample size provided limited responses from the RLDP. More interviews could have provided in-depth data to support claims in the literature. Furthermore, other data collection methods could have been used outside of the RLDP to utilize a diverse sampling technique from other religious archives. Overall, the field research revealed the importance of social justice in the faith community (Delehanty, 2016). The attitudes and perceptions of racial inequality among White and Black religious dyads have sparked the attention of researchers in the field (Munn, 2019). More research is needed to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of social justice movements among multiracial churches.

Social Justice and The Role of the Church

A recent wave of social justice movements has pointed to accumulating research on social justice and the role of the Church (Delehanty, 2016). Research states activism can help frame socioeconomic concerns and racial injustice through community activism (Delehanty, 2016). The church's response to these issues will be further examined through the lens of ethnographic research, conducted at several faith-based community organizations (Delehanty, 2016). The study investigated comfortable church culture and how this framed the church's approach to social justice (Delehanty, 2016). The phrase comfortable church culture can be

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defined as, a set of beliefs relating to the approach to religious life where faith communities are

accustomed to activities that encourage individualistic religious commitments familiar to the

status quo (Delehanty, 2016). For example, community advocacy is seen as feeding the hungry

and giving charitable donations (Delehanty, 2016). On the contrary, social justice in the faith

community is not seen as a unifying faith-based activity (Delehanty, 2016). Similar claims

suggest addressing racial injustice in a religious setting can be seen as political and divisive

(Oyakawa, 2019). Therefore, pastors of multicultural churches are more comfortable suppressing

racial injustice to preserve unity among Black and White members (Oyakawa, 2019). Literature

also suggests that comfortable church culture is ubiquitous among emerging multicultural

churches (Delehanty, 2016).

Interview responses from the study pointed to several themes affirming the role of

comfortable church culture (Delehanty, 2016). Church leaders theorize faith communities should

lead efforts to address racial issues. However, lay members are hesitant to join social movements

for the sake of disturbing the peace in religious spaces (Delehanty, 2016). One of the pastors

from the study concluded that community advocacy brings all Christians together to work for

social justice, inclusion, and equity (Delehanty, 2016). Social justice can be defined as the

equitable distribution of resources, benefits, and burdens throughout society (Israel & Frenkel,

2018). Moreover, social justice has been seen as a vital aspect of the church's mission and

vision (Delehanty, 2016).

Ultimately, the study points to the prevailing perception of the church to embrace racial

reconciliation and shy away from racial injustice (Oyakawa, 2019). Despite existing hesitation to

address systematic racism, the collective efforts in the study created a step in the right direction.

The shift toward embracing community activism may be complex for some pastors (Delehanty,

2016). However, research has shown effective change comes from the attitudes and perceptions of church leadership (Edwards, 2019). Similar studies have reported consistent findings regarding the church and social justice.

Numerous studies have explored the strategies pastors use to address racial issues (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). A qualitative study was conducted to investigate how church leaders leverage opportunities to develop social change (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Congregations reflect 50% of the United States social capital (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Hence, congregations can be the bridge to connect members to social change and solidarity (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). The study conducted by Driskill and Jenkins (2019) sought to understand how social and racial tensions may be alleviated with open dialogue.

Several themes emerged from the data after a total of 10 interviews were conducted with pastors across the United States (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Questions included how would you explain to a newcomer the purpose of your church? Researchers categorized the data in three frames including, integration-segregation, belief-practice, and vertical horizontal (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Responses from the integration-segregation frame found that concepts of worship practices differ according to race which further isolates members and impedes integration across racial lines. Ultimately the study revealed pastors missed critical opportunities to consolidate racial and ethnic boundaries to foster a true multicultural church mission (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019).

Recent research has been conducted to analyze how church leaders manage the intersection of race, religion, and faith-based organizing (Markofski et al., 2020). Moreover, this study sought to understand how White evangelicals expressed their faith in multifaith settings (Markofski et al., 2020). Four modes of religious typology were reviewed which included

secularist, generalist, particularist, and exclusionist modes of faith expression (Markofski et al., 2020). This study investigated the strategies White evangelicals used to foster unity and solidarity in multifaith settings (Markofski et al., 2020).

White evangelicals have strongly aligned with religious right perspectives on social activism (Markofski et al., 2020). Research has shown these expressions have isolated other political views which impedes community organizing efforts (Markofski et al., 2020). White religious attitudes toward faith-based organizing have been influential in diversity and inclusion efforts (Markofski et al., 2020). Therefore, a multimethod study was conducted to understand the perceptions of six different faith-based organizations in predominantly White communities (Markofski et al., 2020).

A year-long ethnographic study began in 2011 for a duration of 1 year in several metropolitan cities across the United States (Markofski et al., 2020). The culture of each organization was analyzed through 92 in-depth interviews involving various stakeholders in the organization (Markofski et al., 2020). Community action groups were observed to investigate the strength of their diversity efforts. A faith-based organization, *Together for Justice* was strategically moved to a predominantly Hispanic community to create access and equity for the underserved residents in the community (Markofski et al., 2020). More specifically, the organization sought to provide the community with food, hygiene products, and mobile healthcare services (Markofski et al., 2020).

Data collected from the interviews found White evangelicals prefer the secularist mode of religious practices which excluded the outward expression of faith in broad community activist settings (Markofski et al., 2020). Furthermore, the negative perceptions of White conservative religious views may discourage White evangelicals from expressing their faith at social justice

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forums (Markofski et al., 2020). As a result, the secular mode of public engagement remained prevalent for predominantly White faith-based organizations (Markofski et al., 2020).

The quantitative data affirmed the findings of the qualitative data collected in the study. The survey data included responses from the National Study of Community Organizing Organizations (NSCOO) (Markofski et al., 2020). Each organization in the NSCOO provided a platform to address social justice concerns for poor, low-income regions (Markofski et al., 2020). Surveys were distributed to 158 members with over 506 paid organizers. Survey data measured the likelihood of White evangelicals operating in the secular mode of religious expression (Markofski et al., 2020). Variables were measured to determine if the organization downplayed religious expression using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never, rarely, sometimes, often, or always. The data were analyzed using a multivariate regression model to examine the relationship between an organization's secular practices and the orientation of White evangelical members (Markofski et al., 2020). Quantitative data showed a strong correlation between White evangelicals and their preferred secular mode of communication in multifaith settings (Markofski et al., 2020).

The extant research mentioned throughout the literature has shown the strategies pastors used to facilitate social activism may differ by race (Markofski et al., 2020). The research conducted in these studies has shown the intricacies of developing social justice practices in emerging multicultural churches (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Furthermore, the compelling amount of qualitative data pointed to the effective approach of phenomenological studies in the field of multicultural churches. The experience of multicultural pastors may provide a pathway for effective diversity practices for future qualitative research. More attention has been directed toward multicultural pastors and their experiences with social capital (Delehanty, 2016). The

following studies will review the existing literature relating to social capital and multicultural pastors.

Social Capital and Multicultural Church Growth

Over the last 5 years, research has pointed to the uneven stratification of resources among Black and White pastors who lead multicultural churches (Munn, 2019). The following studies investigated how the dissemination of social capital, church investments, and access to funding may be unevenly distributed to pastors of color (Munn, 2019). Social capital can be defined as the process of networking strategies to obtain certain resources within a shared group (Perry, 2013). Studies have shown a pastor's ability to foster sustainable church growth over time largely depends on the social capital within their religious network (Munn, 2019). The following studies attempted to find a correlation between social capital and church growth.

Researchers drawing upon survey data from the RLDP investigated the experiences of pastors leveraging their resources within their religious network (Munn, 2019). Participants in the sample were pastors across the United States who lead diverse churches (Munn, 2019). Patterns and themes were coded to describe their attitudes and beliefs as it related to social integration. The experiences of White and Black pastors were the primary focus of the study (Munn, 2019). Various patterns emerged among the same racial groups from the data collected.

Data collected from the interviews of White pastors found the relationships between community members and investors were seamless and required minimal effort to gain the necessary support to expand the church (Munn, 2019). A White pastor shared his experiences serving disparaged communities (Munn, 2019). Through prominent connections, he obtained large donations to support poor neighborhoods. The literature also stated that large donations covered the salary of the senior pastor and funded large housing projects (Munn, 2019). The

prominent relationships the pastor built through community connections resulted in social capital which supported the growth of the church (Munn, 2019). Several White pastors in the study shared that their social ties in the broader community have consistently benefited the church (Munn, 2019).

The study found pastors of color have an entirely different experience with social capital (Munn, 2019). A Black pastor shared his challenges starting a new multiracial church after leaving a predominantly Black church. This experience led him to believe there was no room for him at the table to access resources for his new church. He described being alienated from the Black church and often sidelined by White leaders who could provide sustainable support (Munn, 2019). Despite their efforts to gain access, Black pastors were rarely given a seat at the table of privilege and influence (Munn, 2019). Research also indicated that pastors of multiracial churches face more economic difficulty due to the inconsistency of race, class, and socioeconomic status within their church (Munn, 2019).

Social Capital in Evangelical Churches

The Perry (2013) study was designed to examine the relationship between social capital inequity among different evangelical racial groups. Evangelical Outreach Missions (EOM) thrive and function solely through personal fundraising efforts within their social network (Perry, 2013). Other factors were investigated regarding race, income, class, and religious affiliations to determine if these variables made a difference in the fundraising efforts for evangelical ministries. The role of social homophily across racial groups was also be evaluated to understand the given trends of fundraising through the lens of social capital theory (Perry, 2013). The term homophily can be defined as the ideology that individuals tend to connect with people they perceive to be like them (Edwards, 2019).

Data were collected from the parachurch ministry's fundraising survey in 2009 which contained 57 closed-coded and nine open-ended questions (Perry, 2013). The online survey was designed to assess the fundraising experiences of EOM staff across different racial groups (Perry, 2013). To participate in the online survey, participants had to personally conduct fundraising activities. An estimated 3,570 staff members participated in the survey (Perry, 2013). Researchers developed several hypotheses to predict the outcomes from the data collected. The following themes and patterns were found after a thorough analysis of the data.

The Perry (2013) study found minority EOM workers benefit more from attending interracial churches. The study further asserted that minorities can capitalize and access social capital through the elite connections made in religious institutions (Perry, 2013). The researcher's hypothesis was tested by multivariate analysis from online surveys. The third hypothesis presumed the experiences of minorities would be aligned with having fewer prominent connections and less access to charitable donations. This was affirmed. (Perry, 2013). Both the quantitative and qualitative data supported that respondents' fundraising efforts were negatively impacted by social capital deficits (Perry, 2013). Based on the findings of this study, the data continues to report the inequities experienced by minority pastors leading multicultural churches (Perry, 2013).

The overarching data presented in the studies correlate with similar claims in the literature. The information revealed compelling data which showed a positive correlation between race and an uneven distribution of social capital (Munn, 2019). Although the data presented themes across racial groups, more research is needed to investigate if there is a correlation between social capital and the size of the church. Earlier studies revealed similar challenges in raising funds to promote the growth of evangelical ministries. The current body of

research points to the relevance of social capital across denominations (Perry, 2013). The preponderance of evidence shows both the advantages and disadvantages multiracial churches face accessing funds from their religious networks. Nonetheless, structural racial issues have become more prevalent throughout literature (Edwards, 2019). The challenges church leaders face to overcome these structural issues have gained more attention in recent research (Edwards, 2021).

Role Conflict and Church leadership

A study was conducted to capture the experiences of African American and Asian pastors in multicultural churches (Edwards, 2019). Researchers in the field have deemed new pastors leading multicultural churches as *estranged pioneers* (Edwards, 2019). An estranged pioneer can be defined as someone leaving a familiar environment to start a new unfamiliar venture outside of their comfort zone (Edwards, 2019), therefore, resulting in alienation in their journey ahead (Edwards, 2019) This ethnographic study addressed the various challenges Asian and African American pastors face leading multicultural churches (Edwards, 2019).

Participants in the study included 121 in person interviews with head clergy which included 90% responses from men (Edwards, 2019). Pastors were identified through the RDLP database which included archival data for multicultural church leadership (Edwards, 2019). To ensure a variety of different perspectives were included in the study, church membership varied from 2,000 or more members to pastors with less than 150 members (Edwards, 2019). A variety of different denominations were included such as Conservative Protestant, Catholics, and Mainline Protestant (Edwards, 2019). After pastors were interviewed several themes emerged from the data collected.

Most of the feedback from face-to-face interviews suggested being labeled an estranged pioneer in a multicultural church comes with lower self-esteem, alienation, and inferiority (Edwards, 2019). Asian pastors expressed they do not feel accepted by their congregation (Edwards, 2019). Interview data concluded that Asian pastors feel more like adopted family rather than real family members in their own church. Interviews with African American pastors revealed that they were often perceived as leaders who have neglected their racial identity and abandoned the Black church. Therefore, they felt they were perceived as less trustworthy by Black members (Edwards, 2019). The themes and concepts unveiled in the study showed a strong correlation between racial identity and the perceptions of leadership in multicultural churches (Edwards, 2019) Other methods to address racial inclusion have emerged in the literature.

Leadership Expectations

Parallel concepts in the literature reveal pastors of multiracial churches are often confronted with addressing discourse across racial lines (Priest & Edwards, 2019). A study from the RLDP investigated the strategies that multicultural pastors use to achieve a cohesive diverse church (Priest & Edwards, 2019). A total of 121 pastors of multicultural churches were interviewed in geographically diverse locations in the United States (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The racial composition of the study included 19% African American and 61% White (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Almost half of the participants in the study led medium to large size congregations which included 150-749 members. The interview protocol included questions regarding racial ethnicity, congregational experiences, and racial attitudes toward worship practices (Priest & Edwards, 2019). These elements led to various themes and concepts of effective multicultural church leadership.

The polarizing topic of race and religion, in the study by Priest and Edwards (2019), showed notable differences among racial groups. For example, pastors are faced with dilemmas when deciding what race they will hire or if ethnic music will be played versus White-sounding music (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Nonetheless, the literature suggests successful diverse churches learn to intentionally incorporate all worship styles into their services (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The findings of the study concluded that multiracial pastors were responsible for the balance of power and how it was distributed across racial lines (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The following studies explored the strategies pastors employed to manage diversity expectations.

Leadership and Diversity Expectations

Many pastors faced social and racial dilemmas as it related to their own racial identity (Edwards, 2014). The following case study examined the influence of role strain theory within the social dynamics of multicultural churches. Role strain theory can be defined as the expectations of roles and behaviors within multiple levels of the organization (Edwards, 2014). Furthermore, the socially acceptable norms of the organization can regulate the types of strategies multicultural pastors use to foster diversity (Edwards, 2014). The following study explored how multicultural pastors develop and sustain diversity within their congregations.

Researchers gathered interview data over the course of an 18-month period at an interracial Midwest church in 2002 (Edwards, 2014). The study included 40 semi-structured interviews with members and leadership at Cross Town church lasting up to 2.5 hours (Edwards, 2014). The racial composition of cross town comprised 65% Blacks, 30% Whites, 5% Asians and Latinos (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Geographically, the church was located within a 3-mile radius of 100 predominantly Black churches (Edwards, 2014). Despite the prominence of Black

churches in the area, Cross Town's religious foundations were embedded in the White

evangelical network (Edwards, 2014).

The findings from the case study suggested that head clergy played a critical role in the

long-term longevity of racially diverse churches (Edwards, 2014). Furthermore, the role of

pastors may be strained due to role expectations from two distinctly different racial groups

(Edwards, 2014). Further research suggests the dichotomy between Black and White member

expectations creates a strain for pastors of color (Edwards, 2014).

The collection of studies points to the prevailing dominance of White culture in many

institutional spaces in society (Edwards, 2014). Perceptions of race and social injustice in Latino

communities is an important part of the literature that is missing. The current body of research

has shown religious institutions are not exempt from White normative ideologies (Edwards,

2014). These studies provided a wide range of data across different racial groups, however more

information is needed to express how female pastors lead multicultural churches. The next

section of the literature explores effective diversity management practices in multicultural

churches.

Managed Diversity

The onset of multiculturalism and diversity in society has led researchers to examine how

pastors manage diversity differently according to race (Jenkins, 2003). An ethnographic study

was conducted to analyze the emerging methods multicultural churches used to foster diversity

(Jenkins, 2003). This 4-year study took place at the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), the

People's Temple, and U.S. Baha faith communities (Jenkins, 2003). The researcher described

intimate diversity as providing members with a platform to create and develop nurturing

relationships with members of different racial groups (Jenkins, 2003). The strategies and

methods used in the study were largely based on the principles of intimate diversity (Jenkins, 2003). Moreover, the study reported leaders at ICOC made frequent social interactions with members through disciple groups. Disciple groups were a mandatory practice implemented by leadership to ensure members connected with unfamiliar people (Jenkins, 2003).

The primary site of the research was ICOC which comprised 300 members in a New England city (Jenkins, 2003). The researcher attended 60 on-site church events and in-home group meetings (Jenkins, 2003). Interviews were conducted with more than 50 current members. In addition, ex-members were identified and interviewed in the study to obtain a well-rounded perspective. Sermons were analyzed and coded to systemically interpret the data (Jenkins, 2003).

The study found inclusive worship styles of multicultural churches played a critical role in unifying the congregation (Jenkins, 2003). The disciple groups formed a social bond that mitigated misconceptions of racial issues at ICOC. Furthermore, disciple groups provided a platform for members to safely express racial concerns and break down cultural barriers through structured communication (Jenkins, 2003). Members of ICOC felt empowered to share their personal challenges with racial discrimination. Hence, a high level of intimate diversity was developed organically through disciple groups (Jenkins, 2003). Later studies have pointed to similar claims throughout the literature.

Several ethnographic studies were conducted to examine diversity practices for multicultural leaders. The following study investigated various perspectives on diversity in multiracial churches (Marti, 2009). Accumulating ethnographic studies have explored how diversity is successfully maintained in emerging multicultural churches. A more recent ethnographic study was conducted at two Los Angeles, California churches to understand the strategies pastors use to employ diverse practices (Marti, 2009). These studies were conducted at

Mosaic and Oasis church due to the rapid growth of members within the past 3-5 years (Marti, 2009). After extensive interviews and in-depth observations of church practices, three concepts emerged from the data collected (Marti, 2009).

The study found church members thrived in multiracial churches when they have an affinity that draws them to the church's programs and services (Marti, 2009). Several interviews revealed when there is a shared interest among members, an organic interest is formed which transcends racial boundaries (Marti, 2009). Research also found that identity reorientation is the process in which members fully embrace the values and practices associated with the church's collective identity to reorient their personal identity within the congregation (Marti, 2009). This process allows members to align with the corporate identity of the church to eliminate personal prejudices. The term ethnic transcendence is the process in which multicultural communities foster racial integration through a new shared religious identity (Marti, 2009). This term can also be defined as a necessary process in which members disassociate with their own racial prejudice to connect with the religious identity of the church. Furthermore, this serves as a tool of solidarity and cohesion among members of different social, and racial backgrounds (Marti, 2009). Similar ethnographic studies in the literature have supported these claims.

An ethnographic study was conducted in 2003 at a well-established multicultural church (Marti, 2010). The study was conducted at Oasis church due to a recent growth spurt in church membership (Marti, 2010). At the time of the study, Oasis church had at a total of 2,200 members attending weekly services (Marti, 2010). The racial demographics included 45% African Americans and 40% Whites (Marti, 2010). Despite an all-White leadership roster, Oasis church has remained racially diverse in recent years (Marti, 2010). According to several

interviews conducted in the study, leadership at Oasis Church strategically emphasized diversity (Marti, 2010).

Over the course of 1 year, fieldwork was completed to understand the culture, practices, and programs available at Oasis church (Marti, 2010). The researcher reviewed archived materials, conducted in-person interviews, and published materials were gathered for additional analysis (Marti, 2010). A total of 50 semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with long-time members, occasional attendees, and first-time visitors (Marti, 2010). The sample size included 42% White members and 32% Black members (Marti, 2010). The researcher used NVIVO qualitative software to code responses and determine themes and patterns.

Research revealed ethnic transcendence was a critical component at Oasis church (Marti, 2010). Furthermore, ethnic transcendence is claimed to create solidarity and cohesion within interracial settings (Marti, 2010). The study found Black and White interviewers complimented the church's ability to unify and create an atmosphere of inclusion (Marti, 2010). Unlike other testimonials mentioned in the literature, Oasis church incorporated gospel music in their worship styles to appeal to Black members. Moreover, members expressed there was an equal representation of culture in their programs and services (Marti, 2010). Most of the Black members at Oasis were previous members of an all-Black church looking for a new diverse experience. It is evident, that Oasis made it equally important for all members to become a part of the collective church identity regardless of race (Marti, 2010). Opposing views of effective diversity tactics have emerged throughout this body of literature.

A mixed methods study was conducted to determine how different racial groups maintain a sense of belonging in multicultural churches (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013) The study hypothesized individuals who belonged to the larger racial group would experience a greater

sense of belonging (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). This hypothesis was derived from

organizational ecology theory which suggests that organizations seek out resources from their

environment to maintain a sense of stability (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). Further research

explains this as organizational niches where generalists and specialists compete for members in a

strategic way. The strategies deployed by niche specialist and generalist niches were further

explored through survey data and multilevel modeling (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013).

Data were collected from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (USCLS) which is a

national sample of U.S. congregations and their members (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). The

survey included 1,214 congregations and a total of 434 returned surveys. Survey questions

included do you have a strong sense of belonging to this congregation? The second question

measured whether church members have close friends who a part of the congregation (Martinez

& Dougherty, 2013). Participation in weekly church services and church activities were also

analyzed. Data analysis started with comparing belonging and participation using Chi-square and

t-tests to examine racial group differences. Multivariate analysis was used as a strategy to

identify individuals within the congregation to test group effects on specific members (Martinez

& Dougherty, 2013).

Based on the data collected, the study found mean levels of belonging and participation

were higher for members in the dominant racial group (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). The

largest racial group which represented 75% of the congregation presented a strong sense of

belonging. Overall, members of the dominant racial group reported having close friends in the

congregation (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013). The study ultimately found dominant racial groups

within multiracial congregations participated more and established relationships within the

church. The study affirmed earlier claims throughout the literature which suggest White racial dominance are ubiquitous throughout social structures in society (Martinez & Dougherty, 2013).

A more recent ethnographic study reported similar findings at a downtown multicultural church (Barron, 2016). Researchers aimed to focus on diversity best practices for White pastors (Barron, 2016). The study was conducted over an 18-month period in 2008 at the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (Barron, 2016). Through semi-structured interviews with lay members researchers focused on strategies that leaders use to foster diversity on all levels of the congregation. Diverse strategies included placing Black men of color in greeter positions to create an image of diversity for new members. Furthermore, the interview responses also suggested attractive men of color were intentionally given visible positions in the church to gain the support of new Black members. Nonetheless, the worship practices have been seen by members of color as less inclusive and more appealing to White members (Barron, 2016).

The study affirmed earlier claims throughout the literature which stated Black pastors are given the autonomy to make influential decisions as long as they refrain from altering worship styles (Barron, 2016). Moreover, Black identity is seen as tolerable to White members when Black culture is kept silent throughout church services (Barron, 2016). Member responses from the study concluded that a multicultural vibe means embracing all aspects of African American religious practices (Barron, 2016). Pastors at Downtown church had specifically prioritized the diverse needs of Black members (Barron, 2016). Efforts to successfully foster diversity have been attributed to allowing Black males to become involved in day-to-day operations. As a result, pastors have used Black men as diverse capital to push their multicultural agenda. (Barron, 2016).

A Diverse Methodology for Church Leadership

The inception of this multi-method research study explored the methods of developing the RLDP (Edwards, 2019). The literature explains how homophily impacts diversity and inclusion efforts for multiracial church pastors (Edwards, 2019). The following study supports earlier claims throughout the literature that suggest the success of multiracial churches are contingent upon the success of their head clergy (Edwards, 2019). Examples of these efforts include, diversifying music genres, recruiting members of different racial backgrounds to occupy visible roles in the church, and developing a mission statement that reflects diverse values (Edwards, 2019).

The initial phase of the study included 123 face-to-face interviews with pastors of racially diverse churches in 12 metropolitan areas across the country (Edwards, 2019). The recruitment efforts of interviewers included targeting diverse neighborhoods where researchers lived. A year after the first phase was completed, the second phase was initiated, which included interviews and surveys from members of racially diverse churches (Edwards, 2019). The criteria for participants meant they belonged to churches where no one racial group made up more than 80% of the church. Two pastors did not want to go on record, which resulted in a sample of 121 pastors (Edwards, 2019). A total of 100 surveys were completed which addressed the church mission statement, leadership characteristics, and hiring practices (Edwards, 2019). The processes used in this study revealed the nuances of collecting data from several different sources can create barriers for researchers in the field (Edwards, 2019).

A similar biographical study was conducted to examine the past experiences of pastors who lead multicultural churches (Okuwobi, 2019). This biographical approach was used to develop formula stories which produced specific outcomes for narrative research (Okuwobi,

2019). Pastors were selected from the RLDP database which included 121 semi-structured interviews (Okuwobi, 2019). Interview questions included:hat was life like for you growing up? What was the racial makeup of your schools growing up? Tell me about this church (Okuwobi, 2019). After interview responses were collected, several themes emerged from the responses (Okuwobi, 2019).

Researchers found that pastors who identified themselves as effective multicultural pastors associated themselves as having a special niche for diversity (Okuwobi, 2019). Moreover, many pastors interviewed shared experiences with racial injustice as a child. As a result, this experience led them to a passionate pursuit to lead multicultural churches (Okuwobi, 2019). Pastors affirmed several claims throughout the literature which suggested multicultural churches provide a platform for racial reconciliation. This aligns with most of the literature produced relative to racial injustice and the role of the church (Okuwobi, 2019).

A thorough review of the literature on managed diversity has shown diversity tactics may be employed differently according to race (Barron, 2016). Emerging themes have suggested White pastors may be more effective at managing diversity (Marti, 2009). These patterns and themes have shown there is a need for more comparative case studies that analyze effective diversity practices between White and Black pastors. The differences between White and Black pastors' approach to diversity may provide a strong sense of direction for qualitative research in multicultural churches.

Chapter Summary

The compelling amount of research in this paper has shown multicultural churches are relatively new but continuously emerging throughout the country (Dougherty & Emerson, 2018). Despite, the rise of multiracial churches in the United States, pastors continue to struggle with

managing diversity, fostering racial equality, and finding common ground in multicultural churches (Edwards, 2021). The evidence-based studies revealed throughout the literature indicate diversity may be more challenging for pastors of color (Edwards, 2019). Moreover, the strategies and practices pastors of color used to gain social capital remain a challenge across several denominations (Munn, 2019). Furthermore, more evidence-based studies are needed to understand the experiences of lay members aiming to become a part of a polarizing faith community.

As the political climate embraces social justice and policy reform, the church community will benefit from social justice activism (Delehanty, 2016). Other practitioners in the field have concluded that systematic and institutional views of racism and the resistance to address racial issues have shaped the church today (Tisby, 2019). Research suggests racial reconciliation has shifted how pastors support social movements within their prospective congregations (Oyakawa, 2019).

The concepts in the literature revealed church leaders of multiracial churches recognize race as a complex stratification of power (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The strategies and tactics pastors adopt to balance the stratification of power are greatly influenced by the intentional efforts of church leaders (Edwards, 2019). More importantly, the literature reports race plays an integral role in identifying the culture and the social tone of the congregation (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The empirical evidence presented has ultimately shown multiracial churches are here to stay, but are not easy to sustain (Edwards, 2014).

Multilingual focus groups may be a unique research method that adds to the understudied body of research. Future longitudinal studies are needed to provide scientific evidence as it relates to the gradual growth for emerging multicultural churches. More biographical studies are

needed to inform the existing body of research relating to multicultural church leadership. The studies throughout the literature frequently pointed to case studies or interviews but they rarely analyzed how congregational growth occurs over time. Case studies and focus groups in predominantly White neighborhoods where multicultural churches are thriving remain understudied in the literature. Hence, the enumerable amount of literature is limited to qualitative studies which lacks experimental evidence for emerging multicultural churches. More research is needed to address the lived experiences of Latino pastors who lead multiracial churches. Furthermore, future research should investigate how perceptions of worship impact the racial demographics of multicultural churches. Studies have indicated that there is a need for a comparative phenomenological study examining the experiences of lay members in diverse churches. Finally, a study comparing an urban multicultural church in contrast to a suburban multicultural church would close the gap in the existing literature.   Chapter 3 will provide details on the research methodology of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Numerous ethnographic studies have been conducted to observe the essence of culture in multicultural churches (Barron, 2016). Some of these studies sought to investigate church culture through the lens of leaders in multicultural churches (Delehanty, 2016). Other studies have analyzed how multiracial churches use racial reconciliation to address racial inequality (Oyakawa, 2016). However, there is limited research that examines the lived experiences of church members in emerging multicultural churches (Edwards, 2019). Earlier studies have been overwhelmingly based on the Religious Leadership and Diversity Project which draws upon pre-existing interview data (Edwards, 2019). Previous studies have focused on the negative experiences of Black pastors managing diversity in multicultural churches (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Therefore, there is a critical need to conduct a comparative phenomenological study based on the perspective of church members in a thriving multicultural church setting. The next section of this paper will discuss how a phenomenological study was conducted in a multicultural church to address the existing gap in the literature.

As pastors implement strategies to diversify their congregations, they are faced with numerous challenges as homogenous traditions persist in traditional church settings (Barron, 2016). Interracial churches have been recognized as spaces where race relations can be prioritized through the diverse experiences of Black and White members (Edwards, 2021). Although the United States has become more multi-ethnic, most churches remain segregated in society (Edwards, 2021). Therefore, the methods used to maintain diversity in multicultural

churches are critical for pastors who are seeking to transition into a multicultural institution (Barron, 2016). This has brought the researcher to the following research questions:

1. How do multicultural church leaders influence race relations among Black and White members?

2. How do these experiences vary in an urban and suburban church setting?

Research Design

The study sought to examine the lived experiences of White and Black members in multicultural churches in an urban and suburban church setting. The study investigated how members evaluated their pastors' strategies to effectively manage racial diversity. Interviews were conducted based on Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological research design. Transcendental phenomenology can be defined as the nature of individual perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that describe human experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This research design was selected because it examines how church members sense, perceive, and become aware of their own experiences in multicultural congregations (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental phenomenological research design was introduced into the study based on Edmund Husserl's scientific contribution to the field of human science (Moustakas, 1994). This research design was used to guide the process and determine the meaning behind church members' lived experiences. The study investigated if these experiences were different for Black members in comparison to White members. Furthermore, Husserl's research on the phenomena of intentionality and the perception of human experience were used to examine the diverse experiences of members in urban and suburban church settings (Moustakas, 1994).

A phenomenological research design often examines experience from a holistic view to disclose the essence of circumstance (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher must set aside

preconceived notions based on their own experiences to maintain a pure sense of consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). This process can be defined as bracketing, which means the researcher leaves behind their thoughts and opinions to arrive at the true essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher bracketed their lived experiences in the church to avoid potential researcher bias. In the last 5 years, the researcher has been a minister and praise team leader at a mid-sized predominantly Black church in an urban setting. The researcher intentionally investigated multicultural churches to eliminate potential bias (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Context

The first part of the study took place outside of Rochester, NY in a multicultural suburban church setting with a diverse representation of leadership. The second part of the study took place in the city of Rochester, NY in a multicultural church with less diversity in leadership. The contrast in the two environments informed the researcher if the phenomena of race relations appeared differently in alternate church environments. In these contexts, the researcher assessed the specific programs and offerings each church provided outside of normal church services. By examining these details, the researcher evaluated if there was a connection between programs and the level of diversity in the congregation. In addition, the various factors that drew each member to the congregation were investigated through participant interviews.

Church A

Church A was led by a Black pastor with over 5 years of pastoring experience and 25 years total in the ministry. The pastor holds a Master of Divinity degree and a doctorate in human resource education. This church operated under an elder board with minimal oversight in day-to-day church operations. The size of the congregation consisted of 75-100 members. The denominational background of the church was Baptist with a functioning board of elders. Church

A was selected due to the increasing growth within the last 3 years and the multicultural makeup of the church. In the past 3 years, the church has experienced exponential growth since the installation of the current pastor. Church A is in one of the most affluent suburban communities in Monroe County, NY. Most members explained their political views were diverse across age, race, and gender. All participants have joined since the installation of the current pastor in 2020. A total of nine interviews were completed at Church A with a total of four Black participants, four White participants, and one participant who identified as non-White. All of the participants at Church A held a college degree with a mixture of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Church B

Church B is led by a White pastor with over 8 years of pastoring experience. He holds a master's degree in secondary education and English. In addition, he holds a master's degree in literature and biblical studies. Church B was selected due to its geographical location in an urban community and the multicultural makeup of the church. Church B does meet the requirement that consists of 80% of the congregation not surpassing one racial group. The size of the congregation was between 50-100 members. The church was affiliated with the Presbyterian church with a functioning board of elders and deacons. Participants in the study had on average been attending services between 5-7 years. The sample at Church B involved a wide range of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Most members explained their political views were diverse across age, race, and gender. A total of seven interviews were completed at Church B. Five participants identified as White females, one participant was identified as non-White and one participant identified as a Black female. Table 3.1 highlights the differences in the mission and vision of each church.

Table 3.1

Church Mission Statements

Church A Mission Statement	Church B Mission Statement
We are diverse, empowered, unified, and sent. We are intentionally multicultural and multigenerational. Welcoming all backgrounds. The spirit of God enables us to operate as kingdom people. We are a part of one body, the body of Christ, filled with the same spirit. We recognize God has brought us together to go do his good work. (Church A, 2024)	"To participate in the spreading of the kingdom of God (…) neighborhood of Rochester through proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ." (Church B, 2024)

Research Participants

The research participants for this study were required to meet the following criterion: (a) attended church at least once a month, (b) attended services for at least 1 year, (c) participants needed to be at least 18 and older to participate in the study, (d) and participant must identify as Black or White. A combination of quota and purposeful sampling was used to ensure participants met the criteria needed for data collection purposes (Adams & Lawrence, 2022). The study aimed to include up to 10 participants at each church site, which resulted in a total of 16 interviews. The age of the participants ranged between 30-75 years to ensure there was a diverse age representation in the given sample. The quota sampling approach ensured there was an even representation of race and gender (Adams & Lawrence, 2022). The researcher conducted two informational sessions with the congregation to explain expectations and interview protocols. At each informational session, a flyer with the researcher's contact information and the purpose of

the study was provided (Appendix A). Participants were given guidance and direction before

they consented to participate in the study (Appendix B). The interviewer did not have pre-

existing relationships with church members. This eliminated potential interview bias (Adams &

Lawrence, 2022). Participants were rewarded for their participation with a $10 gift card. Table

3.2 displays the demographic details of the participants in Church A and Table 3.3 displays the

demographic details of the participants in Church B.

Table 3.2

Demographic Data of Participants- Church A- Suburban Church

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Church Attendance	Length of membership
P1	M	Black	Every Sunday	1 year
P6	F	White	Every	2 years
P7	M	White	Every Sunday	2 years
P10	F	Black	Every Sunday	2 years
P 11	M	Black	Every Sunday	2 years
P 13	M	Black	1x/month	1 year
P 14	M	(non-White)	Every Sunday	3 years
P 15	F	White	Every Sunday	1 year
P16	F	White	Every Sunday	1 year

Table 3.3

Demographic Data of Participants- Church B- Suburban Church

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Church Attendance	Length of membership
P2	F	White	Every Sunday	7 years
P3	F	White	Every Sunday	3 years
P4	F	Black	Every Sunday	8 years
P5	F	White	Every Sunday	8 years
P8	F	(non-White)	Every Sunday	7 years
P9	F	White	Every Sunday	7 years
P12	F	White	Every Sunday	4 years

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Based on Moustakas's (1994) data collection processes the researcher reviewed a

significant amount of research on similar topics to develop an appropriate list of interview

questions. These questions addressed gaps in the literature and provided a basis of criteria that

informed the interview process. A series of eight questions were created to address the research

questions (Appendix C). The first two interview questions included questions to address

participants' denominational backgrounds prior to joining a multicultural church. The next two

questions involved their personal experiences with diversity in their congregation. The last

question involved feedback regarding what suggestions they may have to improve the level of

diversity in their church. Church members' level of engagement was measured based on their

church attendance and the amount of church programs in which they participated.

Procedures Used for Data Collection

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Saint John Fisher University, data

collection procedures took place in an urban and suburban multicultural church over a period of

2 months. After connections were made with eligible participants, the interviews were conducted over the course of 6 weeks via zoom at a mutually agreed upon time. The semi-structured interviews were approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. The interviews were recorded and transcribed via zoom.

Based on Moustakas's (1994) findings the interview approach was developed from the long interview data collection process which included a series of open-ended questions. Furthermore, the researcher developed this process by emphasizing the essence of the experience to the participant. The researcher needed to maintain comfort and rapport with the participant to encourage a comprehensive response. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 church members across two congregations to decipher patterns of phenomena that occur among Black and White members.

Creswell and Poth (2016) suggested the researcher can avoid bias during the data collection process through external audits to assess the accuracy of the extensive notes collected during the interviews. To maintain the validity of the instruments, the researcher took extensive field notes to mitigate inaccuracies during data collection. Effective and consistent coding procedures assisted the researcher with the reliability of data interpretation. The next section of the paper will discuss the procedures the researcher adopted to analyze the data collected.

Procedures Used for Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted, the researcher began the analysis by reviewing and reading transcripts several times. According to Moustakas (1994), The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method should be used in phenomenological research to ensure all aspects of the data are recognized as equally significant. This research method was chosen to ensure the researcher embraced every aspect of the participants' experiences. The process of horizontalization can be

described as the continuous process of discovering meaning (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher used this approach to establish a wide range of code categories to develop an in-depth analysis of semi-structured interviews. After interviews were completed, transcripts were reviewed to analyze emerging codes.

Selective coding can be described as the closing phase of the coding process in which the researcher takes an emerging phenomenon and applies it to relevant categories (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher used A priori coding to establish themes and patterns beforehand based on a theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2021) Some of the central themes were connected to concepts of transformational leadership theory. The following categories were selected to establish the connection between transformational leadership and the experiences of members in multicultural churches: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Bruch & Walter, 2007). This process can also be defined as descriptive coding, which is the process of taking inventory of emerging themes and placing them in specific categories (Saldaña, 2021). These processes assisted the researcher with the interpretation of each member's experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Qualitative researchers have used bracketing to mitigate preconceptions while analyzing the data (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing assisted the researcher with analyzing the content of the transcripts by distinguishing the essence of the participants' experiences from the researcher's own church experience (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Based on the Colaizzi-Keen method, all statements from transcripts were considered relevant (Moustakas, 1994). The next step of the analysis consisted of identifying consistent statements that contributed to larger emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994). After identifying themes, consistent experiences were assigned a coding category. The researcher then assigned verbatim statements into prominent

categories to capture the essence of each experience (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the researcher reflected on key concepts that emerged to assign meaning based on the researcher's own experiences. This can be defined as textural structural descriptions that assist qualitative researchers with categorizing data from transcripts to identify a deeper essence of meaning based on the captured experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Transformational leadership concepts were applied to analyze the experiences of church members.

Chapter Summary

Pastors of multiracial churches continue to face challenges managing diversity in different demographic areas (Edwards, 2021). Research has shown that the indicators of a successful multicultural church are vague and often understudied throughout literature (Barron, 2016). Although previous studies have been conducted based on the Religious Leadership Diversity Project, more studies are needed to examine the lived experiences of church members (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Therefore, the researcher developed a research design to address the salient gaps in the literature.

This comparative phenomenological research approach was used to distinguish the key differences in the lived experiences of members in a suburban and urban church setting. The captured experiences of church members will add to the existing body of research for pastors seeking to cultivate a multicultural church. This research design assisted the researcher in examining the dichotomy of the lived experiences of members in different demographic areas. The outcome of the study will assist pastors aiming to provide an inclusive environment for members in multicultural churches. Concepts of transformational leadership theory will be applied in the next chapter to interpret the data collected in this section of the paper. Chapter 4 provides the findings based on the research methods.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This comparative phenomenological study sought to assess leadership's impact on race relations in multicultural churches in urban and suburban churches. After a thorough review of similar studies, a comparative phenomenological study was selected to address the gap in the literature. The study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of church members in both churches to determine what strategies assisted pastors in improving race relations. This chapter uncovers the themes and patterns disclosed during 16 semi-structured interviews. A total of four themes were identified along with eight subthemes. Interviews revealed the following themes and subsequent categories (a) leadership and racial/political influence: reconciling differences and overcoming racism; (b) multicultural leadership traits: ask, learn, and listen, connecting with community, a shared vision; and (c) getting over preferences, overcoming what's easy, and accepting change; and (d) overcoming the past: past church struggles.

Findings

The research was conducted based on the following research questions:

1. How do multicultural church leaders influence race relations among Black and White members?

2. How do these experiences vary in an urban and suburban setting?

Interview questions explored the participants' experiences related to the research questions. A priori codes were selected based on the concepts of transformational leadership. Northouse (2022) describes the attributes of an effective transformational leader as idealized

influence which are the attitudes and behaviors that are ideal and highly esteemed by followers (Northouse, 2022). Secondly, inspirational motivation is a process in which leaders influence the organization to partake in a shared vision, while also inspiring followers to commit to a collective goal. The third quality is described as intellectual stimulation, which inspires followers to develop new and creative ways to solve organizational problems. The fourth quality is defined as individualized consideration which causes leaders to carefully consider the individual needs of their members. These concepts were presented in the findings from participant interviews. Themes and subthemes were categorized as a result of a priori and open coding. Table 4.1 highlights these themes and subthemes.

Table 4.1

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3
Multicultural leadership traits	Creating a shared vision	Ask, learn, and listen	Connecting community
Leadership and racial political Influence	Overcoming racism	Reconciling differences	
Overcoming what's easy	Getting over preferences	Accepting change	
Overcoming the past	Past church struggles		

Theme 1: Multicultural Leadership Traits

Leaders at both churches exemplified similar qualities that members shared during their interviews. Many of these qualities involved traits from transformational leadership theory.

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Although, the qualities were similar, the idealized traits and influences were esteemed differently in Churches A and B. Findings from the following interviews revealed how certain leadership traits may be more prominent for White pastors in comparison to Black pastors. One of the main transformational leadership traits that became prevalent in the study was inspirational motivation which inspires followers to engage in a shared vision (Northouse, 2022). A total of 13 different codes across both churches acknowledged the specific strategies that compelled the congregation to participate in a shared vision.

  Subtheme 1: Creating A Shared Vision. A subtheme within the theme of multicultural traits was the idea of creating a shared vision. Participants mentioned the importance of this trait. One participant who identified as a White female shared her empowering experience with leadership at Church A. Participant 6 said,

> So I think he's very blessed and a talented pastor. I think his vision and leadership and teaching are probably the things that I see about him, and I really like it. It was the first church in a long time where it had a Black population.

Another member from the same church shared he specifically sought out a multicultural church due to the shared vision for a diverse church. Participant 14, who identified as a non-White male, shared the importance of a shared vision. Participant 14 smiled with admiration and excitement as he described the shared vision of the church. Participant 14 proudly stated that,

> We have a discipleship plan baked into the foundation of the church. That's something that we're hoping to develop and hopefully even straight up put it on the website. You know, like hey this is something that we believe is very important. You know, part of our church mission is to, you know to be diverse. We're diverse, empowered, unified, and sent. We're baking it into the branding and the mission statement of the church and we

put it out there publicly. I think people need to understand we truly want to represent the kingdom of God.

Engaging in a shared vision for other members at Church A may be inspired differently for certain members. Another member at Church A, who identified as a Black male, shared his admiration for the diverse leadership in his church. Participant 1 had been a member of Church A for over 2 years, and he has witnessed how leaders boldly shared their vision and viewpoints from the pulpit. This participant shared his excitement to hear how passionately leaders expressed their views from the pulpit. Participant 1 said,

> And [pastor name] is amazing but [elder name] is what I call the young Malcolm X. He is simply amazing in that, he's not going to back down on what he stands for, and I think the combination between … and how they feel but they always bring it back to the bible. This is not how we might feel but this is how God wants us to feel, and it's amazing to see them work with each other.

Another participant from Church A shared the intentional strategies that leaders foster to encourage a shared vision of diversity. Participant 7 also agreed there were specific strategies in place to communicate the objectives of the church. Participant 7, who identified as a White male, said that,

> The leadership specifically states that's their intention. You know, that's written on the website publicly. The pastors or the elders or anyone speaking, that's a common theme to say who the people are attending in the church. We want to have a multicultural church here, because that's what heaven looks like. It's a better situation that way. So I think they're putting that message out there.

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Based on the findings from several interviews at Church B, participants shared different ways their pastor encouraged a shared vision. The efforts of leaders at Church B expressed a different approach to encourage a shared vision. Several participants asserted the behaviors that supported a collective vision included practicing what you preach. Participant 5 identified as a White female with over 8 years attending services at Church B. She proudly noted that,

I feel like it's kind of part of the water that we swim in is managing race relations because of where we are and kind of what our mission is. So I think there are probably ways that it's being done intentionally, but as a parishioner, I'm kind of like yeah, it's what we do, you know. Got it. (P5)

Other members have expressed the pastor emphasized core values that were centered around faith and community. These values were seen through community engagement efforts and local ministries within the church. Participant 2, who identified as a White female with over 7 years of experience attending services, shared her perception of the church vision. She explained her perspective on the church's vision with passion and admiration. She said,

I think our three core values are Christ-centered, cross, and neighborhood-focused. I think there is definitely more of a focus on the gospel transforming your everyday life right where you are, where you live. But more specifically like a smaller community. But more hyper community, so in your day-to-day interactions with your neighbors and then I think there is this component specifically focusing on cross-cultural ministry and you know trying to embrace that as something that's a part of the gospel. (P2)

Other examples of inspirational motivation for members at Church B were woven throughout the fabric of the sermons on Sunday. One participant shared gratitude and appreciation for the diverse representation in the pastor's sermon. Participant 8, who identified as

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a non-White female, shared an example of the pastor's shared vision in a sermon. Participant 8 described her experience hearing a sermon with shock and amazement. She said,

> So, I think [pastor's name] he regularly reminds us and I think when he preaches it is also very important that he uses references from another pastor. And I don't mean this in a brash way or anything but it's not just an old White man from England or Australia. I mean he's bringing in information from people who are African American. I think that's really important to see that perspective. (P8)

Many of the participants at Church B realized the vision was based on community engagement and outreach. Leaders at Church B were hyper-focused on giving back to support the needs of the underserved in the community; whereas, leaders at Church A stressed the importance of an internal vision to serve the needs of members and become more diversified. Other key differences including strategies to build capacity within the church were executed differently. Leadership at Church A seemed to be dedicated to the spiritual growth of the church. On the contrary, the vision of leaders at Church B was bent toward evangelism efforts.

Subtheme 2: Ask, Learn, and Listen. The most compelling advice shared by over half of the participants in the study across both churches revealed that asking, learning, and listening were the key ingredients to improving race relations for pastors seeking to lead a multicultural church. An in-depth analysis of interviews demonstrated 21 codes reiterating the importance of asking, learning, and listening supported the sustainability of a multicultural church. More importantly, members asserted that listening to other members was a key component of maintaining a multiracial church. Participant 2 from Church B, who identified as a White female, repeatedly expressed the importance of a humble approach and the importance of listening. Participant 2 said,

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The first thing that I think is important is having a posture of humility and trying to listen

from one another. It's like we all have something to learn about someone else's culture

and background and . . . even know how their race affects their life and all these different

things. So, I think that it is reflected in leadership like humility and a desire to listen first

and learn. I think that's the biggest thing, like when challenges come up and being quick

to besides listen but like get into God's word and see how the scriptures speak to things

and be quick to pray.

Another member echoed the same thoughts regarding leaders being open to criticism and

seeking accountability from others. Participant 3, who identified as a White female at Church B,

recognized how leadership should strive to receive feedback to support the continuous

improvement of the ministry. In addition, she passionately expressed the importance of White

pastors aligning themselves with different racial groups. Participant 3 added,

Being willing to continue to learn and be open to critique and deep in the community, not

just surface level but establishing friendships with people of color, people that can call

you out. I think or just speak the truth and be willing to listen to people of color in the

church and also understand their own privilege.

A member attending the same church who identified as a non-White female made similar

comments regarding the importance of leading with a humble listening approach. Participant 8

wholeheartedly believed that leaders should take time to hear from members. Participant 8

shared her experiences with deep concern and conviction. Participant 8 also said,

They have to be humble and they have to surround themselves with accountability and be

willing to listen. But you also have to have this interesting balance that the Lord requires

and at the end of the day we are accountable to him.

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Another participant from the same church, who identified as a White female, expanded on the importance of members listening to each other through thoughtful conversations. This participant has been an active member for over 3 years with limited experience with other racial groups. Participant 9 shared her thoughts with frustration and deep conviction. Participant 9 noted that,

> Can you teach me? Instead of saying I'm not a part of your culture. Can you please teach me? I don't want to come off sounding rude or sounding ignorant because of something I don't know. I love to learn. I'm a learning person and the more I learn the more I can help people and not offend.

Another participant from Church A made parallel comments regarding her experience learning from the diversity at Church A. Participant 15 shared her experiences with deep passion and sincerity. Participant 15, who identified as a White female, mentioned that,

> We have that commonality of knowing that we have that relationship with Christ. So I think the strategies of getting involved and trying to open up and talk with different kinds of people and being willing to listen to what they have to offer from their standpoint or from their cultural background. I think that has helped me grow a lot.

A participant attending Church A, who identified as a White male, echoed the importance of patience and willingness to learn from a diverse congregation. Participant 7 noted that, "Just be patient with people and take time to listen to people." Another participant made similar comments who attended the same church and identified as an African American male. He said, "learn to listen and listen to learn. I think it's important that you know where you're at and you hear what the people say, and you embrace those things that you think will grow the church."

A participant who identified as a White female shared passionate comments regarding pastors aligning themselves with other multicultural pastors and seeking counsel from leaders who have successfully sustained multiracial churches. She highlighted some of the books she read and the best practices used by pastors who lead multicultural churches. Participant 6 shared her comments with a strong passionate tone. She commented with,

> You need to go where it started and that's the beauty of the book, "One Blood" because almost every one of those churches started that way. I mean they became multicultural because they were listening to each other. They were doing different things together, and they asked what was hard, what was difficult. My thing is, I will always make mistakes but what we don't want to do is make the same ones. (P6)

Another member from the same church who identified as a White male emphasized similar experiences regarding humility and learning from the struggles of other pastors. Participant 13 shared her thoughts with conviction and certainty. She said,

> Be open to challenges, be willing to look outside the box when nobody else looks outside the box. Go outside when nobody else is willing to take those chances. Those little chances add up. Be willing to be humbled. If you're wrong, you're wrong. Move forward. Learn those lessons. (P13)

Another participant explained the importance of leadership coming into a multicultural church as a learner before accomplishing anything. Participant 5 shared her thoughts and experiences with raised eyebrows and a strong tone. Participant 5, who identified as a White female, noted that,

> I think they would need to start out as a learner and be led and taught by people who come from different backgrounds than them. Whatever that background may be. I

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definitely feel nervous when becoming multicultural becomes the goal and someone

hasn't walked through with people of different backgrounds.

Many members shared some profound advice for leaders considering leading a

multicultural church. In addition, leaders may lead from a place of experience that may stifle

race relations. Participant 5 adamantly expressed the importance of pastors being intentional

about learning from others. She noted that,

> I think it also takes someone to be intentional about looking at their own biases and their
>
> own background. Not only listening to people of other races and other backgrounds but
>
> really doing the work of their own history, their own cultural history and seeing the
>
> places where they have their own biases. They have to see where they have their own
>
> trigger issues and humbly set those aside. (P5)

Members across both churches seem to provide consistent feedback regarding the

importance of listening to others and initiating thoughtful conversations with members and

leaders who have successfully built a multiracial congregation. Participant 12 from Church B,

who identified as a White female, added to earlier comments regarding the importance of

benchmarking successful multicultural pastors. She shared that,

> I would recommend they have a conversation with a pastor who is shepherding a
>
> multicultural church. At least one pastor to make sure you consider what the different
>
> cultures are that are going to be coming together in the church. Get an awareness or an
>
> understanding of all those different cultures beforehand. (P12)

The strategies that maintained a successful multicultural church for all members

consistently reflected the significance of asking, listening, and learning from members and other

noteworthy leaders in the multicultural church community. Several White participants

continuously shared the importance of learning from each other; whereas, Black participants stressed the importance of leaders learning from their members. The collective essence of member experiences indicated humility and openness was a critical leadership trait that supported cohesion in diverse churches. The efforts of multicultural pastors have been described as thoughtful and intentional with a compassionate consideration for all members. Additionally, asking, learning, and listening seems to have been the driving force to building trusting relationships, regardless of race or geographical location.

Subtheme 3: Connecting with Community. Interviews revealed that developing a sense of community was contextualized differently based on the church. The mission for leaders at Church B was hyper-focused on community engagement, missions, and outreach; whereas, Church A maintained a focus on internal relationships and maintaining diversity in the congregation. The phenomenon of community engagement for White and Black members across different churches came with stark differences. For most of the members at Church B, they mentioned the importance of living and worshiping in the same community. Building a bridge between the community and the church was engrained in the mission and the values of Church B. The mission had inspired members to serve the needs of the surrounding community. One participant, who identified as a Black female, who had been involved in the ministry for almost a decade shared what attracted her to Church B. Participant 4 described her experience with admiration as she explained the church's approach to community relationships. Participant 4 said,

> Our pastor founded [the church outreach center] before the church started and you know that was Christian development with the kids clubs and teen clubs. So specifically doing that in the neighborhood for our neighbors and with engaging families, community meals,

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and then you know, doing mentoring and coming alongside the teens in the community

garden. We have a community garden here where it started out where families in the

neighborhood could adopt a plot and we did that for many years. So, we have events and

things at the community garden as well.

Another participant reiterated the same feelings and passion for community events. Participant 3,

who identified as a White female who had been involved in the same ministry for the past 3

years shared that,

Doing barbeques in the neighborhood is kind of a unique model here. So, I lived in the

neighborhood on . . . for 7 years in my early 20s and I wanted to kind of invest here and

be present. So yeah, through that, had a lot of neighbors that forced me to think about

race which showed me I have privilege and I didn't have to think about that growing up.

Participant 8 echoed the same feelings regarding community connectedness and making

an impact on the neighborhood. Making true connections and ensuring the surrounding

neighborhood thrives alongside the church encourages members to associate with Church B.

Participant shared passionate comments regarding the outreach practices at Church B. Participant

8 said,

[The church outreach center] is closely connected to the [Church B] and they separated

those two functions which was also very telling for me. And there's a big commitment to

the community for folks to stay. I know that they'd been looking for a new building.

There were a lot of questions around how will this impact the community that we are

trying to serve. That to me means that people are really connected and I don't take it

lightly that physically moving your church where you are as human beings, we're

creatures of habit. So, if we are changing our location, what kind of impact is that gonna have?

Although the church demographics have shifted over the past 3-5 years, Church B remains predominantly White with prevailing struggles to reflect the diverse demographics of the community. The inclusive practices of leaders at Church B had created a strong sense of camaraderie for current members. Nonetheless, the church continued to grapple with stagnant diversity. Although the community was being served externally, a large portion of the community failed to connect to Church B during regularly scheduled services. Nonetheless, some members have shared their experiences joining the church after benefiting from community outreach. Participant 9, who identified as a White female, shared how she became involved with the church through community outreach. Participant 9 noted that after receiving support from Church B, she started attending church services. Participant 9 shared her experience with a smile and a heart full of gratitude. Participant 9 noted that,

> The café was just opening across the street from [Church B] and slowly I got in there.
> And then I had my niece and nephews here. And at that point they had some new camps
> or kids club, so I slowly got introduced with everybody there and started volunteering
> with the kids' programs. But for me, it was I needed the help, and I needed the help, and I
> liked the fact they didn't judge you.

Participants from Church B consistently expressed the importance of giving back and restoring the community through outreach. The shared vision of the community had drawn a significant amount of members to stay and serve the congregation. Community efforts for members attending Church B looked quite different than members attending Church A. Pastors

leading services in urban communities may feel a greater obligation to attract members seeking services in the community.

Earlier research indicated that pastors of color who lead multicultural churches are often seen as estranged from their community (Priest & Edwards, 2019). The social inequalities Black pastors face can directly or indirectly impact access to resource-rich networks in suburban communities (Munn, 2019). The alienating journey for multicultural pastors of color has left them with limited access to community partnerships and surrounding resources. The same social challenges were present and apparent for members attending services at Church A. Members explained they developed a sense of belonging and community within the church walls. Members at Church A came from near and far to engage with the congregation. One participant from Church A explained the challenges of partnering with the local community. Participant 13 shared comments with passion and sincere conviction. Participant 13, who identified as a White male who attended services regularly at Church A noted that,

> It's still a new church. It's still developing strategies for the community. And you have to understand that (Church A) is smack dab in the middle of a different kind of community, basically a Whitish community, all very rich in that area. And the community has to understand, that we are not just for them. We are there for a purpose. We are there for a reason, not for our own, not for anybody else's. We are there to give the word of God.

Another participant from Church A described the challenges of making community connections and creating solidarity in your own backyard. Developing community strategies to diversify a suburban church looks entirely different. Participant 14 shared his thoughts with a concerned, frustrating tone. Participant 14, who identified as a non-White male, said that,

There's not enough churches that are just like hey, what can we do? What can we do?

You know just reach out to people in the neighborhood, you know? I'm not saying like,

hey let's go to this place and this place where there's diversity and haul them in. So if

you don't have a diverse neighborhood, question why is that? Why is that going on? And

maybe take up the social justice issue. But also see if you can expand your reach, you

know? All of that is difficult to do. And sometimes it's partnering up with the people that

are already doing the work in places where ethnicities exist that are not like the makeup

of the church.

Community connections for participants at Church A were limited and sought after much

less than for members at Church B. The multicultural mission of Church A was galvanized by a

diverse leadership team that reinforced community inside the church walls. The established

affinity groups within Church A have brought a sense of community between racial groups to

maintain a family-oriented environment. Other themes have emerged to explain how church

leaders influenced race relations among White and Black members.

Theme 2: Leadership and Racial Political Influence

Participants from both churches agreed leadership does have a profound impact on race

relations and the experiences of church members. Pastors addressing racial matters from the

pulpit was a consistent theme in both churches throughout the study. A total of 17 codes were

identified from participants indicating pastors play a vital role in shaping the congregation's

views on racial and political matters. Participant 1, who identified as African American with no

prior experience attending a multicultural suburban church, described how leadership openly

addressed racial matters from the pulpit. Participant 1 shared a surprising experience while

listening to a sermon addressing divisive political matters. He explained that,

One Sunday he talked about Trump, and I thought it was gonna get a little bit heated, because I saw some faces in our church that kind of turned red at some point and eyebrows lifted but he brought it back. Pastor brought it back biblically and after he started talking about politics and some of the transgressions and things we went through with the Pharisees, and how they shunned him, and he really said politics are in the Bible. (P1)

Another participant of color, who attended Church A described hearing a sermon addressing former President Donald Trump. Participant 14 shared comments with raised eyebrows and deep concern. Participant 14 stated that,

Whenever you bring up Donald Trump, like ethnicity and race come up as a result. You know, there's other members of our congregation that support Donald Trump. And it's kind of as a minority, and the things he said and how he refers to us, and just trying to not dissuade them from the vote. When like, that's not our job. We don't want to tell them how to vote. But also, having them consider, you know how he approached minorities, and the things he said, you know calling people thugs, and how he handled the George Floyd era. That was a whole, you know lack of acknowledgement of the pain and the hurt.

The interviews gathered from Church A revealed that multicultural church leaders were more inclined to share political matters and address the polarization of the election from the pulpit. Furthermore, leadership qualities such as intellectual stimulation were a prevailing theme used by church leaders in Church A. Intellectual stimulation can inspire members to overcome division and collectively engage in problem-solving strategies. Racism was an emerging theme as elicited from in-depth interviews.

Subtheme 1: Overcoming Racism. A participant who identified as a White female from Church B explained how her pastor addressed similar concerns from the pulpit, using intellectual stimulation to resolve problems during a racially divided time in our country. This experience was both shocking and inspiring to Participant 3. Participant 3 stated that,

> I would say like during the Black Lives Matter protest, that kind of thing, and some of the different shootings and not just ignoring it but like grieving and lamenting that as a congregation and bring that up in the pulpit. Daniel Prude right in our community and a lot of people were going out and some of us went to those protests.

Participant 9, a White female who attended Church B shared a shocking message she heard from the pulpit. She explained her pastor shifted her image and view of what Jesus looks like in the context of race. Prior to this message, she explained her view of Jesus' racial identity came from a Western European construct she never questioned before. Participant 9 said,

> So the first time I've ever heard, "there ain't no baby White Jesus in the manger" and I was like, say what? The pastor was actually calling it out, that was a White man's way of controlling things. I've never heard anybody ever put it that way. So now I'm like wait a minute. There is no White baby Jesus. So how do White people make a White baby Jesus? And it really makes you stop and think, wait a minute. This is really challenging the whole viewpoint.

Other attributes of an effective transformational leader were present in other interviews. For example, inspirational motivation moves followers to meet high expectations beyond societal norms. Several members embraced open conversations discussing racism and social injustice. Participant 16 shared a surprising moment that caused her to realize the racial injustice that still

exists in society. Participant 16 from Church A, who identified as a White female with no history

of attending multicultural churches made similar comments stating that,

> In February Black History Month, there were quite a few sermons about racial injustice.
>
> And having been through all of the racial tensions of the 60s and early 70s, I knew a lot
>
> about that firsthand and I thought I had a good understanding of what was wrong there.
>
> But it was an eye opener to me because I didn't realize that not much has changed.
>
> Another member from Church A, who identified as a Black male, described his

experience hearing a sermon preached during Black History Month. Participant 1 felt inspired by

the approach the pastor took to a very polarizing topic. Participant 1 stated that,

> I remember when the pastor told me in advance he was going to preach about socialism
>
> and the social gospel, that kind of stuff. Pastor said and some people are not going to like
>
> it. But that's ok. "It's something I have to preach on." And I thought this is the place I
>
> want to be because it's not coming from a worldly perspective but a biblical perspective.

Many participants expressed how they valued the boldness and the bravery of their pastors. A

member from Church B, who identified as a White female, shared her experience of hearing

messages about race referenced in the pulpit. Participant 12 stated that, "He actually made a

comment on Sunday and he said that Jesus does not take sides in culture wars. And I just thought

that was really interesting because I never heard anything like that from the pulpit before" (P12).

In the past 4 years political and racial injustice have infiltrated institutions and leaders are

faced with confronting the polarizing topic of race. Some participants had suggested that not

discussing racial prejudice may be even more divisive than ignoring it entirely. Participant 1,

who identified as a White female, from Church A shared her long history of attending several

multicultural churches. Participant 1 vehemently shared her experience during the early racial protests in 2020. Participant 1 stated that,

> When the George Floyd killing happened, that Sunday the pastor canceled the regular church service and brought in a Black pastor and the two of them had a dialogue and I thought that was great. And I reached a point where I was sick and tired of seeing my White friends at other churches putting up Black Lives Matter on their phones. And I thought, if I see it one more, I don't know what I'm going to do. And I just started writing back things like, are you gonna be there next week, next month, next year?

The combination of experiences at both churches revealed most members valued a pastor who could challenge racism with transparency and candor. Regardless of race or geographical location members were attracted to leaders who embraced the challenges of race and politics in a multicultural setting. It is also important to note, that members seemed to trust leaders who confronted racial matters through a biblical lens.

Subtheme 2: Reconciling Differences. Many members expressed the importance of creating unity, a sense of belonging, and fostering community in the congregation. Research suggests this can be more challenging for leaders in multicultural churches (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). More importantly, previous research indicates that pastors of color experience more challenges reconciling differences among White and Black members (Edwards, 2019). For Church A, reconciling differences and removing racial hierarchical structures had been successful for the senior pastor in a suburban predominantly White community. Several members have come forward to disclose their firsthand experience with racial reconciliation.

Racial reconciliation can be defined as the resolution between two racial groups through shared faith, where unity is encouraged and political differences are avoided (Oyakawa, (2019).

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Based on several interviews from participants, the actions taken to create unity and belonging were executed differently in an urban and suburban church setting.

A member from Church B shared her experience with leadership addressing the polarizing topic of political and racial injustice from the pulpit. Participant 5, who had been a member at Church B for almost 8 years shared her experience hearing leadership address racial injustice and politics during a Sunday sermon. Participant 5 described her experience with admiration and deep respect for her pastor. Participant 5, who identified as a White female, stated that,

> A time I can think of in particular, which is a dated example, but it was a big one, was during the first [President] Trump election. Racial justice was a big issue around that time. It's always racial justice of course a big issue, but it was more prominent as people were being abused in the culture around us. What was spoken of in church was a very balanced, very theological perspective which is to say, you know, maybe you land on this side of the line but we need to find where Jesus is, and we all need to come together and have conversations around race and justice issues, even if we land on different side of political line.

A participant, who attends Church A, who identified as a White male, shared his experience hearing leadership address differences among Black and White members. Participant 7 stated that,

> Some leaders make statements that may help people in their own interactions. One Sunday the pastor addressed the entire congregation to help guide interactions with people from different backgrounds. He said "Maybe don't point out that someone is playing a reggae song and that it's from their homeland."

Another participant from Church A, who identified as a Black male, had similar experiences with leadership and racial reconciliation. Managing racial differences may be challenging for some leaders in different institutions, but members at Church A respected how leadership handled racial matters. Participant 11 reacted to his pastor addressing racial differences and cultural expressions from the pulpit. He said,

> We want to be together as one. There's diversity here and because someone is different or sings different, or whatever their differences are, we're gonna celebrate that and it doesn't make it wrong or right. And it was basically almost like, pastor didn't say it but without saying it. If you don't like it you can cross the Golden Gate Bridge. (P11)

A member from Church B expressed difficulties reconciling racial differences. She shared her interest in understanding other people's diverse experiences in a faith setting. Participant 9, who identified as a White female, explained why some of these conversations were still difficult inside the church walls. She said, "We can't keep apologizing. Start teaching, why was this offensive to you? Why did that trigger you and call it out?" (P9).

Other strategies to reconcile differences and create unity were discovered through participants attending Church B. Church B was located in a predominantly Black neighborhood with at least 80% White members. Members who attended Church B described feeling attracted to the strong sense of community and relationship building opportunities with neighbors. Church B aimed to strengthen connections with local residents to encourage a multicultural church environment. Nonetheless, members attending Church B saw the struggle creating a sense of belonging for Black members. A participant attending Church B explained the struggle to identify volunteers that mirrored the community they served. Participant 2, who identified as a White female with over 7 years of experience at Church B said that,

We're trying to figure out the volunteer situation and making sure the kids have role

models and people they can look up to. People they see regularly in their lives and in the

neighborhood who they can identify with, who are also Christian role models.

Another member from Church B who identified as non-White, shared similar challenges.

Participant 8 explained this experience with hesitation and uneasy emotions. Participant 8 said,

I'm thinking of a particular conversation that I had with someone where their notion or

concept was, we weren't invited to the neighborhood. So, you have to think about that,

because I've heard that before from certain minority communities. Particularly, African

American communities is that it's kind of like you have these White people and then they

come into the neighborhood and then they help you over the weekend, and then they

leave. That's like nasty. It's like their soothing themselves. They've checked off a little

box.

Reconciling differences in the community may be a different set of challenges for

multicultural churches in an urban setting. Research on White humanitarianism suggests that

charity efforts did not support Black communities, however, it soothed the conscience of White

humanitarians seeking to ameliorate racial power dynamics while securing their superior image

in society (Pallister-Wilkins, 2021). Predominantly White churches in an urban community

seeking to support diverse communities were confronted with a White savior complex. The

concerted efforts of White and Black members assisting the community may alleviate the

perception of disingenuous outreach. Participant 2 shared an experience with hesitation and

discomfort. Participant 2 expressed other challenges in reconciling differences at Church B. She

said,

I don't know too many of the details, but I know maybe a couple of years ago we had a group specifically for Black women in the church to get together and kind of share experiences, and process things together. But it did become tricky and became more like separated from the church instead of solving things together. (P2)

One participant who also attended Church B for almost a decade described some strategies leadership used to reconcile racial differences. These strategies can be linked to inspirational motivation which moves followers to engage in a common goal or shared vision (Northouse, 2022). Participant 4, who identified as a Black female, shared she was inspired by the inclusive practices the pastor used during his sermons. She stated that,

I see intentionality, you know, one thing that I really love and what helps me feel like I belong is how the pastor uses PowerPoint slides with quotes of different people. He reads and he studies African Americans and Asian Women. And to me that's a powerful thing because in churches I've been in before, it's always the same White guys, old White guys, current White guys but it's always White, White guys.

Reconciling differences at Church A for White and Black members in the last 2 years had been a consistent theme for several participants. Many members have shared, they had seen the church grow immediately following the installation of the current pastor. According to several members, strategies to improve race relations in a suburban church with close to 65% White members was slightly different. Participant 6 from Church A, who identified as a White female, adamantly expressed her responsibility to connect with other Black members to build a bridge and close the racial divide. Participant 6 shared her thoughts with a deep passionate tone. Participant 6 stated that,

I think for Whites, we really have to make sure we are not relying on our only Black

friend and make sure that we're not asking them every question about what's it like to be

Black? We should actually be going and doing some research and reading some books

that help you understand it. Or why don't you take a class at a college, because these

topics are now being taught. So I think White folks have to recognize we have a huge

responsibility to change our behavior.

A participant from Church B, who identified as a White female, made similar comments

about the intentionality of engaging Black members in the congregation. Participant 3 said,

I've been there when it looked more mixed in terms of demographics, and it's changed

since COVID-19 but I think right now, you know, how do you keep Black folks in our

church and like have inclusion. If we can have diversity and not have inclusion they may

not be feeling known and appreciated or seen, so I don't know. So I think, when you're

talking about a White pastor, we have to make sure we have strategies in place to make

sure they feel a part apart of our community and they feel their desires and their culture

are influenced in the service.

The overwhelming amount of experiences across both churches indicated racial

reconciliation in a multicultural church does not organically occur. Members in an urban and

suburban church reiterated leaders should confront racial tensions. The intentional efforts of

leaders make an indelible impact on racial differences in multicultural churches. Confronting

racial tensions with tactful dialogue on and off the pulpit can ameliorate race relations and build

trust among White and Black members. Interviews also revealed candid conversations build trust

and transparency among leaders and the congregation.

Theme 3: Overcoming What's Easy

Interviews analyzed throughout the study stressed the significance of stepping outside of the norm to improve race relations and move toward sustainable change. More than half of the participants from both churches passionately mentioned diversity was not easy in any institution. Nonetheless, a tactful approach from leaders can ameliorate the tension between different racial groups. Subthemes were identified as (a) getting over preferences, and (b) accepting change.

Participants shared the essence of improving race relations was not an easy task. Nonetheless, intentional strategic efforts were critical to ensure all racial groups had a sense of belonging. Participant 10, who identified as a Black female who had attended services for at least 2 years at Church A, shared some of her experiences witnessing the challenges that leaders faced. Participant 10 shared her thoughts with a serious, passionate tone. She noted that,

When you have seen the catastrophes of someone getting killed and you see a situation in the news but it's also being addressed here. In the past they talked about it. I don't think it's been shunned away but the pastor will take them on in a difficult way. (P10)

Another member at the same church shared the societal challenges pastors faced when addressing racial issues from the pulpit. Participant 13, who identified as a White male, made similar comments. He said "If you look at what's happening right now in the culture today, it's very difficult for not even believers. It's just people don't want to be interacting with one another." Multicultural faith leaders play an integral role in managing the perceptions of race and addressing racial conflicts. Other participants recognized the hardships multicultural leaders face while managing internal and external conflict.

Other participants have expressed the obstacles of managing racial differences.

Participant 9 expressed her frustration confronting racial conflict. She shared some of the discomfort she experienced addressing racial matters and how often her motives were misconstrued. Participant 9 from Church B, who identified as a White female, added that,

> New things today have made it challenging in all aspects because it feels like if we try to go one way then we get told we're overemphasizing and you're trying to make yourself look good. For me it's not the lack of caring, it's because we care so much that we want to encompass everybody's upbringing and celebrating everybody where they're at.

> Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a policy implemented in institutions across various institutions. The church is not exempt from inclusive practices. Pastors of color are charged with confronting the complexities of race, gender, and the diversity of social and political views. Other participants from Church B agreed that managing race relations comes with challenges. Participant 5, who identified as a White female, noted that,

> So, I think everyone felt like, this is really hard. This is really hard stuff. Racial justice is always difficult and we always have to acknowledge that my culture, where I come from and my background might rub you the wrong way sometimes in vice-versa.

Participant 14 from Church A, who identified as a non-White male, made parallel comments about the prevailing challenges multiracial churches face. Participant 14 shared his thoughts with a serious, frustrating tone. He said,

> The reason that churches are not diverse is because it's an appeasement of the flesh. it's easy, it's easier. We like easy. I would challenge them, and too many churches embrace easy when it comes to people management and who are the members of the congregation they can easier get along with. That's the name of the game, you're appeasing the flesh

with your lack of diversity. It's easier for a White person to get along with another White person with a similar background (P14).

Another participant from Church B echoed similar perspectives relating to overcoming what's easy. Participant 4, who identified as a Black female, noted that,

It's hard, It's hard work. It has to be something that, you know, you know and believe is good. I think it's good to not always be with all the same people, because that's not the kingdom of God you know, every tribe, tongue, and nation. And I think we're really missing out if we're just hanging out with everyone that's like us.

Participant 8 from Church B agreed with these statements concerning embracing what's easy. Participant 8, who identified as a non-White female, shared that, "It's really hard to make people learn. I always say people are like water, they just want to flow downhill." Many participants shared the complexities of managing diversity in multicultural churches. Most of them had reiterated the importance of facing the challenges of diversity to embrace a new experience. Participant 14 insisted on the importance of leadership influencing diversity by encouraging members to overlook the challenges of racial conflict. Participant 14, who assisted the pastor with diverse initiatives, noted that,

We're making it known, if you don't like talking about diversity you are going to struggle here but we hope that you stay because we believe that you will learn some things that are really valuable and important to your spiritual walk.

Participant 12 from Church B made recommendations for pastors seeking to alleviate some of the impending conflict that existed in multicultural spaces. Participant 12 insisted that pastors be prepared to address conflict. Participant 12, who identified as a White female, noted that,

There's going to be conflict whether you choose to see it or not. You have to be prepared

for that and there have to be things put in place to deal with the conflict because it's

going to happen. Anytime you have a diverse group of people together in the same place

it's going to be tough.

The compounding statements from both churches reminded pastors that conflict and

difficult circumstances were inevitable. Many members shared the importance of confronting the

difficult side of leading a multicultural church. Several members recommended leaders should

face these obstacles rather than overseeing an easier homogenous church. Members also shared

the importance of embracing growing pains to inspire racial reconciliation.

Subtheme 1: Getting Over Preferences. Members from both churches repeatedly

stressed the importance of getting over your preferences in pursuit of diversity. The interviews

also revealed members from both churches recognized the importance of relinquishing their

personal preferences to improve race relations. Before attending services at multicultural

churches, several members had shared past experiences attending a homogenous church.

Participant 6, who identified as a White female, shared that, "When you add marginalized people

into your arena, into your church, into your group or whatever you do and you get diversity of

opinions and diversity of thinking." For participant 6, embracing diversity was the key ingredient

to overcoming what was easy and getting over your preferences.

Participant 1 from Church A, who identified as a Black male, shared his experiences

coming out of his comfort zone and experiencing something unfamiliar at Church A. Participant

1 seemed to be surprised by his ability to overcome his preferences and join a multicultural

church. Participant 1 said,

I'm in a place that's foreign. I drive, I drive and I don't wanna say I drive from nowhere

in the hood but I drive by houses that are worth 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 1.2 million…. I drive and I

look at these houses and I look at all these churches and it takes me 20, 30 minutes to get

to church and every time I get to [church] I feel welcome.

It is clear, members at both churches who are well adjusted to change will benefit more

from the diversity multicultural churches offer. More participants had shared similar experiences

overcoming their preferences. Participant 5 from Church B, who identified as a White female,

made similar comments. She noted that,

It takes work and it takes setting aside, even for me, my own preferences even as far as

church start time. I'm an early riser. I would rather be at church by nine and be home by

11. But that just doesn't work for most of the people around me. It's such a silly example

but I can go to church at 11 because that's what's better for the people around me and it

takes everybody kind of figuring out what those things are and doing the work to be

unified on things. (P5)

Participants from both churches agreed multicultural churches thrive when members

overcome their own preferences and let go of the innate habit of embracing what's easy. Based

on over 12 interviews, participants realized the importance of creating unity through the

intentional acceptance of racial differences. Compelling evidence from participants indicated that

leaders should recognize the overwhelming challenges members faced attending diverse

churches. As everyone collectively takes on these challenges, the church can experience

cohesion and mutual understanding.

Subtheme 2: Accepting Change. A variety of participants shared feelings of anxiety

about leaving their comfortable church environment and attending a multiracial congregation.

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One participant, who identified as a Black male, recalled his experience as he considered

embarking on a new church journey. Participant 11 from Church A said,

> So, we attended [Church A] and we walk through the door and the sisters greeted us with
>
> a hug as soon as we walked through the door. And I said I think this is the place, and my
>
> wife was like, no I don't think so, and I said let's give it a while. But then just before I
>
> got there, listening to some things he preached online. I was like you know what I think
>
> he's real about what he's saying, you know, talking about it, not just some new thing to
>
> say.

Another participant shared his hesitation in adjusting to the change at Church A.

Participant 1 giggled while sharing his challenges adjusting to a brand new music style at Church

A,

> I'm actually very excited, especially coming from someone who was considering going
>
> back to a traditional Black church because of the music department. My only reason for
>
> going to a church is because of the music department? [giggles] . . . it's not all about that.

Both Participants 1 and 11 had been members at Church A for a similar period of time

with no prior experience in a multicultural church. In addition, their decision to join stemmed

from their connection to the idealized influence that came with church leadership. Accepting

change came with a high degree of admiration for the values, perspectives, and character that

leadership displayed. Another participant, who identified as a White female, shared parallel

experiences. Accepting change at Church B took time and adaptability. Nonetheless, they agreed

the change came with a high degree of respect from church leaders. Participant 12, who

identified as a White female, recalled her experience adjusting to Church B. She shared that,

My experience at (Church B) is completely different. Unlike any other church I have

attended. I mean, you gotta understand that I am used to attending basically all White

churches and (Church B) is not that. So, it took me a minute to really feel comfortable

with that. (P12)

Other members at Church B expressed why they decided to join and embark on a new church

journey. Participant 8 described her experience with pride and excitement for the leadership at

Church B. Participant 8, who identified as a non-White female from Church B, shared that,

The idea that I can approach leadership and say something and they're really going to

consider it and not just say "Let me think about it." No, they actually engage in a

conversation because somebody can tell me that they're gonna think about it. And then

they file it in their circular file, right? But you're really actually talking to me about it and

then I actually see that you're acting on it. That's different.

Participants at both churches reiterated the importance of pastors leading the effort

toward change. Implementing change effectively comes with idealized influence which

thoughtfully considers how actions may individually impact the organization.

Theme 4: Overcoming the Past

Members from both churches shared past church struggles before attending their church.

Past struggles led them on a path to pursue all the possibilities at a multicultural church.

Their unique journey propelled them to trust the leadership they found at their prospective

churches. One participant from Church A shared their experiences which led them to Church A.

Participant 11, vehemently expressed his reasons for selecting his current church. His prior

experiences attending smaller predominantly Black churches came with pressure to raise money

to build the church. The participant stressed the importance of becoming a part of a sustainable

church free of financial limitations. He shared the pivotal moment that caused him to consider trying something new. He said,

> If you told me I was going to be in a church in [a suburban area], I was like no!! I'm not being into some little White church in a [suburban area]. No, unless the Lord says, this is where I want you. So, I was like no, I don't want to be in some small, tiny church in the city either because I'm not with selling seven fish dinners and chicken. Been there and done that before. The church now is sustained and we don't have to worry about money. (P11)

Subtheme 1: Past Church Struggles. Participant 11 shared his decision to join Church A stemmed from the financial stability and security in leadership at Church A. Every participant embarked on a separate journey that led them to consider something completely different from their past experiences. Other participants from the same church recalled their past church experiences as extreme and unwelcoming. Participant 6, who identified as a White female, mentioned a time she attended a service where anti-abortion activists expressed their views in the presence of children. Participant 6 shared an uncomfortable experience attending a church with extreme views. She said,

> I just felt like it was an extreme. I'll listen to you, but we don't need to do the extremes. I guess I felt that was sort of an extreme. So, I tried another church and then ended up at (Church A). Then when the pastor was part-time while I was there too and I like that the pastor can deliver messages without the extreme. (P6)

Other members from Church A recalled their past church struggles with church leaders. Participant 14 shared some issues with prejudice while serving in the ministry. Participant 14

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described an experience with raised eyebrows and discomfort. Participant 14 , a non-White male, shared that,

> That was an eye-opening experience because my wife and I went in with the expectation of like, yeah you know, these are our brothers in Christ. It's not a diverse church. There's only one Black family here and one Hispanic family. And we kind of had this like, yeah no problem, you know it'll grow. I don't know why they're not diverse but we liked what's coming from the pulpit. We experienced prejudices there and we tried to stick it out for like 18 months. But there was opposition because of our denominational background and they came at us because we were charismatic and Pentecostal. It was crazy.

> Participant 14 passionately recalled past prejudice and discrimination led them to partake in a very different journey where acceptance and inclusion were engrained in the mission of the church. Members at Church B shared similar comments regarding the lack of acceptance at previous churches. Participant 9, who identified as a White female, shared that,

> This is my first church I ever heard somebody say, look, we're all sinners, just like you. We're not Jesus Christ. We're gonna fail you. We can't always be there, that to me was so refreshing to hear, like, not another empty promise. That really intrigued me enough to come to the church.

Another participant shared some past experiences that were not favorable while considering a church home. Participant 16 travels almost 30 miles to visit Church A each Sunday. Participant 16, who attends Church A and identified as a White female noted that,

The leadership is very humble. The pastor is a humble, kind man who welcomes you

right away. When I'd visited other churches, I felt invisible. Sometimes I never even saw

the pastor and sometimes people were not friendly. But here everybody is welcoming.

These participants agreed leaders who lead by example and live out their values are

highly esteemed by followers. Overcoming the past brought these participants to congregations

where honesty and integrity were executed by faith leaders. Furthermore, these leadership traits

were identified in both churches before a decision to join was made.

The Comparative Analysis

From a comparative perspective, the differences between the suburban church and the

urban church were surprisingly minuscule. Before the study, the hypothesis presumed that

member experiences would have vast differences. Contrary to the hypothesis, members at both

churches reported they idealized similar characteristics in their leaders. Members at both

churches preferred the charismatic traits of a transformational leader. In addition, the study

revealed that regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status, participants agreed humility,

approachability, and intentionality were favorable leadership characteristics. Despite leaders

coming from different racial backgrounds, their perspectives on leadership were strikingly

similar. The differences in leadership styles as it relates to race relations were also minimal.

The primary differences for both churches involved the relationship with the surrounding

community. It was evident leaders at Church B fulfilled the church mission to serve the

community through outreach programs. Unlike Church B, at Church A there were no systems in

place for members to connect with nearby organizations. There were no community serving

programs for external organizations at Church A. Despite, vast differences in their approach to

community, both pastors shared similar opinions on social and racial injustice.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this comparative study was to investigate how leaders impact race relations through the lens of church members in a suburban and urban church setting. This phenomenological research design explored the experiences of church members to determine if members reported a different experience based on leadership styles and geographical location. This comparative phenomenological study revealed the differences across both churches were minimal. Interviews at both churches have shown members had similar experiences regardless of race, gender, or geographical location. The data from 16 participants were analyzed to address the prescribed research questions.

Research Question 1 asked: how do multicultural church leaders influence race relations among Black and White members? The data collected and analyzed from participants revealed that leaders had a profound influence on the social, and political landscape in their churches. Church A was coded as a suburban church and Church B was coded as the urban church. Members from both churches agreed racial matters should be addressed to encourage racial reconciliation. Furthermore, participants agreed church leaders had the power to manage differences while also creating cohesion among White and Black members. In addition, participants strongly agreed that reconciling differences played a vital role in managing race relations. It is also important to note that confronting polarizing topics such as racial justice was admired and highly respected by members.

Several participants explained that racism in society should not be ignored from the pulpit. Pastors who exemplified boldness and bravery in discussing social justice were highly regarded by many members.

A compelling amount of themes revealed that consistent leadership traits include humility and approachability. Leaders who were willing to ask, learn, and listen to foster cohesion were highly respected by members at both churches. Leadership who could engage in difficult discussions about race and learn from other people's experiences were consistently recognized as having a favorable leadership trait. Other themes were identified and expressed differently based on the church location.

Research Question 2 asked: how do these experiences vary in an urban and suburban church setting? A multitude of responses revealed that community connection occurs differently for pastors leading churches in an urban and suburban church setting. Members attending Church B stressed the importance of community engagement and neighborhood outreach. Many members joined Church B for the sole purpose of supporting the outreach ministry. In addition, members who received services from outreach became involved after benefiting from outreach. On the contrary, members attending Church A defined community as an internal focus to sustain the growth of the church. In the past few years, Church A has experienced exponential growth in the area of diversity under the leadership of the current pastor. As earlier research indicated, Black pastors face different challenges in partnering with resource-rich communities.

A significant number of interviews revealed that asking, learning, and listening were the primary drivers for improving race relations among Black and White members. Codes in the study disclosed that members were more engaged where there was a high degree of humility, intentionality, and approachability by leaders. This was a distinct theme across both churches from Black and White members. Participants shared consistent advice for leaders seeking to build a multicultural church. The traits from transformational leadership revealed that leaders

who communicated high expectations and engaged members in a shared vision drove the success of multicultural churches.

A significant amount of interviews also revealed that sustaining a multicultural church was not an easy task. Members had repeatedly stated that faith leaders should consider these challenges before planting a multicultural church. The feedback from interviews expressed the importance of building relationships across racial lines and creating a safe space for members to engage in difficult dialogue.

Other prevalent themes included members embracing change by overcoming past church struggles. Members who attended multicultural churches attributed personal and spiritual growth due to their association with diverse communities. The essence of their experience disclosed that a sense of belonging and a welcoming environment added to the success of a multicultural church environment. Leaders who established a shared vision to support a culture of belonging and inclusion made an indelible impact on the choices of members to join the church. Recommendations and future research implications will be presented in Chapter 5. These recommendations will be presented as a result of the findings in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

      This comparative phenomenological research study was conducted to investigate the experiences of members in urban and church settings. The data collected in this study revealed that pastors play an integral role in managing race relations, regardless of race or geographical location. The strategies identified by members have consistently reported that pastors who lead multicultural churches should be intentional and lead with the right motives. The concept of building relationships and establishing trust has been strongly echoed by participants in the study. Despite very different geographical locations, members across both churches shared similar experiences and opinions of church leaders. The fragility of race and political preferences sparked a compelling conversation relating to the importance of leaders confronting topics from the pulpit.

Implications of Findings-Leadership Differences

      Earlier research indicated that Black pastors struggle to find equal access to resources to improve the sustainability of multicultural churches. The study revealed White pastors in urban communities tend to support the surrounding community. The study was consistent with earlier research suggesting that White pastors have more access to community outreach resources. One of the main differences across both churches revealed that White and Black pastors have different priorities as it relates to community outreach. The White pastor at Church B leading a church in a predominantly Black community emphasized the importance of outreach; whereas, the Black pastor leading a suburban church did not share a vision or focus on the surrounding

community. Contrary to earlier research, the study demonstrated that Black pastors in a suburban community can have sustainable success leading multicultural churches (Edwards, 2014).

The existing body of research has determined that social injustice is often avoided by pastors in multicultural churches and racial reconciliation is more prominent (Delehanty, 2016). The racial reconciliation framework suggests that racial reconciliation emphasizes the importance of community and forgiveness for past racial injustice (Oyakawa, 2019). Previous studies have shown leaders in most churches do not address polarizing topics such as race and politics (Delehanty, 2016). Contrary to earlier research, the study revealed that both pastors lead more from a social justice framework. The social justice framework often confronts racial injustice and encourages open dialogue in institutions (Oyakawa, 2019). In addition, the study revealed that participants highly respect leaders who address racial matters from a biblical perspective. The bravery and boldness of both pastors' abilities to reframe their members' attitudes regarding race was a prevailing theme at both churches.

Race and politics can be one of the most divisive topics from any platform. Nonetheless, the study revealed that church leaders should not avoid these topics. The intersection of race, religion, and politics is often divisive in any institution. Nonetheless, church leaders and members must confront political conflict to ameliorate racial and political division. The intersection of faith and politics are salient in society due to the founding values of the United States (Kidd, 2019). Moreover, Christian doctrine shaped America's political landscape due to the strong influence of religion during the American Revolution (Kidd, 2019). Church and politics may not mix in most institutions; however, political beliefs are often aligned with religious values.

Professor Glaude from Princeton University provides context to the discomfort of addressing race and politics through shared faith (Edwards, 2021). Furthermore, Glaude emphasizes the importance of establishing a safe space to discuss the nuance of race and politics from the pulpit. More importantly, pastors should leverage their influence to discuss racial injustice and bridge racial gaps from a biblical perspective (Edwards, 2021.)

As presidential elections are underway faith leaders are faced with the moral responsibility of addressing complex societal issues from the pulpit. Although prior research has suggested these topics are taboo, the study revealed that members expect and welcome pastors to weigh in on these topics. Nonetheless, it is recommended pastors enforce the separation between church and state when referencing political candidates (Schwartz & Priest, 2022). It is also important to note that leaders should avoid an authoritarian approach and carefully use their influence to foster unity and collaboration (Castle, 2017).

The study revealed that the geographical location of a church does not make a significant difference in the experiences of members. Regardless of race, the data revealed members value consistent leadership traits. The traits of a transformational leader were highly esteemed by both churches. This finding revealed that leaders who show integrity and moral character are idealized by their followers (Northouse, 2022). Other transformational leader qualities include inspirational motivation, which encourages members to partake in a collective vision (Northouse, 2022).

The most surprising finding from the study revealed that geographical location does not determine the racial makeup of the church. For example, Church A is located in a suburban area in a predominantly White community. The racial composition of the church is 60% White and 40% Black. In addition, proximity did not influence members' decisions to join the church. In

fact, most of the participants did not live in the surrounding area of the church. Members who decided to join the church became affiliated due to their connection to leadership and the welcoming environment of the church.

Study Limitations

Ideally, the study would have included a balanced representation of age, race, and gender. Other limitations include a limited number of men in both churches. The participants in Church B were limited to only women, which provided a narrow perspective. Furthermore, both pastors in the study seem to have a strong focus on social justice, which may have resulted in limited differences between the two churches. There was also a limited number of Black participants in the study at Church B. Although the study focused on Black and White perspectives, the study could have benefited from the experiences of Latinx members.

It is abundantly clear that members honor and respect leaders who will not only listen to their concerns but follow up with actionable steps to improve processes. As many members have mentioned throughout the study, leaders must initiate dialogue with their members and seek out ways to create a sense of belonging. Research suggests the racial divide can be removed when leaders assist members to reframe and redirect their past experiences with racism, discrimination, and prejudice (Edwards, 2021). Finally, leaders should strategically organize forums for their congregation to listen to the collective needs of the church.

Implications for Leadership Theory

The evidence collected from the study was analyzed through the lens of transformational leadership theory. Research suggests that the qualities of a transformational leader are the driving force behind leading a successful multicultural church. The findings of the study were aligned with earlier claims stating that transformational leadership qualities are critical to fostering

growth and cohesion through intentional relationship building (Scott & Klein, 2022).

Transformational leadership traits include idealized influence, which means leaders exhibit

moral character and act as role models for their members. More specifically, these are traits

members perceive to be admirable and well respected. Other key traits include inspirational

motivation, which encourages followers to engage in a shared vision. Intellectual motivation

encourages members to create new ways to engage in problem-solving strategies. Finally,

idealized consideration is a process in which leaders carefully listen to the individual needs of

their members. Based on existing research on transformational leadership theory several

strategies have been developed.

Recommendations

There are numerous recommendations based on the findings of this research study. These

include recommendations for faith leaders, suburban multicultural churches, urban multicultural

churches, new pastors, and church members. Finally, recommendations for future research are

provided. Additionally, Table 5.1 highlights various strategies and action items that leadership

can undertake to incorporate effective transformational leadership steps.

These action steps can further enhance pastors in growing their churches and assisting their

members in participating in the vision of the church. Addressing sensitive topics and helping to

educate their members will help their members deal with racial opposition.

Table 5.1

Transformational Leadership Strategies

Transformational Leadership Trait	Action Items
Idealized Influence	• Leaders can engage in cultural sensitivity workshops • Establish ongoing meet-and-greet opportunities for new members and conduct open house events with the community. • Leaders can guide open and transparent discussions to give members an opportunity to learn from their character and establish trust.
Inspirational Motivation	• Leaders should share their mission and vision with the church at regularly scheduled meetings. • Leaders should include the vision in writing in different areas throughout the church • Leaders should educate new members on the shared vision and mission of the church
Intellectual Stimulation	• Leaders should address social injustice from the pulpit • Leaders can educate and train their members to overcome implicit racial bias through workshops and cultural sensitivity training • As racial conflict arises leaders should promptly address the concerns openly with the congregation
Individualized Consideration	• Leaders should survey the congregation to receive regular anonymous feedback from members • Leaders should meet with members one-on-one to actively listen to their concerns and provide steps to improve church processes. • Leaders should strategically develop relationships with members at regularly scheduled retreats and outings to create common ground and build trust.

Recommendations for Faith Leaders

The findings from the study revealed that leaders play an integral role in managing racial conflict and shaping the perceptions of their members. Multicultural leaders can provide a safe platform for members to engage in thoughtful conversations about racism, social injustice, and prejudice. Furthermore, an overwhelming number of participants believe it is everyone's

responsibility to learn from everyone's unique experiences to unlearn our prejudice and implicit biases. Earlier research has shown collective action through community organizing is an effective platform that promotes cohesion and ameliorates racial division (Delehanty, 2016). Through community activism, leaders can ask, learn, and listen from members inside and outside of the church community. More importantly, community activism can establish greater bonds with the surrounding community and potentially grow the church.

Recommendations for Leadership in Multicultural Suburban Churches

Based on the evidence from participants in Church A, it is clear pastors in suburban areas should place a stronger focus on community engagement to build a network of resources for the congregation. Suburban churches can build momentum from the resource rich networks in their community. These networks can be utilized to promote the diversity and the growth of the congregation. Community allies and neighboring churches can help the church fundraise and expand the ministry (Munn, 2019). As earlier research indicated, finding a seat at the table can be cumbersome for pastors of color (Munn, 2019). Nonetheless, community connections can close the gap between the church and the community by establishing trust and meaningful engagement. Other scholars describe combining diverse resources can improve economic impact when the sum of everyone is invited to the table (McGhee, 2022)

Recommendations for Leadership in Urban Multicultural Churches

Based on participant experiences at Church B, members may seek urban churches to intentionally connect with the surrounding community. Members situated in an urban area described their motivation to attend services because of the leadership's strong focus on community connections. The study also revealed White pastors leading urban churches may be challenged with sustainable diversity. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that leaders

intentionally partner with Black organizations to promote the diversity and cultural awareness of the church. Several members shared the importance of diverse partnerships to bridge the gap across racial lines. More importantly, leaders should work to build stronger relationships with residents and move beyond performative outreach. Lupton (2011) noted that "When we respond to a chronic need as though it was a crisis, we can present toxic results: dependency, deception, and disempowerment" (p. 56). Lupton describes how compassion can override our ability to see someone through the lens of dignity which encourages economic mobility. Therefore, community relationships should not be based on a needs-based approach. Leaders should aim to provide a continuum of financial stability to make an indelible impact on the underserved. This approach can build trust with community members who are benefiting from sustainable resources which promotes financial independence.

Recommendations for New Multicultural Pastors

Prior research suggests pastors who are considering planting a multiracial church should consider the challenges that come with managing diversity (Edwards, 2014). Findings from the study aligned with earlier research which suggests the importance of learning and establishing relationships with other multicultural leaders before planting a diverse church (Perkins, 2018). New pastors should carefully consider how their identity influences their approach to racial matters (Priest & Edwards, 2019). Earlier studies have shown that pastors should recognize how their identity may impede race relations. Therefore, new pastors should build trust with their members to encourage collective action towards a successful multicultural church.

Results from the study demonstrated that the essence of community may be represented differently according to the geographical location of the church. Therefore, pastors who are considering connecting with the community in a suburban church should research how other

churches in the area have effectively engaged with the community. Pastors should always recognize how their identity may impact the culture and sense of belonging of their members. More importantly, participants from the study suggest pastors should be patient and open to the challenge of planting a multiracial church.

The study indicated that leaders who aspire to plant multicultural churches should align themselves with successful multicultural leaders. It is also recommended that thriving multicultural leaders mentor and train new pastors pursuing a diverse church. New pastors should take time to listen and survey members who have attended multicultural churches for extended periods. In addition, new pastors should form a committee and work closely with all stakeholders at emerging multicultural churches to gain insight into their success. Forming a coalition of multicultural Protestant churches in different regions in the United States can establish a resource-rich network for multicultural faith leaders.

Recommendations for Church Members

The study consistently revealed that members play a vital role in managing race relations. In fact, members are the key ingredient behind the cultural and social landscape of the church. Members have reported that it is not an easy task to assimilate to a multicultural community. Nonetheless, removing personal expectations and embarking on a new journey takes intentional acceptance and openness. More importantly, as leaders work to remove their own biases, it is also important for members to become continuous learners and embrace the unique differences of a multicultural church. Recommendations have been made based on the feedback from members:

1. Engage in active learning and cultural sensitivity training opportunities.
2. Join affinity groups with other racial groups.

3. Join a ministry in the church to build relationships with diverse groups.

4. Attend regular church meetings and listen to the concerns of the congregation.

5. Recognize your privilege and how this may hinder cohesion and community.

6. Read and educate yourself on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging best practices.

7. Promptly share thoughts and concerns with leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study involved a comparative analysis of the lived experiences of church members in an urban and suburban setting. The perspectives of members provided an in-depth analysis of their perception of leaders in multicultural churches. More comparative studies are needed to investigate the lived experiences of members attending multicultural churches in the bible belt region of the United States. As evangelical churches continue to grow in the bible belt, more research is needed to investigate the experiences of members in multicultural churches. Earlier research has explored the perspectives of leadership and their approach to managing race. A comparative study is needed to investigate the lived experiences of Black and White pastors leading multicultural churches. A comparative study that can explore the experiences of three or more pastors in different regions of the United States would add to the existing body of research. More research is needed to evaluate the strategies of Hispanic pastors in an urban and suburban church setting. More research is needed to evaluate the lived experiences of female pastors leading multicultural churches. There is also limited research investigating if Hispanic pastors are having a different experience managing race. In addition, the perspectives of Hispanic members can add to the existing body of research.

Chapter Summary

This comparative phenomenological research study examined the lived experiences of church members in an urban and suburban church environment. The study aimed to explore the strategies multicultural leaders use to manage race relations in contrasting locations in Rochester, NY. Previous studies on multiracial churches have been conducted in the western and southeastern parts of the United States. However, the current study investigated the lived experiences of members being led by a White pastor and Black pastor from a comparative viewpoint in the northeastern region of the United States. The comparative approach addressed the existing gap in literature which analyzed how race relations are managed differently in an urban and suburban church setting. Transformational leadership theory was used to analyze the data and develop a priori codes. The following research questions helped to examine the experiences of members in both church settings.

1. How do multicultural church leaders influence race relations among Black and White members?

2. How do these experiences vary in an urban and suburban setting?

This body of research has indicated that pastors leading multicultural churches, regardless of geographical location, are faced with a slew of challenges. Prior studies have shown managing the nuances of race should be strategic and requires thought leadership for emerging pastors (Edwards, 2021). As the United States continues to become more diverse the strategies to deploy diversity, equity, and inclusion will become increasingly more important (Perkins, 2018).

The comparative analysis revealed that regardless of geographical location or racial background members at both churches value the same characteristics for church leaders. These characteristics involve being open and flexible to learn from everyone's unique experiences.

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Members also mentioned the importance of being curious about the needs of the congregation. A leader who is observant and able to adjust to the evolving needs of the congregation was also highly esteemed. The study also highlighted the needs of members in a suburban church may look different in an urban church. Members who attended the church in the city recognized the importance of serving to support the needs of the community. Participants in the city shared their struggles managing the perceptions of the community. These perceptions include predominantly White missionaries serving in impoverished neighborhoods without presenting a solution for long-term mobility (Lupton, 2011). Some scholars have described this as toxic charity where the rewards we receive through service are prioritized over the benefits received by the poor (Lupton, 2011).

Findings from this study reveal that leaders who intentionally engage in conversations with members and seek ways to eliminate implicit bias can improve race relations in multicultural churches. Furthermore, participants have indicated that approachability, humility, and intentionality are the preferred leadership traits for members attending multicultural churches. It is also important to note that members recognize building community is not organic, but it takes time and effort to become a sustainable multicultural church. Despite, the imminent challenges to starting multicultural churches, research has shown new multiracial churches are on the rise in the last 20 years (Driskill & Jenkins, 2019). Therefore, pastors can benchmark and seek counsel from successful multicultural churches to promote the future success and mobility of their church (Perkins, 2018).

Themes and subthemes from the study include: (a) leadership and racial political influence, reconciling differences, and overcoming racism; (b) multicultural leadership traits: ask, learn and listen; connecting with community; and a shared vision; (c) getting over preferences: overcoming

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what's easy and accepting change; and (d) overcoming the past - past church struggles. The analysis of these themes has determined that the influence of faith leaders shape the attitudes, thoughts, and perceptions of their members regarding race. Contrary to earlier research, the study determined that members appreciate pastors who can engage in thoughtful conversation relating to racial and social injustice. In addition, these conversations can work to close the dividing line between the church and race. The pulpit can be used as a safe platform to bring divisive racial and political topics to the surface and reconcile differences.

The most prevalent themes throughout the study revealed that it takes a transformational leader who can manage diversity and develop strategies that encourage a sense of belonging for everyone. Leaders who inspire a shared vision and model moral behaviors are seen as successful transformational leaders (Christian et al., 2022). Furthermore, leaders who exemplify a high degree of individualized consideration through asking, learning, and listening to their members can successfully implement organizational change (Northouse, 2022). Although leaders play an integral role in establishing an inclusive environment, the study revealed that members who embrace change will promote the sustainability of multiracial churches. The collective action of all parties is critical to preserve the viability of current and future multicultural churches.

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Appendix A

Flyer for Research Study

Greetings Potential Participants,

Your participation is needed for a research study to improve race relations in multicultural churches.

I am a student in a Doctoral Program at St. John Fisher University seeking research participants who meet the following criteria:

(a) Attends church at least once a month
(b) Attended services for at least 1 year
(c) Must identify as Black or White
(d) Must be at least 18 years of age

If you meet this criterion please scan the QR code

Please contact me directly if you have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your support!

jms02946@sjfc.edu

Janee Slade

Appendix B

St. John Fisher University   **Institutional Review Board**

<div style="background-color: #d896d8;">

Statement of Informed Consent for Adult Participants

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Consent Form

SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION:

- You are being asked to be in a research study to improve race relations in multicultural urban and suburban church environments.

- The purpose of this comparative study is to investigate the experiences of church members in an urban mid-size to large multicultural church with the experiences of church members in a smaller suburban multicultural church.

- Up to 20 interviews will be completed. 10 will be conducted at an urban multicultural church and the other half will be conducted at a suburban multicultural church. The results will be used for a doctoral thesis.

- If you agree to take part in this study, you will be involved in this study up to 1 hour in person or zoom based on your preference. If the interview is in person, the interview will be conducted at a mutually agreeable location.
Click or tap here to enter text.

- This study has no more than minimal risk. Although you may not directly benefit from participation in the study; however we hope your participation will improve diverse relationships in multicultural churches and assist pastors with managing race relations.
Click or tap here to enter text.

DETAILED STUDY INFORMATION (some information may be repeated from the summary above):

You are being asked to be in a research study of to improve race relations in multicultural churches This study is being conducted at a number of locations that are convenient for each participant. This study is being conducted by: Janee Slade, supervised by Dr. Guillermo Montes in the Executive Leadership Doctoral program at St. John Fisher University.

You were selected as a possible participant because you are at least 18 years of age, a member of this church for at least 1 year and you attend services at least once a month.

Please read this consent form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be in the study
PROCEDURES:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Procedures will involve face-to-face or virtual interviews at a mutually agreed upon site.
- Interviews will not exceed 60 minutes.
- Interviews will be audio recorded whether in person or on zoom.
- You will have the option to turn off your camera during the interview, however, you will not be able to opt out of the audio recording, as the transcription is required for participation.

COMPENSATION/INCENTIVES:

Participants will be compensated with a $10 gift card

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The records of this study will be kept private and your confidentiality will be protected. In any sort of report the researcher(s) might publish, no identifying information will be included.

Identifiable research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All data will be archived in a secure folder saved on a password-protected laptop by the investigator. All study records with identifiable information, including approved IRB documents, tapes, transcripts, and consent forms, will be destroyed by shredding and/or deleting after 1 year.

Zoom recordings will be audio recorded and the information will only be used for educational purposes. This information will only be accessible to the researcher. Once the interviews are completed, any identifiable information will be deleted. Upon completion of the study, all recordings will be erased.

 The data collected in this study as well as the results of the research can be used for scientific purposes and may be published (in ways that will not reveal who I am). An anonymized version of

the data from this study may be made publicly accessible, for example via the Open Science Framework (osf.io), without obtaining additional written consent. The anonymized data can be used for re-analysis but also for additional analyses, by the same or other researchers. The purpose and scope of this secondary use is not foreseeable. Any personal information that could directly identify an individual will be removed before data and results are made public. Personal information will be protected closely so no one will be able to connect individual responses and any other information that identifies an individual. All personally identifying information collected about an individual will be stored separately from all other data.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study is voluntary and requires your informed consent. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. John Fisher University or with your participating church . If you decide to participate, you are free to skip any question that is asked. You may also withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

CONTACTS, REFERRALS AND QUESTIONS:

The researchers conducting this study are Janee M. Slade. If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact the researcher at █████████ or email jms02946@sjfc.edu. The dissertation chair is Dr. Guillermo Montes, Professor, Ed.D Program in Executive Leadership, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education- St. John Fisher University. Phone █████████; email: gmontes@sjfc.edu.

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher University has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact the SJF IRB administrator by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or irb@sjf.edu.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understood the above information. I consent to voluntarily participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

Retain this section only if applicable:
I agree to be audiorecorded/ transcribed _____ *Yes* _____*No* *If no, I understand that the researcher will [explain alternative to audiorecording, if any. If no alternative, state this clearly].*

I agree to be videorecorded/ transcribed _____*Yes* _____*No* *If I do not wish to be videotaped, I will inform the researcher, who will instead [explain alternative to videorecording, if any. If no alternative, state this clearly].*

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

If this is an online study, remove the signature sections above and instead use this language:
"Electronic Consent: Clicking on the "Agree" button below indicates that:
- I have read the above information.
- I voluntarily agree to participate.
- I am at least 18 years of age.
If you do not wish to participate in the study, please decline participation by clicking on the "Disagree" button below."

Please keep a copy of this informed consent for your records.

Appendix C

Interview Script & Questions

Hello, my name is Janee' Slade and I'm a Saint John Fisher Doctoral Candidate. I would like to thank you for participating in the study. The first set of questions will address some of your church background experiences. The last part of the interview will address your current experience at (blank) church.

I would like your permission to audio record the interview.

If you choose to discontinue the interview, you can withdraw participation at any time. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

(Interview Questions)

1. How long have you been a member at ……….?

2. What church denomination did you belong to prior to joining this church?

3. How did your experiences differ from your experiences at your current church?

4. What are some of the strategies you've experienced that encourage a multicultural church environment?

5. In what ways have you seen church leaders manage diversity for church members?

6. Tell me a story about a time your church addressed racial matter.

Appendix D

Thank you for your interest in my research study. You are eligible to participate in my research study. Please review and complete the attached consent form in the link below. Once I have received the completed consent form, I will contact you via email to schedule an interview.

Kind regards,

Janee M. Slade
Doctoral Candidate, EdD Executive Leadership
St John Fisher University