LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCHES THAT HAVE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED ETHNOCENTRIC BIASES AND CULTIVATED IMAGO DEI-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Shirley Ann Vazquez

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

Much research has been conducted in recent years concerning implicit bias. Banaji and Greenwald (2016) tell readers that even good people can have some form and level of implicit bias, including implicit ethnic bias (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). While ethnically based implicit bias has been studied in education and business, the effects of ethnically based implicit bias in churches have only recently come to the forefront. Christian pastors need a good understanding of these implicit biases and how these phenomena may have been, and may still be, operating in their local multi-ethnic church body, preventing them from becoming a successful multi-ethnic church. Further, research was needed to better understand how implicit ethnic bias in the Church may ultimately be affecting the call of the Great Commission. This study utilized qualitative interviews as the means of data collection. Seven Christian pastors, from around the United States, who pastor multi-ethnic churches participated in one-on-one interviews. Six research questions guided the study.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. The theories guiding this study were Implicit Bias Theory and Cognizant Dissonance theory.

Keywords: Christian, culture, implicit bias, church, multi-ethnic, leader

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my four children, Frank, Thomas, JaKenna, and Jacinta. You have been my inspiration since the day you were each born. Once my little children, now my best friends. The world is a better place because of your presence in it and as you continue to grow in your own pursuits the world will be gently shaken into new awakenings each day. May God continue to shine His light on you, bless you, and keep you in the Palm of His hand. I love you to infinity and beyond.

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The seven brave and forthcoming pastors who participated in this study at a time when racial unrest in America is once again at the forefront of American life. Without your willingness to bare your truth, and the truth of your congregants regarding implicit ethnic bias, this work could not have been conducted. I will forever be grateful to you and keep you in my prayers. May the church be blessed because of your bravery. May God bless you all.

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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul expounds on the virtue and necessity of love comparing the love the Ephesians should have for one another to the love Christ had for them, even giving Himself up for that love. In speaking of this love and the Church, Paul tells those in Ephesus:

> Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, Eph. 5:25-27)

The spots are something to ponder. No person is perfect, save Christ, no husband, no wife is perfect. The Church is not perfect. Spurgeon preaches to his audience on May 7, 1865, and challenges them to "Look at Christ's Church as you see her visibly in the world, and I ask you, brethren, though she has much about her that is admirable, whether there is not much that might cause her Lord to cast her away" (Spurgeon, 1865). Since the Church is not perfect, it must consider the spots.

In their groundbreaking work, Banaji and Greenwald (2016) define *blind spots* as hidden or implicit biases. In making the connection to implicit biases, the authors explain that the human retina has a blind spot or scotoma. This blind spot in the retina has no light-sensitive cells. Therefore, the light that arrives at that spot has no pathway to the visual areas of the brain. Yet, the brain is a remarkable thing; it fills the blind spot with something that makes reasonable sense so it can continue making sense of what the spot cannot see (p. xi-xii).

Implicit biases behave in curiously similar ways. When the human mind lacks information to fill a spot or gap, it fills it with what it thinks it knows, or what makes sense.

Implicit bias is one way the mind fills the gap (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Kirwan Institute, Module One). Stereotypes are well-learned sets of associations among groups and traits established in children's memories at an early age (Armour, 1997). Banaji and Greenwald (2016) note it is widely accepted among scientists that hidden biases or blind spots do exist and that even good people can have them (p. xii-xv). Implicit biases come from one's environment and experiences in formative years and are hardwired into the brain. If they go unrecognized, they can wreak havoc causing pain, often unintentionally because they are unconscious (Chugh, 2018; Rudman, 2004).

For some, there may be a disconnect between the mind and the heart, particularly when one tries to make sense of another whose ethnicity, they are unfamiliar with, or worse, whose mind has a hardwired implicit bias from earlier years. Is it possible that even in well-intentioned, loving Christians blind spots can exist pertaining to the other, who may be of another ethnicity? The other is defined as an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way (Brooklyn CUNY). Filling in the blind spot in whatever way the mind deems necessary can include a variety of stereotypes or cultural biases.

> As Spurgeon so eloquently put it on that May day some one hundred fifty-five years ago
>
> Christ himself being the bridegroom of the Church, the true Christian is to seek to be such a husband as Christ was to his spouse. I fear, brethren, that we often stop short of the Master's example; that we compare ourselves among ourselves, and are therefore far from being wise (Spurgeon, 1865).

It may very well be that implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches is a spot that should be studied intensely. In this research, implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches is the specific spot that was studied by interviewing senior pastors and exploring the

best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming implicit ethnic biases amongst leadership and congregants.

DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003) are quick to point out that before the early church was called the church the gospel is clear that Jesus' own choice of disciples showed diversity. He chose a tax collector and a zealot to be among the first called (KJV, Matt. 10:2-4). Soon after the women would be added to the roster. Mary called Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Salome, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and many others were added to the number (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 15:40-41). All were invited to the table fellowship of Jesus. This stood in stark contrast to many of the religious leaders of the day who defined their table fellowship by those who were excluded. This list was long and excluded women, those who were ethnically different, the sick or disabled, tax collectors as well as varying other occupations, and anyone else deemed to be a sinner according to these religious leaders (p. 15-16). DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003) write, "Jesus broke all the rules that these religious leaders made to separate themselves from others. It indicated His acceptance when Jesus publicly shared meals with tax collectors and those deemed sinners" (p. 17).

While Jesus was clear that His earthly ministry was only to the people of Israel (KJV, Matt. 15:24), He did not shun the Gentiles and even performed miracles for them. This is seen in the healing of the Roman Centurion's servant in Matthew 8:5-13

> And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall

> sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour (Matt. 8:5-13).

This Roman Centurion was indeed a friend to the Jewish people, as noted in Luke 7:2-5, still he was not Jewish. Luke 7:2-5 states

> And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue (KJV, Lk. 7:2-5).

There is another example told in both Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-28 of a Greek woman, a Syrophoenician, asking Jesus to cast a devil out of her daughter (KJV, Mk. 7:26). Matthew 15:21-28 reads

> Then Jesus went thence and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour (Matt. 15:21-28).

On the Day of Pentecost Scripture makes clear there were devout men from every nation witnessing the event and marveling at its' meaning (KJV, Acts 2:5-12). Bock (2007) writes, "Some scholars are surprised that the reference to Jews shows up in a verse speaking of the nations, but the Diaspora is in view, and so the use is not merely ethnic but also geographical" (p. 100). The list of those in attendance was vast, Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews, and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs were included (Acts 2: 9-11). Bock (2007) notes, “This list appears to highlight the key communities where Jews of the Diaspora congregated and suggests the gospel’s universal scope” (p. 103). Jesus’ own words describe a fellowship table in Heaven where “many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 8-11). Finally, in Acts 10 the ingrafting of the Gentiles into the Body of Christ is recorded as laying the groundwork for the diversity of the Church (Acts 10:34-48).

In recent years there has been ongoing research pertaining to implicit ethnic bias. With implicit ethnic bias, the person does not realize they have an ethnic bias toward another. Grant (2021) writes,

> My favorite bias is the “I'm not biased” bias, in which people believe they're more objective than others. It turns out that smart people are more likely to fall into this trap. The brighter you are, the harder it can be to see your own limitations. Being good at thinking can make you worse at rethinking (p. 25).

Christian pastors need a good understanding of implicit ethnic bias and how these phenomena can affect themselves, their leadership, and their overall church.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. For this study effectively overcoming means that the senior pastor identified practices that have led to a more biblical, cohesive, and harmonious multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission.

Christian pastors, who pastor multi-ethnic American churches participated in one-on-one interviews with the researcher. The interview questions were open-ended. The pastors were asked to detail reflections and stories of how implicit ethnic bias affected themselves, their leadership, and teams and how they overcame them to become cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American churches working to fulfill the Great Commission.

Background to the Problem

While there is an increasing number of studies being done about implicit ethnic bias, there has not been such concerning the impact of implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches. Moreover, there are no known studies that tell the stories of Christian pastors who serve multi-ethnic American churches and how implicit ethnic bias may have affected themselves, their leadership, and congregants and how they overcame them. The overarching objective in researching this problem was to see how it fits into the greater scheme pertaining to the current conversations and research surrounding implicit ethnic bias to help pastors who serve in multi-ethnic American churches understand how implicit ethnic biases may impact themselves, their teams, and their churches and how they can overcome them.

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of a man named Simeon, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel (KJV, Luke 2:25). Luke tells the story of Mary and Joseph bringing their new baby to the temple

> And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel (Luke 2:25-32).

Carson and Moo (2005) note, “We find also the announcement that this salvation will not only mean the glory of your people Israel but also a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:29-32).

Revelation 7:9-14 highlights a diverse Heaven in eternity:

> After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (KJV, Revelation 7:9-14).

These two Scriptures are examples of the importance of recognizing implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches and the impact it can have on ministry so that none are lost (2 Peter 3:9, John 6:3).

Rudman (2004) suggests four possible ways implicit bias in an individual is created: early experiences, affective experiences, cultural biases, and cognitive consistency principles (Rudman, 2004). As an example of early experiences, Chugh (2018) remarks that children are often shushed when they stare or make a comment about someone different than they are making the difference appear to be a bad thing (Chugh, 2018). The American Psychology Association defines affective as, “the attitude or emotion elicited by a stimulus, such as a musical piece, a drawing, or especially a word or phrase” (American Psychological Association). In defining culture Diller (2011), notes

> Culture is a difficult concept to grasp because it is so basic to human societies and so intertwined with our very natures that its workings are seldom acknowledged or thought

> about by those who have internalized it. It is all-encompassing, like water to a fish, so it remains largely preconscious and is obvious only when it is gone or has been seriously disturbed (pp. 66-67).

Diller (2011) further explains

> Culture is the stuff of which human paradigms are made. It provides them content, their identity, beliefs, values, and behavior. It is learned as part of the natural process of growing up in a family and community and from participating in societal institutions. These are the purveyors of culture. In short, one's culture becomes one's paradigm, defining what is real and right. Diverse cultures, in turn, generate different paradigms of reality, and each is protected and defended as if a threat to it were a threat to a member's very existence (p. 67).

In discussing values that are a part of a culture, Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines (2008) state, "values are defined as those things you hold most dear. They are conceptions of what is good, right, more worthwhile, and they direct your actions as well as those of other family members" (p. 49). The American Psychological Association defines cognitive consistency as, "the extent to which one cognitive element follows from or is implied by another cognitive element" (American Psychological Association).

Myers (2007) reminds readers that associative learning was first studied by Pavlov during his dog experiments. These experiments exploring the cause and effect of classical conditioning identified five major conditioning processes: acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, and discrimination (Myers, 2007). Associative learning in the human brain allows the brain to make a connection between two things to infer something (Kirwan, Module Three).

Understanding the influence of culture on implicit biases is crucial because both may be formed due to the influence of both early and affective experiences (Rudman, 2004). Understanding family of origin, one's culture, early experiences, and affective experiences may be key in becoming aware of one's own implicit biases and how each may have been shaped. This is particularly important for leaders. More so for Christian leaders who understand that all

people are made in the image of God and should be valued and treated accordingly (KJV, Gen. 1:26).

Leaders

Perception of the other can affect how a leader leads those who are different from them. In learning to lead people of varying cultures, Lingenfelter (2008), points out that most individuals believe their familiar structure or constructs are the only ones that can be used. Most do not consider the diversity of other structures and other cultures. Why? Because they believe their perception correctly aligns with reality. A problem occurs when other structures are not considered or valued, and team members are forced to comply with the structure of their leader (Lingenfelter, 2008). In other words, they are forced to assimilate to the dominant culture's beliefs and practices. Concerning the Church, DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003) write

> a commitment to being together with people of faith who emphasize and speak to different experiences has a number of benefits: it pushes us to understand others; we put ourselves in another's shoes; and we are forced to get out of our own cocoon (p. 139).

Livermore (2015) suggests that people who do not understand the profound differences in how culture influences the way people operate will be less effective as leaders. Cultural values influence the way people are motivated, offer ideas, and are at the core of their work ethic (Livermore, 2015). This can apply to multi-ethnic American churches in their efforts toward fulfilling the Great Commission.

Statement of the Problem

Both implicit ethnic bias and explicit ethnic bias have existed in American history since its inception, including in the American Church. Both implicit ethnic bias and explicit ethnic bias have been expressed as discrimination, racism, and hate speech, in America, even in the American Church throughout history (Hill, 2020; McPherson, 2020; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-

Hartgrove, 2020). As stated earlier, many people have some level of implicit bias in some regard, even well-meaning individuals (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). This also applies to Christians. Both ethnic implicit and explicit bias ram into a foundational truth; all human beings are made in the image of God (KJV, Gen. 1:26).

While implicit ethnic bias has been studied in education and business, the effects of implicit ethnic bias in American churches have only recently come to the forefront. Some researchers have highlighted the issues with both the expressions of explicit ethnic bias and implicit ethnic bias in the American Church through both the historical and current times lens (Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). Other authors have taken this a bit further and offered suggestions as to what American churches can do to address these issues to ensure they are living up to the recognition that each person is made in the image of God (Hill, 2020; Mason, 2018; McPherson, 2020).

In 2003, DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey released the results of their three-year research study concerning multi-racial congregations in a book titled, *United by Faith* (DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, &Yancey, 2003). In this work, the authors outline their argument that "Christian congregations, when possible, should be multi-racial" (p. 2). They studied four multi-racial churches, though imperfect, that were striving to become or had become successful multi-racial churches. The authors believe, "multi-racial congregations will be called on in the years ahead to use their experience to provide a healing salve for the wounds of racial division, cultural misunderstandings, and even the lingering pain of traumatic events" (p.75). This work is now nearly two decades old, and the current number of multi-racial churches in America is still quite low. In 1998, only 6% of churches in America were multi-racial and as of 2019, 16% of all congregations across all faith groups were multi-racial (Dougherty et al., 2020).

What needed to be conducted was a current and expanded study of multi-ethnic American churches led by senior pastors who understand the impact of implicit ethnic bias in the multi-ethnic American Church, including the local church, and who have successfully led a multi-ethnic American church. In other words, are there best practices that have been put in place by senior pastors to create and nurture a multi-ethnic American church where all church members feel as though they are regarded as equals, considered equally, as being made in the image of God, and who have formed imago Dei-centered relationships? Herein was the gap in the literature that this work sought to fill.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. For this study effectively overcoming means that the leader identified practices that have led to a more biblical, cohesive, and harmonious multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission.

Research Questions

The following Research Questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do participating senior-level pastors describe the value, if any, of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the churches or ministry?

RQ2. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor?

RQ3. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the senior-level pastor's team?

RQ4. How can the ministry/Church benefit from increased understanding of implicit ethnic bias?

RQ5. What practices are perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

RQ6. What practices are perceived to have not worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

This research assumed implicit bias resides in the heart of almost every person, including good people, even Christians. Biases are based on one's environment and experiences during formative years. They can be created through family of origin, culture, education, and the media. Racism can be traced back to ancient times. An example is seen in the Bible in John 4:9, "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (KJV, Jn. 4:9). This conflict between the Jews and Samaritans can be followed back to 2 Kings 17:24

> And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof (KJV, 2 Kings 17:24).

In modern times, it has been widely held that *race* is a social construct (Hill, 2020; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). Potter (2003) notes that the expression *race* as it has come to be known did not come into existence until the mid-1700s and was coined by French scientist Georges Le Clerc, Comte de Buffon after Swedish naturalist Carl von Linne divided Homo sapiens into Europaeus, Americanus, Asiaticus, and Africanus (Potter, 2003). Please see definitions of race and social construction under Definition of Terms.

Delimitations of the Research Design

Several delimitations should be noted in this study to help define the parameters. The study was delimited to American residents. The study was delimited to adult Christians over the age of eighteen and therefore did not include children or adolescents. The study was delimited to Christian senior pastors from varied ethnic groups and both genders who were serving in multi-ethnic American churches. Further, this study was delimited to churches that have a doctrinal position statement that includes all the following. They must:

- Believe in one God, who exists eternally in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Believe the Father is the first person of the Trinity, the Son is the second person of the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. These three are equal but distinct in person and function.
- Believe the Son was born of a virgin birth by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. The Son is both God and perfect man, distinct in nature but united in one person.
- Believe all things were created by God and nothing was made without God.
- Believe both the Old and New Testaments, while written by men, were inspired by God and are fully true and inerrant.
- Believe Adam was the first man and through his disobedience to God brought sin and death into the world. Therefore, all persons are born sinners.
- Believe for the atonement of sin, Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again where He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven interceding for all who believe in Him.
- Believe all who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved, through repentance of sin, the work of Christ and faith in Him alone as Savior.

- Believe the local church is an assembly of baptized believers who carry out the Great Commission.
- Believe Christ will one day return.

Since there are a limited number of multi-ethnic American churches, the choice of senior pastor participation was limited. The national numbers related to the ethnicity of pastors leading a multi-ethnic church in America in 2019 are white 70%, Black 18%, Hispanic 7%, and Asian 4% (Multiethnic.church). Therefore, random selection was not possible, instead, purposive sampling was used as well as snowball technique. Information on the subjects includes background (environment and experiences growing up), education level, years of senior pastor experience, age of subjects, and race of subjects. A variety of ethnicities was sought as well as pastors from both genders to round out lived experiences.

Definition of Terms

1. *Affective:* The attitude or emotion elicited by a stimulus, such as a musical piece, a drawing, or especially a word or phrase (American Psychological Association).
2. *American Church:* A local church, physically built on American soil and with a 501(c)(3) non-profit designation (Churches & Religious Organizations).
3. *Associative Learning:* Learning that certain events occur together. The events may be two stimuli or a response and its consequences (Myers, 2007).
4. *Blindspot:* Hidden or unconscious biases (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).
5. *Cognitive Consistency:* The extent to which one cognitive element follows from or is implied by another cognitive element (American Psychological Association).
6. *Colorblind*: (traditional use) Excising explicitly ethnic terms such as “Black” and “White” from social and political language to create the view that race should not be a consideration in societal or political agendas (Tisby, 2019).
7. *Colorblind:* (modern use) Minimizing another’s skin color and believing everyone’s day to day experiences are the same (Chugh, 2018). Denying a person of color’s negative ethnic experiences, discarding their cultural heritage, and discrediting their unique perspectives (Harts, 2019; Tarca, 2005; Williams, 2011).

8. *Culture:* Traditional ideas, the way people groups deal with the problems of life, identity, beliefs, values, and behaviors (Diller, 2011).

9. *Cultural Intelligence:* To work effectively and efficiently in cultures different from one's own. To avoid or mitigate problems attributed to cultural differences, namely, conflicts, mistrust, stereotyping, and bias (Livermore, 2015).

10. *Discipleship:* A commitment to Christ (Bonhoeffer, 2003).

11. *Ethnicity:* a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins, or the state of belonging to such a group (Cambridge Dictionary).

12. *Explicit Bias:* refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level (Perception.org).

13. *Imago Dei:* The doctrine that humanity is in certain respects created in the divine likeness of God (Erickson, 2013).

14. *Implicit Association Test:* The IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts (Implicit.harvard.edu).

15. *Implicit Bias:* Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Kirwan Institute, Module One).

16. *Leader:* One who defines reality, a servant and a debtor (De Pree, 2004).

17. *Leadership:* A leader's emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal skills, not just what they can do, but how they do it (Cloud, 2016).

18. *Minimizing:* Overlooking cultural differences and focusing on what groups have in common (Livermore, 2016).

19. *Other:* The other is an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way (Brooklyn CUNY).

20. *Otherize*: To see someone as other than a human being (Chugh, 2018).

21. *Perception:* The mental process of sorting out, interpreting, analyzing and integrating stimuli from the sense organs and the brain (Feldman, 2011).

22. *Person of Color:* A person whose skin pigmentation is other than and especially darker than what is considered characteristic of people typically defined as white: a person who is of a race other than white or who is of mixed race (Merriam-Webster).

23. *Race:* (traditional use) Notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

24. *Race:* (modern use) A social construction (Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Kidd, 2005).

25. *Racism:* any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

26. *Recognized Bias:* the self-recognition and acknowledgment of an implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022).

27. *Responsive Bias:* the active self-monitoring and quick positive response to a recognized implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022).

28. *Senior Pastor:* Serves as the senior leader of a church or parish (Ziprecruiter.com.).

29. *Social Construction:* the process of endowing a group or concept with a delineation, name, or reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

30. *Stereotypes:* Well-learned sets of associations among groups and traits established in children's memories at an early age (Armour, 1997).

31. *The Church:* In Christian doctrine, the Christian religious community as a whole, or a body or organization of Christian believers (Encyclopedia Britannica).

32. *Tolerance:* Sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own (Merriam-Webster).

33. *Totalizing:* Thinking and acting as if a single aspect of a person is the totality of that person (Stewart, 2012).

34. *Values:* One conception of what is good, right, and more worthwhile (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2008).

35. *Whiteness:* refers to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2021).

36. *White Privilege:* The foundational premise that being white is considered the norm or standard for human beings (Chugh, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018; Hill, 2017; Tatum,1997).

Significance of the Study

This study sought to shed light on an ongoing problem in humanity, implicit ethnic bias, specifically as it relates to the multi-ethnic American Church. As stated previously, research has

been done in the secular world but has not been looked at through the lens of the Bible (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Chugh, 2018). This study is significant because all of humanity should be looked at as having inherent value since all persons are made in the Image of God (KJV, Gen. 1:26). If Christians purpose to address their own implicit ethnic bias, the multi-ethnic American Church can move closer to living according to this truth and become closer to fulfilling the Great Commission and reflecting the Church according to Revelation 7:9-14 (Rev. 7:9-14).

Summary of the Design

The population studied were Christians, over eighteen years of age, from varying ethnic backgrounds and both genders. To qualify for the study subjects had to be in senior pastor positions in a multi-ethnic American church. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B).

Through purposive sampling, this research studied senior Christian pastors who were serving in multi-ethnic American churches. As well, snowball technique was used where participants were asked to refer any pastors they felt would meet the criteria and who would be willing to participate. A mix of male and female pastors, as well as ethnically diverse pastors, were sought. Seven senior pastors who were pastoring a multi-ethnic American church were interviewed. A successful multi-ethnic church is defined as a congregation in which no one racial group is more than eighty percent of the people (DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, &Yancey, 2003). There was a delimitation of this sampling process resulting in a lack of randomization. Along with the interview process, a commitment to partake in the study was necessary.

The website Business Research Methodology (BRM) tells readers that purposive sampling can be used when only a limited number of subjects can serve as data sources due to the nature of the research and objectives (Research-methodology.net). The purpose of this

phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. Therefore, only churches in which no one racial group is more than eighty percent of the people were sampled. As part of this purposive sampling for this research project, both heterogeneous and homogeneous sampling was used. Homogeneous sampling was used because the project is very specific to Christian senior pastors, pastoring a multi-ethnic American Church. Heterogeneous sampling was used because the product required a mix of ethnic and gender characteristics (Research-methodology.net). Snowball technique was used because finding pastors who are senior pastors of multi-ethnic American churches proved to be very difficult. There were also challenges to getting pastors to respond to the recruitment e-mail or agreeing to partake in the study.

The methodological design was a qualitative phenomenological design that was interview-based, with open-ended questions. Roberts (2010) notes phenomenological studies focus on people's experiences from their particular vantage points. Generally, the inquiry for the study begins with generalized questions about the subject to be studied. In phenomenological studies, researchers seek the whole picture; a comprehensive and complete understanding of the phenomena under study. Oftentimes this means they go to the field to collect the data taking observations, conducting in-depth and open-ended interviews, or looking at written documents (Roberts, 2010).

In this study, in-depth interviews were used to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have imago Dei-centered relationships working to fulfill the Great Commission. The sampling was purposive and specific

to Christian senior pastors who were pastoring an American multi-ethnic church. Specifically, the interviews were with senior pastors who are American residents and are adult Christians over the age of eighteen. Further senior pastors from varied ethnic groups and both genders who were serving in a multi-ethnic American church were studied. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B). This research design employed the use of member checking to add validity and credibility to this project. Creswell, (2014) tells readers to

> Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate. This does not mean taking back the raw transcripts to check the accuracy; instead, the researcher takes back parts of the polished or semi-polished product, such as the major findings, the themes, the case analysis, the grounded theory, the cultural description, and so forth (p. 202).

Participants were sent a transcript of their interview. This allowed them to make additions, deletions, or clarifications to their interview to ensure their statements were truthful, adding to the accuracy of the findings. In a summary of the findings, the researcher used member checking and presented final themes and descriptions to the participants to allow them an opportunity to determine if the themes and descriptions were accurate.

Additionally, for face validity and to ensure credibility and safety of the instrument being used for the interviews in this study, a panel of four professionals, was convened to review the questions. These professionals included an attorney, a senior pastor (not included in the study), a licensed professional counselor (LPC), and a qualified mental health professional (QMHP). These professionals were approved by the dissertation supervisor before inclusion in the panel. The researcher instructed the professionals to look for wording that could be leading and/or biased in any way that could affect the results. Additionally, the professionals were instructed to

look for wording that could potentially harm the subjects being interviewed or surveyed. None of the participants on the expert panel found the interview questions to be leading, biased, or harmful in any way. Therefore, no changes were made to the interview questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In recent years there has been ongoing research pertaining to implicit or unconscious bias in relation to people of varying ethnicities. In the theoretical framework section of this chapter, implicit bias is discussed as well as race, racism, color-blindness, and cognitive dissonance. In the related literature portion of this review, an understanding of perception is discussed as well as the hidden costs of both ethnic implicit and explicit bias. The review will conclude with the rationale of the study and the gap in the literature.

This review covers the history of America since its inception as well as the American Christian Church regarding racism and implicit ethnic bias. There is no way adequately research the multi-cultural Christian church in America without understanding the history of the broader American Christian Church. The historical content is not meant to disparage any one people group or the American Church. As well, some of the history outlined may illicit a painful or even angry response for some readers. The researcher advises readers to proceed with caution. To reflect on the theological considerations this review will start at the beginning of creation.

Theological Framework

This theological review provides an overview of the theological considerations of implicit ethnic bias in relation to the image of God in man and how it has affected the Church historically. Also, this review delves into the effect implicit ethnic bias can have on Church leaders and the greater Church. Ultimately this can affect the Great Commission.

Imago Dei

The humble psalmist poses the question an untold number of Christians are sure to have asked over millennia, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou

visitest him?" (KJV, Ps. 8:4). Biblical scholars have been offering their accounts surely, for equally as long. Allowing for this future question, the Triune God seems to answer this exact question, years before it could ever be asked by a created man, early in the Genesis account:

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (KJV, Gen. 1:26-27).

Understanding what it means to be made in the image of God and why it is important to recognize that all mankind is made in His image is paramount to the foundation of this work. The understanding or lack thereof, concerning the image of God in man has impacted the well-being of humans since the beginning of time (Kilner, 2015, pp. 17-37). This Scripture lays the foundation for this research project which seeks to understand the impact on the Church and the Great Commission when its leaders and members fail to seek understanding and application of this early Scripture.

As noted above, the concept of man being created in the image of God first appears in Scripture early in the creation story (KJV, Gen. 1:26). In Genesis 1:26, *image* is translated from the Hebrew *tselem* meaning "an image" and *likeness* is translated *demuth* meaning "likeness or similitude" (Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 1999, Strong's 7512, 1952). Estep and Kim (2010) tell readers "*Tselem,* most often translated *image*, signifies something cut or carved, a physical representation; whereas *demuth, likeness,* conveys the idea of being similar, bearing a similarity to the original" (p. 12). While these distinctions are generally agreed upon Estep and Kim (2010) note that these interpretations and the relationship of likeness/image are heavily debated amongst scholars. Regardless, these two words together depict man as a representation of God and who is like God in certain respects (Estep & Kim, 2010).

When noting the generations of Adam, the phrase image of God is reiterated in Genesis 5:1-2. “This *is* the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created” (KJV, Gen. 5:1-2). Here the term *demuth* meaning “likeness or similitude” is again used for the word likeness. Something worth noting here is the plural pronoun “their” in referring to their name, Adam. Both male and female were named Adam. It is similar to “them” used in Genesis 1:26-27, “let them have dominion” (Gen. 1:26). Elwell (2001) writes, “The Hebrew word transliterated “Adam” is found about 560 times in the OT, in the overwhelming majority of cases meaning “man” or “humankind”’ (p. 22). This tells readers both genders were equally made in the image of God. In speaking specifically about gender, Estep and Kim (2010) write

> Regardless of any perceived difference of familiar or social roles of men and women, both the Old and New Testament affirm the image of God is equally present within men and women, without distinction. We all share in a common humanity, one that reflects God's image. Gender is not a part of the fall but a part of the created order, His intentional design within humanity. The imago Dei is not 50 percent male or 50 percent female but something the genders equally share 100 percent. It is not until after the fall that the differences between male and female were accentuated (p. 16).

Moving along to Genesis 5:3, the reader sees there is a distinction when speaking of Adam’s son Seth and the terms image and likeness. It must be noted that while all mankind was made in the image and likeness of God, Genesis 5:3 notes that Seth was made in his father’s image and likeness. Genesis 5:3 tells readers, “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth” (KJV, Gen. 5:3). Certainly, Seth was also made in the image of God as outlined in Genesis 1:26, but the addition of the pronoun *his* lets the reader know Seth carried his earthly father’s physical and non-physical characteristics as well. According to Strong’s Concordance (Goodrick and

Kohlenberger, 1999) the same use of the Hebrew for “likeness” and “image” and *demuth* and *tselem* respectively, are used in both instances (Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 1999, Strong’s 7512, 1952).

Genesis 9:6 moves the importance of man further along and outlines the significance of being made in the image of God compared to the rest of creation. Genesis 9:6 states, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (KJV, Genesis 9:6). Mankind is held above the rest of creation and any person who takes the life of another will have to account to God (Kilner, 2015). Estep and Kim (2010) note, “By using these two words, Moses indicates we are wholly God’s representation; we are His image bearers” (p. 12). This is something to keep in mind as this theological review continues to unfold.

Estep and Kim (2010) note, “The Old Testament openly ascribes to every human, male and female, that we are all God's image-bearers, tasked with being His representatives in His creation. We are the Creator’s temporal representation within His creation” (p. 12). Estep and Kim (2010) argue that this is the problem James was describing when individuals inappropriately use the same tongue to bless God and curse men who are made in the image of God (Estep & Kim, 2010). In speaking of the tongue, James writes, “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God” (KJV, Jam. 3:9). Estep and Kim (2010) follow up this powerful example by stating, “Because we are God's image-bearers, our relationship with our fellow image-bearer must be consistent with our relationship with God” (p. 14).

In speaking of James 3:9, Kilner (2015) agrees and writes, “cursing people is tantamount to cursing God. In other words, when one damages or dishonors people, one is acting in the same

way toward God" (p. 117). The writer of Acts 17:26 tells readers, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" (KJV, Acts 17:26). It is God who determines a person's gender, ethnicity, and even where they are born.

Christians understand that God created everything, and nothing was created without Him (KJV, Gen. 1:1, John 1:1-3). Genesis 1:26-27 makes it clear; that God in his infinite wisdom and sovereign power made trillions of people over time, in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27), yet each person is different. Different in skin color, different in gender, from all nations, all are made in the image of God, with no exceptions and when one person treats another as anything less than being made in the image of God, they are in error according to Scripture. They are not loving another as has been commanded (John 13:34). James writes

> If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors (James 2:8-9).

Further, this can affect their eternal life (1 John 3:14-15).

A few notable scholars are highlighted here to round out the conversation about what it means to be made in the image of God. Elwell (2001) explains the imago Dei and states, "The doctrine that humanity is in certain respects created in the divine likeness" (p. 591). Erickson (2013) believes this likeness is related to God's attributes. God's attributes constitute what He is or the characteristics of His nature (Erickson, 2013). Walton (2001) broadens the thoughts of both of these authors and tells readers, "Being made in the image of God confers on us dignity, and trusts us with responsibility, and implants in us a certain potential, namely, the capacity to mirror our creator" (p. 137). Smith (2009) notes the failure of humans when this dignity and responsibility are set aside; sin is invited in. When humans do not behave like nor treat others as

though all are God's image-bearers not only are individuals affected but so are institutions, systems, and culture at large. The world is disordered (Smith, 2009). Taking the theories of these esteemed scholars into consideration Kilner (2015) does note that the Bible itself offers little information on the subject of the imago Dei, and because of this some have ascribed only minor significance to the subject (Kilner, 2015). The question remains; What is the imago Dei?

Estep and Kim (2010) outline five general views that aim to describe the essence of the imago Dei. The Substantive View describes the idea of the imago Dei as having different parts; physical, psychological, ethical, or spiritual characteristics within humans. These facets of being human are what sets humans apart from animals specifically, particularly the spiritual characteristics (Estep & Kim, 2010). The Functional View emphasizes the work man was created to do and rests on Genesis 1:26-28, which commands man to multiply and subdue the earth (KJV, Gen. 1:26-28). This view reflects God as Ruler. The Relational View reflects mankind's relationship with each other and with God and the Teleological View is Christological in nature and points to the need for a savior because man is fallen and in need of redemption (Estep & Kim, 2010). Estep and Kim (2010) are quick to point out that all these views have a common fault in that they reduce the image of God to parts. Estep and Kim (2010) offer a fifth view and argue that the imago Dei may be a compilation of all four views, culminating in the imago Dei (Estep & Kim, 2010). As stated earlier, the Bible may not give specifics on what exactly the imago Dei is, but the Bible does state, mankind was created in the image of God and that pronouncement was made very early on in the creation story (Gen. 1:26-27). Samra (2008) adds to this conversation drilling down on what it means to be transformed or conformed into the image of Christ using Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 which will be explored later in this work.

Attributes of God

Erickson (2013) believes this likeness or image is related to God's attributes. God's attributes constitute what He is and the characteristics of His nature (Erickson, 2013). Erickson (2013) remarks that when the attributes of God are expressed, they declare what God is, as well as the traits of His nature. His attributes cannot be lost or gained; they are permanent. They do not change. These attributes are inseparable from God's being or essence (Erickson, 2013).

Elwell (2001) describes God as an invisible, personal, and living spirit. Metaphysically God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging. Intellectually, God is omniscient, faithful, wise, and loving. Emotionally God hates evil, is patient, and compassionate. Ethically, God is just, merciful, and loving. Relationally God is a transcendent being, immanent universally in divine providence and immanent with His people in redemptive activity. Existentially God is free, authentic, and omnipotent (Elwell, 2001). Taking the magnificence of these statements in, it may be difficult for one to see how humans could be made in the image of God; with all of humanity's imperfections (sin), yet the Scripture is clear.

Transformed to the Image of Christ

While sin does not damage God's image, it has damaged humanity's image (Kilner, 2015). In Colossians 3:10, Paul reminds readers of the ability to mature in the attributes of God, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (KJV, Col. 3:10). Bruce (2000), notes man becomes new because Christ is inside the new convert, not apart from Him. This new knowledge is possible because man is made in the image of God (Bruce, 2000). Paul teaches this hope by stating, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The renewing or transformation of human beings takes place very specifically according to the image of God in Christ and is outlined in Romans 8:29 which states, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (KJV, Rom. 8:29). Ultimately, according to Kilner (2015) Christians, “will experience an intimate connection with God in Christ and will reflect God's attributes to the full extent that human beings can do so, for sin will be gone” (p. 235). The highest good a Christian can achieve is to mature into this conformed image of Christ (Boa, 2001). As believers continue with increased contemplation and understanding of the Lord a spiritual renovation is occurring leading to increased transformation into the image of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). Eventually, the new man is created in the image of the one who created mankind (Colossians 3:10) (Kilner, 2015). But what can happen when the image of God is misunderstood, and Christians are not moving toward being conformed to the image of Christ?

Misunderstanding the Image of God

Much has recently been written on the problems with misunderstanding the image of God and the creation of false theologies concerning the image of God. This is important because misunderstanding what the image of God means can shatter a population and has shattered people groups throughout history such as Africans in slavery, Native American populations, the Jewish people, and women to name a few, many in the name of Christianity (Kilner 2015, pp. 17-37). It has caused some people groups, to think their culture, their thinking, their way of life is what is correct and all other cultures and people groups either do not measure up to and are therefore inferior, or they should be forced to give up their culture and assimilate into the dominant culture (Tisby, 2019, pp. 16-17).

DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003) retell a story from Richard Twiss, a Native American educator, and author

> So, one afternoon I asked one of the pastoral leaders how I was supposed to relate to my Native culture as a Christian. I distinctly remember him opening the Bible he was carrying and reading from Galatians 3:28 (NIV) where Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". Twiss continues, "After reading the passage, this pastoral leader commented on how culture should all blend together for us as Christians". He then concluded, "So, Richard, don't worry about being Indian; just be like us" (p. 128).

DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003) note, "As Richard Twiss's story illustrates, even much of what is articulated as biblical unity is actually an invitation to assimilate into white definitions of Christianity" (p. 128). In another example, when recounting a conversation with a friend of color, Hill (2017) who is a white pastor, notes his friend telling him that when other cultures collide with white culture, white culture almost always wins (Hill, 2017).

The New Testament discusses the importance of unity in diversity amongst the body of Christ. In speaking about Galatians 3:28, Boa (2001) tells readers, "The church is to be a community of unity within diversity in which the walls of racism, sexism, nationalism, and elitism are to be broken down" (p. 430). Boa (2001) continues the conversation by reminding readers that it is through Jesus' own words that unity in diversity is important. Jesus prayed for His disciples and other believers, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (KJV, John 17:21).

The Bible is teeming with positive exhortations, some from Jesus, encouraging the community of faith to be there for and accept one another, based on nothing except the common faith of Jesus Christ. Boa (2001) lists many of these positive exhortations. Table 1 is an excerpt (p. 431).

Table 1

Biblical Exhortations

Scripture	Exhortation
John 13:14	wash one another's feet
John 13: 34	love one another
Romans 12:10a	be devoted to one another in brotherly love
Romans 12:10b	give preference to one another in honor
Romans 12:16; 15:5	be of the same mind toward one another
Romans 14:19	build up one another
Romans 15:7	accept one another
Romans 15:14	admonish one another
Romans 16:16 1 Corinthians 16:20	greet one another
1 Corinthians 11:33	wait for one another
1 Corinthians 12:25	have the same care for one another
Galatians 5:13	through love serve one another
Galatians 6:2	bear one another's burdens
Ephesians 4:2	show tolerance for one another
Ephesians 4:32a	be kind to one another
Ephesians 4:32b	forgive one another
Ephesians 5:21	be subject to one another
Philippians 2:3	regard one another is more important than yourselves

DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003), remind readers of the radical transformation of Saul to Paul. In Galatians 1:13, Saul admits to the violent persecution of God's Church (KJV,

Gal. 1:13). This is the same Saul who after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus depicted in Acts 9:1-16 would later write the words of Galatians 3:28. Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). After this meeting on the road to Damascus, Saul realized that in order to be faithful to the God he loved so much, he must adopt an inclusive perspective and move forward as a follower of Jesus Christ. This means that he would not only minister to the Jews but the Gentiles as well (p. 148-149).

Holy Spirit

Erickson (2013) makes clear that human effort alone is not capable of transforming the life of the Christian, and neither can this transformation be understood by human intellect. The author notes Jesus' words, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (KJV, John 3:8) (Erickson, 2013). Erickson (2013) continues, this transformation by the Holy Spirit is ongoing through the process of sanctification, which focuses the Christian on becoming more and more Christ-like each day (Erickson, 2013). Jesus says in John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (Jn. 16:13).

This study focuses on the multi-ethnic American Church. To do this study justice and to begin to understand the impact of implicit ethnic bias on the American Church, it is imperative to first delve into the impact of explicit ethnic bias on the American Church throughout its history. This historical impact begins with the era of slavery and ends in present day America.

Historical Impact of Racism on the Church in America

The historical impact of the Church not operating on the foundation of Scripture which declares the image of God in all humankind (KJV, Gen. 1:26-27), and the subsequent effects of explicit ethnic bias on the Church have been studied by many scholars. Mason (2018) notes one example

> Many modern mainline denominations played a role in soothing the conscious of those involved in the oppression of slavery by creating theologies and ideologies that justified these atrocities. One such ideology was that Blackness was a curse. This was used to communicate Black inferiority. Poor biblical theology created the so-called "Curse of Ham", a bizarre misappropriation of the curse Noah pronounced on his grandson Canaan, not his son Ham, which is said to apply to all Black people of Africa and beyond (p. 82).

When the history of the American Christian Church is followed starting with the era of slavery in America, it is observable how devastating it has been on American Christian people of varying ethnicities (Hill, 2020; McPherson, 2020; Tisby, 2019). Before understanding the impact of the American Christian Church on varying ethnicities, it is important, to begin with, an understanding of what the term racism means and how it first came about.

Racism

Racism is defined as any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). It is widely held that *race* is a social construct (Hill, 2020; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). Potter (2003) notes that the expression *race* as it has come to be known did not come into existence until the mid-1700s and was coined by French scientist Georges Le Clerc, Comte de Buffon after Swedish naturalist Carl von Linne divided Homo sapiens into Europaeus, Americanus, Asiaticus, and Africanus (Potter, 2003). Tisby (2019) tells readers:

> There is no biological basis for the superiority or inferiority of any human being based on the amount of melanin in her or his skin. The development of the idea of race required the

> intentional actions of people in the social, political, and religious spheres to decide that skin color determined who would be enslaved and who would be free (p. 27).

Once this social construct was commonly held, laws were written and habits formed that caused the center of power to be held by those whites in America, both Christian and non-Christian, who worked to cement this social construct (Tisby, 2019). Alexander (2010) summarizes this historical movement saying it began as part of European imperialism and moved into America as a way to excuse chattel slavery and the blatant extermination of America's indigenous people (Alexander, 2010).

While the word "race" is used in the Bible, it is mostly used concerning running a course (KJV, Ps. 19:5, Ecc. 9:11, 1 Cor. 9:24, Heb. 12:1). A well-known example is found in 2 Timothy 4:7 where Paul says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). "course" is translated from the Greek δρόμον, meaning a course or race (Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 1999, Strong's 1536). It is never used in the Bible to distinguish or separate people by the color of their skin. Instead, when describing various people groups either the Greek ἔθνος /ethnos or γένος /genos is used. Mounce defines ἔθνος as the following, based on how it was used in various Scripture, a multitude, company, (Acts 17:26; Rev. 21:24); a nation, people, (Mt. 20:25; 21:43); pl. ἔθνη, from the Hebrew nations or people as distinguished from the Jews, the heathen, Gentiles, (Mt. 4:15; 10:5; Lk. 2:32) (Bill Mounce). Mounce defines γένος as family, offspring; nation, people, native (of a region); classification or kind (Acts 17:28-29) (Bill Mounce). It is also used one time in 1 Peter 2:9 (Bill Mounce). The King James translation uses the word generation when translating γένος. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Used here the word

describes those who are part of God's new holy nation, or the Church, because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

Ethnic or ethnicity derives from the Greek *éthnos*, meaning "nation, people" (Kelly & Pereira, 2021). In referring to Acts 17:26 once again it is noted, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;" (KJV, Acts 17:26). The Book of Acts states, that people groups can be distinguishable by nation. This is in alignment with Bock's (2007) commentary on Acts 2:5-12, mentioned earlier. The Bible never separates people groups by their skin color, or gender, but rather at times, by their nationality.

When explicit ethnic bias or implicit ethnic bias resides in the hearts of church leaders and church members it can negatively impact the entire church body working against the purpose of the Great Commission (KJV, Matt. 28:18-20). It is important to understand how both explicit and implicit ethnic bias has affected the American Church in history. To do this, one must go back to the beginning of the early days of American colonialism.

Slave Era

Kilner (2015) notes, that many during colonial days not only supported slavery but used the image of God to reconcile it. Some believed that white bodies were somehow more like God than Black bodies. Still, others believed that African slaves and America's indigenous people were closer to that of animals than to humans, thereby perpetuating the narrative that whites were to subdue this part of creation as commanded in Genesis 1:26. Still, others felt that because they were literate, they were above those who were not (Kilner, 2015).

Tisby (2019) notes, that in the century that followed, many southern white Christians argued that God sanctioned slavery in Scripture and for those who were African, a natural state

of being was under the bondage of white authority. In addition, these southern Christians believed they were doing slaves a service by introducing Christianity to them, or else they would be relegated to eternal damnation (Tisby, 2019, pp. 80-82). Having said this, Tisby (2019) is clear to note that the same Bible some racists used to support their ideology of slavery is the same Bible those who fought against these evils used to undergird their resistance (Tisby, 2019). While technically the abolitionists prevailed and the slaves were freed, history is clear to show that even once the slaves were freed from the bondage of their white masters, all was not well. Hill (2020), Tisby (2019), and Wilson-Hartgrove (2020) all note that Blacks have gone through period after period of great turmoil to just survive in the years after slavery. From the Reconstruction Era to current times, the American Church has either been actively perpetuating the theology of white supremacy, going against the Scripture concerning the image of God in man, or stunningly silent about it (Hill, 2020; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020).

Reconstruction

Reconstruction is the period beginning just after the end of slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment had been ratified giving all former slaves citizenship and equal protection under the law. Tisby (2019) notes many whites were not happy over losing the Civil War and white supremacy flourished. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, an ideology that fused nationalism, white supremacy, and Christianity set the stage for hatred of Blacks to be so overwhelming and acceptable among Christians that the lynching of Blacks was oftentimes held on Sundays, just after church service ended, with churchgoers in attendance cheering on the death of a fellow human (Tisby, 2019). Wilson-Hartgrove (2020) retells the story of the Colfax Court House where on Easter Sunday in 1873, a massacre occurred as local Black men sought to protect their rights by defending the courthouse. The whites, some of whom had earlier been in church and

who murdered these Black men defended their actions, calling themselves Redeemers, and claimed that God was divinely in favor of their cause (Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). In his work, Meacham (2020) quotes Edward Alfred Pollard, a Virginia confederate and journalist, "White supremacy has not been 'lost' immeasurably or irrevocably, but it is yet in a condition to be 'regained' by the South on ultimate issues of the political contest. Ethnic subjugation through the defense of the states' rights, Pollard added, was the true hope of the South" (p. 132).

Jim Crow

Meacham (2020) reminds readers that by 1896, the Supreme Court had codified Jim Crow cementing the theory described as separate but equal decided under Plessy v. Ferguson. While Justice John Marshall Harlen dissented, the new law of the land was clear (Meacham, 2020). Tisby (2019) notes that Jim Crow laws were, "developed as a system of laws and customs to revive the older social order that slavery had enabled for much of U.S. history" (p. 103). The Jim Crow era was nothing less than domestic terrorism against Black bodies devastating the Black population through killings, rapes, imprisonment, and segregation (Tisby, 2019). Meacham (2020), says, "It was a harrowing era to be Black, Southern, and American" (p. 21).

Civil Rights Movement

Tisby (2019) discusses the failure of many Christians, particularly in the South to oppose racism in their families, communities, and churches and says this provided a fertile soil from which hatred grew (Tisby, 2019). In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail (King, 2017), Dr. King addressed several of his white counterparts who thought his tactics were too bold and that Blacks should wait for the laws to change in their favor. King called out these white pastors because while they seemed bothered by the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham, they seemed not to be bothered at all by the conditions that brought about the necessity of the marches (King,

2017). Tisby (2019) writes that not much has changed in the churches in these past sixty or so years since the Civil Rights Movement was in full swing and notes that racism still plagues the Church. It still plagues the Church because most white Christians do not know how bad racism in America is, so they do not feel an urgent need to address it, nor do they care to make the sacrifices necessary to address it (Tisby, 2019). It was not until 1995 that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) would apologize for its complicity in slavery and racism (Bailey, 2020; Green, 2019; Hall, 2015).

Post-Civil Rights Movement

Alexander (2010) reminds today's Americans that the current stereotype of Black men as being aggressive and predatory can be traced back to the post-slave and Jim Crow eras when whites believed angry Black men might attack and even rape their women. This has led to the ongoing fear of Black bodies by some whites. This includes some whites who hold power and some whites who do not (Alexander, 2010).

Tisby (2019) says over time there have been white Christians who participated in the aforementioned system of white supremacy, even as they have claimed to accept people of color as their brothers and sisters in Christ. Unfortunately, race has been so ingrained into the culture of America, that it is difficult to imagine another reality (Tisby, 2019). This may be the exact spot that implicit bias fits into. As noted earlier, there are many good Christians who would never think of themselves as racist. Grant (2021) notes, “for decades psychologists have found that people can feel animosity toward other groups even when the boundaries between them are trivial” (p. 125).

A 2018 report on the history of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), included the sordid relationship the denomination had with slavery and racism. SBTS noted the

1995 apology of the SBC and reminds the reader of the adoption of a historic resolution by the SBC which included apologizing for the role that slavery played in the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC apologized for the defense of slave ownership by its founders, the participation and support of the inhumane nature of American slavery, and recognized that even in later years, concerning the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's that Southern Baptists failed to support, and in some cases opposed, legitimate initiatives to secure the civil rights of African Americans. They further specifically apologized for their role in institutionalized racism in America (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

Truth and Understanding in Leadership

Bredfeldt (2006) writes that "Biblical leadership begins with a commitment to biblical authority" (p. 67). When this is coupled with 2 Timothy 3:16 which notes that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (KJV, 2 Tim. 3:16) it is clear to see Scripture is the foundation that leadership must rest upon even when it may feel uncomfortable to repent for something unseen (implicit ethnic bias). The following discusses the role of the Christian leader in helping followers live out Biblical truths.

The Leader

To begin, a few definitions are in order to help create the foundation. It is important to define these words as they relate to this work. Here reality, understanding, and perception will be defined. Reality is defined as, "the state of things as they are, rather than as they are imagined to be" (Cambridge English Dictionary). Understanding is defined as "knowledge about a subject, situation, etc., or about how something works" (Cambridge English Dictionary). Perception is defined as, "The way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted"

(Lexico). When defining the role of a leader De Pree (2004) states, “the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality” (p. 11). This reality should include the perception and understanding of the other. As noted previously, the other is an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way (Brooklyn CUNY). What does the Bible say about what truth is? For the Christian leader, the definition of reality or what true is rests on Scripture.

Truth

As discussed earlier, John 16:13 states that the Holy Spirit is the giver of truth (KJV, Jn. 16:13). In John 14:6 the Word states, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). In discussing John 14:6, Barclay (1975) notes that while many people have tried to say what truth is, Jesus is the embodiment of truth. There is a vast difference between teaching the truth and being the truth. When Jesus was praying for the disciples, he asked the Father to “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). This author tells readers Jesus was asking the Father to set them apart and to equip them with the truth, which is the embodiment of Jesus Christ (Barclay, 1975). These Scriptures point out the fact that one’s perceptions cannot be the truth unless they are grounded in Scripture, in Jesus Christ more specifically. Along with determining what is truth, Scripture commands a gaining of understanding.

Understanding

Proverbs 4:7 commands, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (KJV, Pr. 4:7). What is this understanding? For the Christian, it is the Word of God. Paul writes to Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,

and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

A Christian leader must stand on the Word of God and lead from that foundation. Therefore, the Christian leader who does not see every person as made in the image of God (KJV, Gen. 1:26-27), rightly and according to Scripture can lead followers down a path of destruction. Kilner (2015) uses Nazi Germany as an example of how Genesis 1:26-27 was misinterpreted and misused to wreak havoc, promoting the extermination of those Hitler did not believe lived up to being made in the image of God (Kilner, 2015). In walking this out Christian leaders must adhere to what is required of them each day. Micah 6:8 says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). If leaders are not careful, they can begin to believe that they have all the answers, trusting only themselves, and no longer looking to God for the truth (Blanchard et al. 2016).

Church Members

Geiger & Kelley (2012) write, "everyone is a disciple of someone, but only disciples of Jesus are transformed" (p. 47). As noted earlier concerning this transformation, Paul reminds readers of the ability to mature in the attributes of God, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (KJV, Col. 3:10). Bruce (2000), notes man becomes new because Christ is inside the new convert, not apart from Him. This new knowledge is possible because man is made in the image of God (Bruce, 2000). Paul teaches this hope by stating, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Geiger & Kelly (2012) quote Scottish pastor Thomas Chalmers as saying, “the best way to overcome the world is not with morality or self-discipline. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ” (pp. 47-48). This is the importance of leaders leading and teaching with the truth of Scripture, the truth of Christ, Jesus who embodies the truth. As stated earlier, one of the first truths outlined in Scripture is that man is made in the image of God (KJV, Gen. 1:26-27).

In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (KJV, Jn. 13:34-35). Blanchard et al. (2016) note that this is “the standard to which Jesus calls all His followers in the relationships they have with one another is their relationship with Him yesterday, today, and forever” (p. 175-176). McPherson (2020) tells readers that mistaken beliefs about others, including about race, cause the Christian to withhold this Godly love from those He created us to love and that it is just as much as a sin of omission as a sin of commission (McPherson, 2020).

Summary

Ethnic implicit and explicit biases were never meant to be a part of the Church. It was made clear in Scripture, from the beginning, that man is made in the image of God to be sanctified through conforming to the image of Christ. The misuse or lack of use of Genesis 1:26-27 has wreaked havoc on the American Christian Church through the centuries. Not only have people, specifically people of color, been hurt and oppressed, they have also been killed. A person of color is defined as a person whose skin pigmentation is other than and especially darker than what is considered characteristic of people typically defined as white: a person who is of a race other than white or who is of mixed race (Merriam-Webster). This part of the

literature review intended to lay the foundation theologically as to the issues with explicit ethnic bias and implicit ethnic bias and the impact it has had on Church leaders, and the greater Church over time which ultimately affects the Great Commission.

Theoretical Framework

Overview

The theoretical framework for this study centers around two prominent theories; Implicit Bias Theory and Cognizant Dissonance Theory. Cognizant Dissonance Theory delves into how humans try to justify their behaviors when they do not line up with their assumptions about themselves and or what is considered good or right. Implicit Bias theory discusses how biases are created and what can be done about them when they negatively affect the Other. To lay the foundation for this part of the study, race, racism, and color-blindness will be addressed.

Race

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) define race as the "notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Interestingly, after decades of genetics research, it is widely understood that the races are incredibly alike regardless of skin color (Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, & Piazza, 1994; Lewontin, 1982). Myers (2007) remarks, "Individual differences within a race are much greater than differences between races" (p. 460). To further explain this Meyers (2007) compares genetic differences between two Icelandic villagers and two Kenyans and notes the differences between these greatly exceed the group differences between both groups (Meyers, 2007). Many social scientists see race as a social construct as defined earlier (Helms, Jernigan, & Mascher, 2005; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Kidd, 2005).

Alexander (2010) writes

> When Malcolm X condemned the white man and declared him the enemy, he was not, of course, speaking about any particular white man, but rather the white, patriarchal order that characterized both slavery and Jim Crow. Malcolm X understood that the United States was created by and for privileged white men. It was white men who dominated politics, controlled the nation's wealth, and wrote the rules by which everyone else was forced to live. No group in the United States can be said to have experienced more privileged, and gone to greater lengths to protect it, than the white man (p. 242).

DiAngelo (2018) adds,

> As a white person, I can openly and unabashedly reminisce about the good old days. Romanticized recollections of the past and calls for a return to former ways are a function of white privilege, which manifests itself in the ability to remain oblivious to our racial history. Claiming that the past was socially better than the present is also a hallmark of white supremacy. Consider any period in the past from the perspective of people of color: 246 years of brutal enslavement; the rape of Black women for the pleasure of white men and to produce more enslaved workers; the selling off of Black children; the attempted genocide of Indigenous people, Indian removal acts, and reservations; indentured servitude, lynching, and mob violence; sharecropping; Chinese exclusion laws; Japanese American internment; Jim Crow laws of mandatory segregation; Black codes; bans on Black jury service; bans on voting; imprisoning people for unpaid work; medical sterilization and experimentation; employment discrimination; educational discrimination; inferior schools; biased laws and policing practices; redlining and subprime mortgages; mass incarceration; racist media representation; cultural erasures, attacks, and mockery; and untold and perverted historical accounts, and you can see how a romanticized past is strictly a white construct. But it is a powerful construct because it calls out to a deeply internalized sense of superiority and entitlement and the sense that any advancement for people of color is an encroachment on this entitlement. The past was great for white people (and white men in particular) because their positions went largely unchallenged (p. 59).

A narrative of white supremacy in America, defined later in this review, began as early as the founding of America that has kept that social construct in place, even amongst Christians (Hill, 2020; Swanson, 2020; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). From this social construct of race, systems of racism evolved creating inequalities in education, jobs, housing, legal protections, and economics (Payne, 2017; Alexander, 2010).

Racism

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) define racism as, “Any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). When discussing racism against Blacks in America Armor (1997) describes this racism as the Black Tax; the price Blacks must pay when they encounter whites because of stereotypes. Examples of the Black Tax include Blacks being stopped and questioned by police for being in a white neighborhood, Blacks being shadowed in department stores, and Blacks being profiled and stopped by drug enforcement officers to name a few (Armour, 1997).

The Black Tax rears its head in the same areas that the social construct of race does but also includes other stereotypes such as the idea that all Black men are aggressive (Armour, 1997). This example of a current stereotype of Black men as being aggressive and predatory can be traced back to the post-slave era when a great insurrection was foretold, terrifying whites that angry Black men might attack and even rape their women (Alexander, 2010). Banaji and Greenwald (2016) expand on this stereotype noting that Black men are very much aware of how they are viewed. They experience this often in both their work and personal lives, whether applying for a loan or merely walking into a store (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).

Color-Blindness

Color-blindness creates a culture that denies a person of color’s negative ethnic experiences, discards their cultural heritage, and discredits their differing perspectives (Harts, 2019; Tarca, 2005; Williams, 2011). Williams (2011) states “The need for color-blindness implies there is something shameful about the way God made me and the culture I was born into that we shouldn't talk about” (Williams, 2011). To take this one step further (Tarca, 2005)

explains that the dogma of color-blindness deals with the concept of social equality (Tarca, 2005). Yet, social, and economic inequality among groups, especially ethnic groups has been widely researched and reported by both scholarly and popular media for decades (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Taylor et al., 2009). The ideology of color-blindness misrepresents this inequality.

In America, underrepresented or disenfranchised minorities will explain that race does matter, as it affects opportunities, perceptions, income, and so much more. Instead of resulting from an enlightened, even if it is a well-meaning position, color-blindness comes from a lack of awareness of ethnic privilege alluded to by the standard social norm; whiteness (Harts, 2019; Hill, 2017; Payne, 2017; Tarca, 2005; Williams, 2011). In this way, Williams (2011) says "White people can guiltlessly subscribe to color-blindness because they are usually unaware of how race affects people of color and American society as a whole" (Williams, 2011).

While the color of one's skin is obvious, personal experiences are not. To use an example, Chugh (2018) makes the point that children are often hushed when they stare or make a comment about someone different than they are making the difference appear to be a bad thing, something that should remain unspoken (Chugh, 2018). Hill (2017) discusses varying Biblical characters and the fact that their race or color was highlighted when describing them to readers. They include Joseph, Moses, Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Jesus. He also discusses the early church as including the cultural identity of many members (Hill, 2017).

Implicit Bias Theory

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity notes "implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Kirwan Institute, Module One). Banaji and Greenwald (2016) note that hidden biases

can guide behavior without the individual realizing it. Hidden biases are bits and pieces of information about social groups that come from experiences and environments, generally during formative years. Once embedded in the mind these hidden biases can influence behavior toward individuals of certain social groups. When challenged most people find this unbelievable especially if they feel as though they are a good person (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). This can lead to cognitive dissonance, which will be discussed further along in this review.

The Science Behind Implicit Bias

Harvard University researchers led by Banaji and Greenwald (2016) have made groundbreaking advances in the field of implicit bias. By developing the Implicit Association Test (IAT) interested participants can take any number of tests to discover the level of hidden biases within themselves. The relevant test to this research developed by this group of researchers is the Race Implicit Association Test. This test can be taken, at no cost, at the Project Implicit website (ProjectImplicit/Take a Test). According to the website, Project Implicit is

> a non-profit organization and international collaboration between researchers who are interested in implicit social cognition, thoughts, and feelings outside of conscious awareness and control. The goal of the organization is to educate the public about hidden biases and to provide a "virtual laboratory" for collecting data on the Internet (ProjectImplicit/About Us).

Myers (2007) writes, "If you later recall something you experienced, you must, somehow, have stored and retrieved it. Anything stored in long-term memory lies dormant, waiting to be reconstructed by a cue" (p. 361). Some of these memories occur through automatic processing. Myers (2007) says, "automatic processing happens unconsciously, as we absorb information (space, time, frequency, well-learned material) in our environment" (p. 361). A human's ability to store long-term memories is in essence limitless (Myers, 2007).

Attitudes and beliefs arise from these experiences that often remain unconscious (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. For example, a person who is a smoker may report only smoking one pack of cigarettes a day, when in fact they smoke two, on average. This individual may be too embarrassed to admit to the two packs a day or does not keep track of how many cigarettes a day they smoke (ProjectImplicit/Education). Banaji and Greenwald (2016) note, more specifically, that the IAT measures an individual's response to mental images and associated words. It is designed to uncover automatic associations held between concepts, such as light and dark, and attributes such as good or bad. Participants are asked to quickly pair concepts and related constructs. Since each question requires a quick response, the participant is given little time to completely process their decisions, but instead, they must rely on gut reactions and subconscious associations (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016).

Payne (2017) tells readers that implicit bias seems particularly difficult to overcome. Why? Implicit biases reside not just in the minds of individuals, based on past experiences, but in ideas that make up a culture (Payne, 2017). To be clear, since most people are thought to have implicit biases, this includes people of all ethnicities.

Unlearning Implicit Biases

Chugh (2018) notes that people with a growth mindset improve performance after making a mistake. As opposed to people with a fixed mindset who continue to make mistakes, never learning from past actions (Chugh, 2018). In her book, *Mindset*, Dweck (2008) defines the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Someone who has a fixed mindset believes they are only as smart as the hand they have been dealt. They believe the innate qualities they have cannot change. A person with a growth mindset believes that qualities are things one

can cultivate through personal effort. Through her research, she has noted that people who have a fixed mindset tend to stereotype, even if they are stereotyping themselves. Often this comes from perceived negative stereotypes, such as assuming girls are not good at math or African Americans are lower in intelligence. The key, she notes is seeking to discover which mindset one ascribes to (Dweck, 2008). Based on Dasgupta's (2004) research people's implicit attitudes and beliefs toward in and outgroups affect specific types of behaviors. Some of which may operate in an individual without awareness or control. For the leader, if they can become aware of their potential bias, their motivation and opportunity to control it can determine whether attitudes translate into action (Dasgupta, 2004).

In light of this information from Chugh, 2018; Dweck, 2008 and Dasgupta, 2004, this researcher is offering two new terms relating to becoming aware of one's implicit biases and further, managing them. These terms are Recognized Bias and Responsive Bias. Recognized Bias is defined as the self-recognition and acknowledgment of an implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022). Responsive Bias is defined as the active self-monitoring and quick positive response to a recognized implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022). How these two terms can be used is further discussed in Chapter Five, Applications.

Cognizant Dissonance Theory

Myers (2007) defines cognitive dissonance theory as, "the theory that we act to reduce the discomfort (dissonance) we feel when two of our thoughts (cognitions) are inconsistent" (p. 728). This theory was first introduced by Leon Festinger. In his introduction to dissonance, Festinger (1957) writes, "A person may think that Negroes are just as good as whites but would not want any living in his neighborhood" (p. 1). This inconsistency or disharmony may come from an otherwise internally consistent individual. Often the individual will try to rationalize the

inconsistency. As an example, the above-mentioned smoker may know smoking cigarettes is bad for their health yet rationalizes the possibility of becoming ill from cigarettes by telling themselves how much they enjoy smoking or by minimizing the health risks to them personally (Festinger, 1957). Myers (2007) explains to readers that the more responsible a person feels for a disturbing thought or act, the more dissonance they feel. The more dissonance the individual feels the more motivated they are to find consonance or consistency. They do this by seeking to justify the act or thought by believing their own false words or thoughts or another's. Their pretense becomes their cognitive response to their perceived reality (Myers, 2007). Ivy, Hill, & Stevens (1978) focus on four variables that are determiners of the magnitude of the dissonance experienced in any given situation, "1) the similarity of alternatives, 2) the importance of the decision, 3) the amount and quality of information obtained about the alternatives prior to the decision, and 4) the degree of functional overlap of the alternatives" (p. 19).

In Gorski's (2009) article he recounts how his students often respond when he challenges them on the notion that America was founded on Christian principles. His students generally balk at the notion, becoming defensive whether by word or by their body language. The conversation can become even more difficult when he challenges the notion that all of America's founding fathers were also Christian. He found that when beginning a conversation on social justice issues, it is often best to begin with an understanding of what cognitive dissonance is, so students can recognize it in themselves and have an opportunity to work through their own dissonance to come to a place of understanding about whatever a topic may be (Gorski, 2009).

Payne (2017) a psychologist, acknowledges his shock at failing a racial implicit bias test, one he designed himself. He knew he had no reason to be biased, yet the data stated otherwise (Payne, 2017). Payne (2017) writes, "I felt for the first time the discomforting gap between my

good intentions and my biased behavior, known as implicit bias" (p. 166). van Wormer & Falkner (2012) write,

> A familiarity with cognitive dissonance theory is helpful also in working with clients who may otherwise be slow to move in the direction of much-needed change. Motivational enhancement therapy, for example, is built on developing discrepancy. This means helping clients to identify for themselves the discrepancies between their stated goals and their present behavior. Only when people get beyond the defenses that they have developed to ward off the dissonance will they be ready to address their problems (for example, prejudice, dysfunctional behaviors) and begin to take the first steps toward change (p. 406).

Summary

This theoretical framework discussed, race, racism, color blindness, implicit bias, and cognitive dissonance as a way of understanding how explicit bias and implicit bias can occur in well-meaning individuals, including Christians. It also begins to give the reader a snapshot into why racism has been such a sore and gaping wound to heal in America, but specifically in the American Church. This is important because Heaven will not be divided but diverse. Revelation 7:9-14 highlights a diverse Heaven in eternity

> After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (KJV, Revelation 7:9-14).

If the American Church can get this wound of racism healed, it may just become that shining example of a city on a hill for the rest of the world to see and emulate (KJV, Matt. 5:14). The following outlines important literature related to this study.

Related Literature

The related literature for this review will delve into concepts such as how perceptions are formed and how perceptions of people of color have been perpetuated through culture, media, education, and through the lens of what it means to be white in America. To be clear perceptions of the other are created in people of all ethnicities. Here the literature is continuing to explain the history of America and the American Christian Church as it relates to implicit ethnic bias. As well, what it means to otherize, minimize, or stereotype another will be discussed. A definition of perception begins the related literature.

Perception

Feldman (2011) defines perception as, "the mental process of sorting out, interpreting, analyzing and integrating stimuli from the sense organs and the brain" (p. 130). Taylor (2019) notes that one's perceptions of others are believed to be the truth by the one doing the perceiving, whether the perceptions are the truth or not (Taylor, 2019). Perception is important to the topic of implicit bias, ethnic, or otherwise because the two are connected. As a reminder and discussed under Background to the Problem, Rudman (2004) suggests four possible ways implicit bias in an individual is created: early experiences, affective experiences, cultural biases, and cognitive consistency principles (Rudman, 2004).

Myers (2007) reminds readers that associative learning was first studied by Pavlov during his dog experiments. These experiments exploring the cause and effect of classical conditioning identified five major conditioning processes: acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, and discrimination (Myers, 2007). Associative learning in the human brain allows the brain to make a connection between two things to infer something (Kirwan, Module Three). Early experiences deriving from one's environment or culture can set the standard by which an

individual perceives the other. Culture, the media, and education can reinforce these perceptions as detailed below.

Perception and Culture

In defining culture Diller (2011), recognizes that it can be difficult. Anthropologically, culture points to traditional ideas and related values. Other thoughts on culture include the way people groups deal with the problems of life. For certain, culture influences an individual's identity, beliefs, values, and behaviors. Culture is learned as part of growing up in a family and community as a part of one's greater society (Diller, 2011). Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines (2008) state, “values are defined as those things you hold most dear. They are conceptions of what is good, right, more worthwhile, and they direct your actions as well as those of other family members” (p. 49). Understanding the influence of culture on implicit bias and perceptions is crucial because both are formed due to the influence of both early and affective experiences (Rudman, 2004).

Perception and Education

Even well-meaning education can contribute to misperceptions of the other. Many history books tell early learners of Lincoln freeing the slaves in 1865 and may even highlight the civil rights era as a time of great turmoil and ultimate success. However, they do not always show the dark underside of the educational and economic disparity still evident in the Black community (Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020).

In speaking of American high school history books, Loewen (2018) writes

> Even though the books bulge with detail, even though the courses are so busy they rarely reach 1960, our teachers and our textbooks still leave out most of what we need to know about the American past. And despite their emphasis on facts, some of the factoids they present are flatly wrong or unverifiable. Errors often go uncorrected, partly because the

> history profession does not bother to review high school textbooks. In sum, startling errors of omission and distortion mar American histories (p. 7).

Loewen (2018) gives an example of false information fed to high school students

> As soon as the federal government stopped addressing the problem of racist whites, Reconstruction ended. Since textbooks find it hard to say anything really damaging about white people, their treatments of why Reconstruction failed still lack clarity. Into the 1990s, American history textbooks still presented the end of Reconstruction as a failure of African Americans. Triumph in 1990 explained, “Other northerners grew weary of the problems of Black southerners and less willing to help them learn their new roles as citizens.” The American Adventure echoed” “Millions of ex-slaves could not be converted in ten years into literate voters, or successful politicians, farmers, and businessmen (p. 160).

Tisby (2019) sheds light on that lie and speaks about the successes of Blacks in politics during the Reconstruction

> This era saw a blossoming of Black political participation. While many whites assumed that Black people did not have the moral or mental capacity to participate in a democracy, Black leaders quickly proved them wrong. Hiram Revels became the first Black US senator in the nation's history representing a state as notorious for racism as Mississippi, and P. B. S. Pinchback served for a brief time as the governor of Louisiana, the first Black person to ever serve in the highest political office of a state. Fourteen Black men served in the US House of Representatives at one time. During Reconstruction, 800 Black men gained office in state legislatures, and at one point, Black men became the majority in the South Carolina house. Countless other Black men took on roles in government like postmasters, assessors, and customs officials (p. 90).

DiAngelo (2018) notes that a white individual can look back throughout much of history and have a sense of belonging. This is the opposite for Blacks in America (DiAngelo, 2018). This is particularly true for those Blacks whose ancestors were brought to America on slave ships severing all ties to their ancestry.

Further, Payne (2017) discusses the historical as well as the current inequalities in education between Blacks and whites. This is important to the idea of racial perceptions. Long-term educational inequalities correlate to income inequality and the stagnation of upward

mobility. This can affect decision-making in a whole host of arenas not understood by those who have not experienced these disparities (Payne, 2017).

Perception and Media

Broadening stereotypes for just a moment from only Blacks to other people of color, it is not hard to see the effect the media has had on perceptions. The depiction of Muslims in American media might lead some Americans to perceive that anyone who is Muslim is dangerous. According to Iftikhar (2019),

> The portrayal of minority groups in mainstream media can have a disparate impact on how they are viewed by the general public. In the eighteen years since 9/11, the American Muslim community has borne the collective brunt of negative media portrayals from cable news to Hollywood movies (Iftikhar, 2019).

Iftikhar (2019) cites a research study conducted at Middlebury College in Vermont by the non-partisan research group The Media Portrayals of Minorities Project. The researchers in that study concluded

> Turning to the roughly 2,800 articles from 2018 that mention Muslims three or more times, we see that coverage focuses even more heavily on foreign conflict, terrorism, and law and order. The prevalence of other themes—such as education, economics, and culture—remains fairly constant. Articles that discuss Muslims in more depth are thus more negative than those that just mention them in passing. This means that stories centering on Muslims or Islam tend to reinforce a perception that there is a correlation between Islam and violence. Simultaneously, by giving relatively less attention to other aspects of Muslim life that are shared by all identity groups—culture, education, domestic politics—newspapers may make it harder for readers to see Muslims as part of mainstream American society (Bleich et al., 2019) (Iftikhar, 2019).

Sun (2015) notes that even those who are peace-loving Americans, such as physicians, feel the sting of this destructive stereotype when patients refuse to have them as their doctor because of their religion or nationality (Sun, 2015). In a recent research study, Padela et al. (2015), concludes “A significant minority of Muslim clinicians experience religious

discrimination at work, and particularly those for whom their religion is most important" (Padela et al., 2015). In the report, researchers outline their results

> Two hundred fifty-five physicians responded (41% response rate). Most were male (70%), South Asian (70%), and adult immigrants to the United States (65%). Nearly all (89%) considered Islam as the most or a very important part of their life, and most (63%) prayed five times daily; 24% reported experiencing religious discrimination frequently over their career, and 14% currently experience religious discrimination at work. After adjusting for personal and practice characteristics, respondents for whom religion was most important had greater odds of experiencing religious discrimination at their current workplace (OR 3.9, $p < .01$). Sixteen respondents reported job turnover due to religious discrimination, of whom 12 rated religion as the most important part of their life (Padela et al., 2015).

Certain movies have portrayed some Native Americans as aggressive. Yet, as Hildebrand et al. (2008) note most Native Americans operate under four core values; 1) self-reliance, 2) noninterference in others' lives, 3) non-confrontation with those who do not agree with them, and 4) respect for their elders. In the workplace, misinterpreting the pride of self-reliance and the non-confrontational nature of Native Americans may cause an uninformed leader to perceive that a Native American team member has no interest in being a team player (Hildebrand et al., 2008).

As with the feeling of belonging in education, concerning media, whites have a sense of belonging when they turn on the TV, walk past a magazine rack, or drive past a billboard (DiAngelo, 2018). DiAngelo (2018) writes

> This belonging is a deep and ever-present feeling that has always been with me. Belonging has settled deep into my consciousness; it shapes my daily thoughts and concerns, what I reach for in life, and what I expect to find. The experience of belonging is so natural that I do not have to think about it. The rare moments in which I don't belong ethnically come as a surprise ... (p. 53).

This is a much different experience for people of color (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 51-55).

Perception and Whiteness

Along with the connections between perceptions and culture, education, and the media, it makes sense to discuss what it means to be white in America to round out the related literature review about perceptions. The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. defines and discusses whiteness as

> Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal. This white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people, since they can navigate society both by feeling normal and being viewed as normal. Persons who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity because they live within a culture where whiteness has been normalized (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2021).

Like Hill (2020), Glaude (2020) discusses a narrative that has been perpetuated since the inception of America. In his work discussing the writings of James Baldwin, Glaude (2020) calls this narrative, "the lie" (p. 7). Moreover, he calls it several sets of lies and discusses what he calls the value gap, the theory that white lives have always mattered in America more than other lives (Glaude, 2020). Glaude (2020) writes,

> The lie is a broad and powerful architecture of false assumptions by which the value gap is maintained. These are the narrative assumptions that support the everyday order of American life, which means we breathe them like air. We count them as truths. We absorb them into our character (p. 7).

This reflects the aforementioned information on how perceptions are created.

Concerning what Glaude (2020) calls the value gap, DiAngelo (2018) discusses whiteness and notes that it rests on the foundational premise that being white is considered the norm or standard for human beings. This then denotes people of color as a deviation from that normal standard. To be white is not generally acknowledged by white people because it is very

difficult to think about whiteness (defined earlier) as a specific state of being that could impact one's life. Conversely, people of color are consistently required to remember that the obvious color of their skin sets them apart from what is considered normal (DiAngelo, 2018).

Chugh (2018) expounds on this by telling readers that in understanding this white ethnic identity, the natural reflex is to try to reduce the pain and self-threat. Some whites do this by doubling down on their assertion that they are color-blind, for example, producing the needed affirmation to minimize the self-threat (Chugh, 2018). This then reflects the prior discussion about cognizant dissonance. Discussed below are the hidden costs of "the lie" (Glaude, 2020, p. 7).

Hidden Costs of Racism and Implicit Bias

Otherizing

In explaining otherizing Chugh (2018) notes,

> Our mind can perceive someone as something other than a human being when we otherize them. We are able to make them less human and less like us than they really are. When we otherize someone in this way, they become more like an object or category and less like a person. We are more likely to assume their experiences differ from ours and less likely to respect that difference (p. 146-147).

In their work, DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey (2003), Native American author and educator Richard Twiss recounts a story

> One day when my oldest son, Andrew, was eight years old, he spent several hours playing at the house of his friend Aaron, who is White. Later, after Andrew left, Aaron asked his mom and dad, 'Did you know that Andrew Twiss is half Indian and half human?'(p. 102).

Otherizing does more harm than good (Chugh, 2018). Yet, the human mind can otherize at lightning speed and often unconsciously. Chester & Timmis (2008) describe it as the other not being seen as "one of us" (p. 76). It would be important to raise a few questions. What is a

Christian to do, if they are unaware of how they may otherize another, who they perceive to be different, thereby creating this distance? How has this affected the American Church? How has it affected multi-ethnic American churches? How can it affect the Great Commission? Along with otherizing minimizing can have a profound effect on individuals, the American Church, and the Great Commission because it causes people to be on the outside of the in-group and to be minimized.

Minimizing

Livermore (2016) remarks on the danger of minimizing and describes it as overlooking cultural differences and focusing on what groups have in common (Livermore, 2016). Chugh (2018) elaborates and observes that this difference-blindness disconnects the blind one from all that is good and true about the other. The essence of the other is discarded to make the blind one feel connected, but they are not (Chugh, 2018). Chugh (2018) discusses the research that seeks to understand how humans immediately process and categorize new people based on their age, gender, ethnicity, and social category. This processing occurs in the brain automatically. Eye-tracking studies have suggested that the strategy most used to avoid noticing one's race is to avoid looking at them at all. This is otherizing, minimizing, and denying at the extreme (pp. 154-158). The eye-tracking study Chugh (2018) references was conducted by Bean et al. (2012). The final behavior that can leave people on the outside of the in-group is stereotyping.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping was briefly discussed as part of the conversation concerning the Black Tax Armour (1997) described. Here it will be delved into a bit more. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) define stereotype as a "Fixed, usually negative, image of members of a group" (p. 184). Armour (1997) explains that often, those who stereotype, consciously or subconsciously, try to justify

their thinking. The Reasonable Racist purports that even if he believes the stereotype of Black men being more prone to violence, he should be excused from the responsibility of this line of thinking because most similarly situated Americans, those who reasonably believe they are in danger because a Black man is close, by would act aggressively toward that Black man in self-defense, even when there was no real threat (Armour, 1997). Smith (2009) discusses how something like stereotyping can become a habit

> Overtime, rituals, and practices, often in tandem with aesthetic phenomena like pictures and stories, mold and shape our precognitive disposition to the world by training our desires. It's as if our appendages function as a conduit to our adaptive unconscious: the motions and rhythms of embodied routines train our minds and hearts so that we develop habits, sort of attitudinal reflexes, that make us tend to act in certain ways toward certain ends (p. 59).

Otherizing, minimizing, and stereotyping can become a habit, normalizing these phenomena, working against the fact that mankind is made in the image of God.

Rationale for the Study and Gap in the Literature

To this point, the research has shown implicit ethnic bias and even explicit ethnic bias have existed across the spectrum in America since its inception, including in the American Church. As noted, earlier most humans have some level of implicit bias in some regard, even well-meaning individuals. This also applies to Christians. It applies to all ethnicities. While implicit bias has been studied in education and business, the effects of implicit bias in churches have only recently come to the forefront. Authors such as Hill (2017), Mason (2018), McPherson (2020), Swanson (2020), Tisby (2019), and Wilson-Hartgrove (2020) have highlighted the issues of explicit ethnic bias and implicit ethnic bias in the American Christian Church through both the historical and current times lens. As well, some authors have taken this a bit further and offered suggestions as to what American Christian Churches can do to address these issues to ensure

they are living up to the recognition that each person is made in the image of God (KJV, Gen. 1:26-27), that all are treated with dignity, and loved according to Jesus' command in Scripture (John 13:34-35) (Hill, 2020; Mason, 2018; McPherson, 2020).

What needed to be conducted was a current study of multi-ethnic American Churches led by senior pastors who have successfully led a multi-ethnic American church. In other words, are there best practices that have been put in place by senior pastors to create and nurture a multi-ethnic church where all church members feel as though they are regarded as equals, considered equally, as being made in the image of God, and who have formed imago Dei-centered relationships? Herein lies the gap in the literature that this work sought to fill.

Profile of the Current Study

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design that was interview-based. In-depth interviews were used to gain an understanding of the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have imago Dei-centered relationships working to fulfill the Great Commission. Purposive sampling and snowball technique were used to seek out senior Christian pastors who were pastoring an American multi-ethnic church. Pastors of both genders and varying ethnicities were sought.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Synopsis

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have imago Dei-centered relationships working to fulfill the Great Commission. The goal of this study was to investigate what has worked and what has not worked in the success of multi-ethnic American churches. The theories guiding this study were Implicit Bias Theory and Cognizant Dissonance theory. The following outlines the research design including methods, instrumentation, data analysis procedures, setting, and participants.

The Problem

Implicit ethnic bias and even overt racism have existed across the spectrum in America since its inception, including in the American Christian Church (Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). Most humans have some level of implicit bias, even well-meaning individuals, whether they realize it or not (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Chugh, 2018). Since this is true, it also applies to Christians. Ethnic implicit and explicit bias ram into a foundational truth; all human beings are made in the image of God.

According to Barna,

> Just a little over a quarter of U.S. Protestant pastors (29%) say that it is completely (11%) or mostly (18%) true that their church has been actively involved in addressing racism or ethnic inequality in the U.S. Another three in 10 pastors (30%) say this is somewhat true of their church (Conversations, Part 1, 2020).

Barna also found “nearly all pastors (94%) agree the Church has a responsibility to publicly denounce racial discrimination. A similar portion (89%) says that it is important for church

leaders to publicly show support for people of color" (Conversations, Part 2). As these numbers show, there is a large gap between pastors who feel racism should be addressed and those who actively work to address the issue both inside and outside the church walls. When implicit ethnic bias or explicit ethnic bias, exists in church leaders and church members it can negatively impact the entire church body working flatly against the purpose of the Great Commission (Mason, 2018).

While implicit bias has been studied in education and business (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016; Chugh, 2018), the effects of implicit bias in the churches have only recently come to the forefront. Some researchers have highlighted the issues of racism and implicit ethnic bias in the American Church through both the historical and current times lens (DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, & Yancey, 2003; Tisby, 2019; Wilson-Hartgrove, 2020). Other authors have taken this a bit further and offered suggestions as to what American churches can do to address these issues to ensure they are living up to the recognition that each person is made in the image of God (Hill, 2020; Mason, 2018). This research studied seven multi-ethnic American Christian churches led by senior pastors to investigate the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have imago Dei-centered relationships working to fulfill the Great Commission. Herein was the gap in the literature.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. For this study effectively overcoming means that the leader identified practices that have led to a more biblical, cohesive, and

harmonious multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission.

Research Questions

This study sought to discover what approaches worked well and which did not while on the road to a successful multi-ethnic church. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do participating senior-level pastors describe the value, if any, of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the churches or ministry?

RQ2. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor?

RQ3. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the senior-level pastor's team?

RQ4. How can the ministry/Church benefit from increased understanding of implicit ethnic bias?

RQ5. What practices are perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

RQ6. What practices are perceived to have not worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

Research Design and Methodology

The methodological design was a qualitative phenomenological design that was interview-based, with open-ended questions. In-depth interviews were used to gain an understanding of what methods may have and what methods may not have worked in leading a successful multi-ethnic church. The researcher interviewed senior pastors directly. The sampling was not random, but specific to Christian senior pastors who were pastoring a multi-ethnic American church. More specifically, the population studied were Christians, over eighteen years of age, from varying ethnic backgrounds and both genders, who were in senior pastor positions

in a multi-ethnic American church. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B).

For face validity and to ensure credibility and safety of the instrument being used for the interviews, a panel of four professionals, was convened to review the questions. These professionals included an attorney, a senior pastor (not included in the study), a licensed professional counselor (LPC), and a qualified mental health professional (QMHP). These professionals were approved by the dissertation supervisor prior to inclusion in the panel. The researcher instructed the professionals to look for wording that could be leading and/or biased in any way that could affect the results. Additionally, the professionals were instructed to look for wording that could potentially harm the subjects being interviewed. None of the participants on the expert panel found the interview questions to be leading, biased, or harmful in any way. Therefore, no changes were made to the interview questions.

The qualitative approach to research focuses on the subject's experience from their perspectives (Roberts 2010). This data can take the form of observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, or even looking at written documents. Rather than just using numbers as in quantitative research, qualitative research uses words that describe people's knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people's actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions (Roberts, 2010). Creswell (2014) notes, that qualitative research is done in the natural setting where subjects experience the issue or problem being studied, therefore individual subjects do not come into a lab, instead, the researcher goes into the field to collect the data. The researcher collects the data themselves by examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. Since qualitative research is an approach for

exploring and understanding the meaning of a socially human problem it was the best research approach for this project, along with a strong phenomenological design (Creswell, 2014).

Phenomenological research design according to Creswell (2014), "is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (p. 14). Leedy and Ormrod (2015), write, "In other words, a phenomenological study tries to answer the question *What is it like to experience such-and-such?*" (p.255). In a phenomenological research study, the researcher needs to set aside any biases they may have pertaining to the topic being researched they may influence what they hear from subjects (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The researcher set aside any biases which are further explained under the Role of the Researcher. Since the population sample was very specific, purposive sampling was employed.

The website Business Research Methodology (BRM) tells readers that purposive sampling can be used when only a limited number of subjects can serve as data sources due to the nature of the research and objectives (Research-methodology.net). As part of this purposive sampling for this research project, both heterogeneous and homogeneous sampling was used. Homogeneous sampling was used because the project is very specific to Christian senior pastors. Heterogeneous sampling was used because the product requires a mix of ethnic and gender characteristics (Research-methodology.net). As well, snowball technique was used where participants were asked to refer any pastors they felt would meet the criteria and who would be willing to participate.

Interview Protocol according to (Creswell, 2014) "is a form used by qualitative researchers for recording and writing down information obtained during an interview" (p. 244). This was the best protocol for this study as it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions

and study the participant fully even though the setting was a video chat platform due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. Participants chose their setting where they felt safe and non-threatened to complete the Zoom interview and the settings varied.

Setting

Phenomenological studies focus on people's experiences from their particular vantage points. The inquiry for the study begins with general questions about the subject to be studied. In phenomenological studies, researchers seek the whole picture: a comprehensive and complete understanding of the phenomena under study. Oftentimes this means they go to the field to collect the data, making observations, conducting in-depth and open-ended interviews, or looking at written documents (Roberts, 2010). Normally, this phenomenological study would have been conducted on the site of participating multi-ethnic American churches to interview the subjects in the natural settings of the church they lead. However, given the current situation of the global Covid-19 pandemic, an alternative option of using the video conferencing technology, Zoom, was employed. Participants chose their setting where they felt safe and non-threatened to complete the Zoom interview and the settings varied. The use of Zoom backgrounds and tight camera focus prevented the researcher from knowing where five of the participants chose to conduct the interview. Two conducted the interviews in their car for privacy.

Participants

This research studied Christian senior pastors, over eighteen years of age who were pastoring a multi-ethnic American Church. A mix of male and female pastors, as well as ethnically diverse pastors, were sought. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B). Since this study required the aforementioned qualifications, purposive sampling was used. According

to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), “In purposive sampling, people or other units are chosen, as the name implies, for a particular purpose” (p. 165). As well, snowball technique was used where participants were asked to refer any pastors they felt would meet the criteria and who would be willing to participate. To determine if participants met the requirements of the sampling, a short questionnaire of twelve questions was used prior to the interview questions. See Appendix C. There is a delimitation of this sampling process resulting in a lack of randomization. Along with the initial questionnaire and interview process, a commitment to partake in the study was necessary.

Seven senior pastors who met these qualifications were interviewed. While additional participants would have made for a more robust study, some churches/pastors either did not respond to the initial e-mail, stopped responding after their initial response, or declined to participate in the study. See Table 2 Non-Participant Demographics under Demographic and Sample Data. To make for a more well-rounded study, pastors of varied ethnicities and both genders were sought. However, early on the balance began to shift toward more Black male pastors than any other demographic who pastor a multi-ethnic American church and who were willing to participate in the study. Since this may have slanted the study, after one white and three Black male pastors agreed to the study, the researcher shifted the focus to finding more white, Hispanic, Asian, and female subjects to round out lived experiences. Concerning the final participants who agreed to the study, there were three Black males, one white male, one Hispanic male, one white female, and one mixed race, Black and Hispanic, female. Seven multi-ethnic American churches were a reasonable number to reach given the limited number of multi-ethnic churches in America. It was also a large enough number to be able to include churches led by

pastors of varying races and both genders whose churches hold to the aforementioned doctrinal statement to round out lived experiences. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) note

> Phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews (perhaps 1 to 2 hours in length) with a small, carefully selected sample of participants. A typical sample size is from 5 to 25 individuals, all of whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (p. 255).

More information on each participant can be found under Demographic and Sample Data, Table 3.

Five participating churches are in the midwestern part of the United States, with the sizes of the city populations ranging from approximately 23,000 to 114, 000. One participating church is on the West coast, with a city population of approximately 45,000 people. One participating church is in the Southwestern part of the country with a city size of 95,000 people. All churches met the definition of a multi-cultural church in which no one racial group is more than eighty percent of the people (DeYoung, Emerson, Kim, &Yancey, 2003). The approximate racial demographics in each church varied between 15% and 80% White, 8% and 60% Black, and 0% and 30% Hispanic. These churches represented a wide range of percent of diversity in ethnicities. Denominations have not been included to protect the identity of the participants. The researcher's home church, while multi-ethnic was not included in this study, nor were any multi-ethnic churches in her home county included in the study.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher varies between quantitative and qualitative research. Concerning qualitative research Leedy and Ormrod (2015) tell readers

> qualitative research requires the researcher to make significant decisions and judgments throughout the data analysis process, not only about what strategies to use in general but also about which data are most likely to be noteworthy and how to evaluate and code specific pieces of data (p. 301).

As well, the researcher must be astute in looking for outliers, exceptions, contradictions as well as working to determine that the subjects gave the truth in their interviews and did not merely give the researcher what they believed to be true, wished was true, or what they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). The researcher holds a Master's degree in Human Services Counseling: Executive Leadership, has nearly a decade of working in the social services field, and has more than twenty years of ministry experience. The researcher also teaches adults, in both community and professional settings, communication skills which include understanding both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. These adults have included professionals, non-professionals, the formerly incarcerated, those who are currently on parole or probation, and those struggling with addiction. The researcher used her practical experience deciphering between what someone who is being interviewed believes to be true, wishes were true, or if they give the researcher what they think they want to hear instead of the truth (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015).

Creswell (2014) notes, that qualitative research is interpretative therefore, researchers must identify their biases, values, and personal background that may shape these interpretations (Creswell, 2014). Leedy & Ormrod (2015) "Rather than claim to be an objective, impartial observer, a researcher describes personal beliefs and attitudes that may potentially be slanting observations and interpretations" (p. 88). Leedy & Ormrod (2015) also note, "ultimately, we must remember that no human being can be completely objective" (p. 170).

The researcher has observed racial incidents for decades, including incidents against the researcher's own family. Further, the researcher has done a self-study of racism and implicit biases for the last four years, particularly implicit ethnic bias. This has been done by researching

and reading a plethora of books and scholarly articles that were written as far back as 1997 such as Armour (1997) and more currently such as Swanson (2020). Much of this information has been included in the References of this study. Additionally, while the researcher in this study is white, the researcher's family members, friends, and church members are of varied ethnic backgrounds which has given the researcher an inside perspective of both the ills of racism and implicit ethnic bias. Therefore, the role of the researcher in this study was to, "suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences that may unduly influence what they "hear" participants saying" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016, p. 255). Since the researcher has studied the topic of racism and implicit bias for many years and has first-hand knowledge of both racism and implicit ethnic bias, the researcher actively listened to the participants, remained open to their lived experiences, and reported the findings honestly. Reflexive journaling was used to achieve confirmability. Leedy & Ormrod (2015) define reflexivity and write, "in qualitative research, a researcher's conscious attempt to (a) identify personal, social, political, or philosophical biases that might influence data collection and interpretation and then (b) take steps to minimize such influences" (p. 371). This reflexive journal was created and used to note researcher bias at the beginning of the study and was updated throughout to prevent the researcher's biases from seeping into the research process. This journal will remain confidential and will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the journal will be destroyed.

The researcher lacked knowledge or experience in the area of understanding inner church workings concerning pastors in general and pastors who have led multi-ethnic American churches. The researcher was limited in this regard having been raised Catholic and then moving to a multi-ethnic, non-denominational church as an adult, without much exposure to other

churches, multi-ethnic or not, or denominations. This lack of experience allowed the researcher to speak to churches of varying denominations without any preconceived notions.

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning any study researchers should check the code of ethics relevant to their professional associations. As well, researchers must have their research plan reviewed by their Institutional Review Board (IRB). Part of the review by the IRB requires the researcher to assess any potential risks to participants in a study, such as physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. As well, the special needs of vulnerable populations such as minors (those under 19 years old), mentally incompetent persons, victims, persons with neurological impairments, prisoners, or any other socially deemed vulnerable populations must be considered (Creswell, 2014).

For face validity and to ensure credibility and safety of the instrument being used for the interviews in this study, a panel of four professionals, was convened to review the questions. These professionals included an attorney, a senior pastor (not included in the study), a licensed professional counselor (LPC), and a qualified mental health professional (QMHP). These professionals were approved by the dissertation supervisor prior to inclusion in the panel. The researcher instructed the professionals to look for wording that could be leading and/or biased in any way that could affect the results. Additionally, the professionals were instructed to look for wording that could potentially harm the subjects being interviewed. None of the participants on the expert panel found the interview questions to be leading, biased, or harmful in any way. Therefore, no changes were made to the interview questions.

Participants signed informed consent forms agreeing to the provisions of the study before they provided data. The provisions of the study included the identification of the researcher,

identification of the sponsoring institution, identification of the purpose of the study, identification of the benefits of participating, identification of the level and type of participant involvement, notation of any risks to the participants, the guarantee of confidentiality to the participant, assurance that the participant can withdraw at any time, and provision of the names of persons to contact if questions arise (Creswell, 2014). Once all requirements by the IRB were met and the IRB approved the research, the project began. All data collected will remain confidential. All data, including hard copies and hard drives, will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the data will be destroyed.

Data Methods Collection and Instrument

According to Creswell (2014), researchers conducting phenomenological studies gather several forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents, and review all of the information. Creswell further notes that the process is emergent, meaning that the initial plan to conduct the research cannot be so tight that it cannot shift or change after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect the data (Creswell, 2014). This research does not test a hypothesis. Ultimately, the conclusions flow from the open-ended interviews, questionnaires, observation, and other methods previously described. Moustakas (1994) writes

> In phenomenological studies the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection. In phenomenological science a relationship always exists between the external perception of natural objects and internal perceptions, memories, and judgments (p. 4).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), researchers using this method often begin by making memos, similar to note-to-self type memos. They may write down hunches or intuitions that might lead to additional interview questions. Other memos may connect to possible theories related to the underlying phenomena being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). As noted earlier the

researcher reflected on any biases they may have related to the phenomena as well as the design process by using a reflexive journal. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), the researcher needs to be careful to separate interpretations from actual observations. In other words, separating fact from opinion keeps the lines drawn about what is true and what is believed to be true so the data can be appropriately analyzed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

Collection Methods

The first order of business in the data collection was to secure participant consent forms. Creswell (2014) discusses the importance of disclosing the purpose of the study to participants prior to seeking consent. Additionally, consent forms need to be signed but the researcher should not seek to force participants to sign the consent form. All participation in any research study must be voluntary. As well, participants should have the option to leave the research study at any time (Creswell, 2014). All participants in this research study signed and returned the consent forms.

The study employed open-ended interviews that ranged from one to two hours in length. The researcher used open-ended questions to allow the participants to be free to provide their perspectives. See appendix C. Time was allowed for each participant to fully answer each question. Further details about the procedure are explained in the procedure section.

Instruments and Protocols

Qualitative interviews were used in this research study. Creswell (2014) tells readers that interviews are done face to face with one person or over the telephone. Interviews are useful when participants cannot be directly observed. They also allow the researcher flexibility in the line of questioning. Some of the limitations of interviews include the inability of every person to be able to articulate their responses fully, the researcher's presence may create a bias in

responses, and interviews are generally not done in a natural field setting, so observation is somewhat limited (Creswell, 2014).

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) note that interviews in a qualitative study are not as structured as interviews in a quantitative study which seeks data that can be quantified. In a qualitative interview, the subject may feel like they are participating in a friendly chat with the researcher. The researcher listens closely as participants describe their everyday experiences related to the phenomenon; the researcher must also be alert for subtle yet meaningful cues in participants' expressions, pauses, questions, and occasional sidetracks. A typical interview looks more like an informal conversation, with the participant doing most of the talking and the researcher doing most of the listening (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

As noted earlier the researcher holds a Master's degree in Human Services Counseling: Executive Leadership, has nearly a decade working in the social services field, and has more than twenty years of ministry experience. The researcher also teaches adults, in both community and professional settings, communication skills which include understanding both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. These adults have included professionals, non-professionals, the formerly incarcerated, those who are currently on parole or probation, and those struggling with addiction. The combined researcher's education and experience give the researcher a strong foundation to be able to pick up on subtle yet meaningful cues in participant's expressions, pauses, questions, and occasional sidetracks. The researcher approached the interview more like an informal conversation with the participant doing most of the talking and the researcher doing most of the listening (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015).

According to Creswell (2014), a large part of qualitative research is interpretive. Therefore, the role of the researcher using an interview as an instrument is to also observe

behavior during the interview (Creswell, 2014). Researchers in qualitative interviews often create their own interview instrument and do not rely on instruments other researchers have designed (Creswell, 2014).

The interview was a very important part of this study as it helped the researcher come to a better understanding of implicit bias in these multi-ethnic American churches and what may and may not have worked in developing and maintaining a multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission. The interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They each took between one and two hours to conduct with no breaks. The questions were open-ended, and time was allowed for each participant to fully answer each question. The interview questions were reviewed in advance by experts in Social Science Psychology, Law, and Pastoral Ministry to help ensure validity. The first twelve questions outlined in the first part of Appendix C were used to determine eligibility. Once the pastor was seen to fit the parameters of participation, questions outlined in the remainder of Appendix C were asked.

Procedures

Before data collection began, the research project was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Roberts (2010) tells readers that institutional review boards are part of colleges and universities and whose members review proposals and approve all research conducted in their institutions. IRBs are interested in protecting human participants to ensure confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm (Roberts 2010). Creswell (2014) notes “IRB committees exist on campuses because of federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violations” (p. 95). After the IRB approves the study data collection can begin. No research can begin until the study is approved (Creswell, 2014).

For face validity and to ensure credibility and safety of the instrument being used for the interview in this study, a panel of four professionals, was convened to review the questions in both. These professionals included an attorney, a senior pastor (not included in the study), a licensed professional counselor (LPC), and a qualified mental health professional (QMHP). These professionals were approved by the dissertation supervisor prior to inclusion in the panel. The researcher instructed the professionals to look for wording that could be leading and/or biased in any way that could affect the results. Additionally, the professionals were instructed to look for wording that could potentially harm the subjects being interviewed or surveyed. None of the participants on the expert panel found the interview questions to be leading, biased, or harmful in any way. Therefore, no changes were made to the interview questions.

Once the approval was completed a search began to find multi-ethnic churches in America. In 1998, only 6% of churches in America were multi-racial and as of 2019, 16% of all congregations across all faith groups were multi-racial (Dougherty et al., 2020). Since there is such a small number of multi-ethnic churches in America, it did take some work to find them, and once found to get an agreement to participate in the study.

Once, a multi-ethnic church was identified as possibly being multi-ethnic, an invitational e-mail was sent outlining the study, including the purpose of the study. The original goal was to have a final number of twelve multi-ethnic American churches participate in the study. The final number ended at seven. Once the churches confirmed participation, the pastors received the informed consent document, outlining the study. Once these were received back by the researcher, interviews with the senior pastors were scheduled. The pastoral interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom video conferencing due to current Covid-19 restrictions. While the interviews were recorded, a reflexive journal was kept by the researcher to take notes

during the interviews concerning managing researcher bias. Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed first by Otter AI and then checked for accuracy by the researcher. To achieve reliability, once the transcriptions were deemed accurate, they were sent to the participants for review to allow them to check for the accuracy of their statements. In a summary of the findings, the researcher used member checking and presented final themes and descriptions via e-mail to the participants to allow them an opportunity to determine if the themes and descriptions were accurate. Creswell, (2014) tells readers to

> Use member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate. This does not mean taking back the raw transcripts to check the accuracy; instead, the researcher takes back parts of the polished or semi-polished product, such as the major findings, the themes, the case analysis, the grounded theory, the cultural description, and so forth (p. 202).

The transcripts were checked several times by the researcher for accuracy to eliminate errors, to constantly compare the data with the codes, then by making memos concerning the codes, and to make sure drift did not occur (Creswell, 2014). To ensure reliability the researcher documented the steps to the procedure, so the procedures could be followed by others (Creswell, 2014). The coding procedure is described under Analysis Methods.

To maintain confidentiality pseudonyms have been used to hide identifying information. As well, church names, denominations, and the cities where those churches operate have been omitted. However, the general region of the United States where the church is located has been included. Five churches are in the midwestern part of the United States, with the sizes of the city populations ranging from approximately 23,000 to 114, 000. One church is on the West coast, with a city population of approximately 45,000 people. One church is in the Southwestern part of the country with a city size of 95,000 people. All data collected will remain confidential. All

data, including hard copies and hard drives will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the data will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) tell readers, "In qualitative research, we closely examine the data to find the meanings that lie within them" (p. 291). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to be truthful about the data, not allowing a researcher's bias or hoped-for conclusions to overshadow the analysis. According to Roberts (2010), the most important point in data analysis is to make sure that the researcher is honestly reporting what has been discovered. It is vitally important to not mislead readers. Research should not be fabricated, nor falsified as it is considered highly unethical. This is where validation strategies such as triangulation, member checking, audit trail, peer debriefing, and external auditing to check for the accuracy of the data can be crucial (Roberts, 2010).

Once data is collected researchers review all the information to make sense of it and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources and code them. Then, researchers use an inductive process looking for patterns, categories, and ideas to establish a comprehensive set of themes. Bhattacharya (2017) writes "Inductive analysis in qualitative research refers to working "up" from the data. The process of inductive analysis assumes that the researcher is not starting the data analysis with any kind of preestablished testable hypothesis about the data" (p. 150). Finally, Creswell (2014) notes qualitative researchers use a deductive process to look back at their data from the vantage point of any emergent themes to determine if they need to gather additional information or if they need more evidence to solidify the emerging themes (Creswell, 2014). To be clear, while qualitative research does not begin with a testable

hypothesis, adding deductive analysis helps to determine if any themes or premises which have shown up in the research, are or are not true. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) write

> deductive logic begins with one or more *premises.* These premises are statements or assumptions that the researcher initially takes to be true. Reasoning then proceeds logically from these premises toward conclusions that—if the premises are indeed true—must *also* be true (p. 17).

This is an important point as phenomenological studies are fluid and while a researcher may have hunches, these hunches must be proven to either be true or false. Deductive analysis helps to do that.

Analysis Methods

Concerning qualitative analysis and interpretation Cresswell (2014) notes,

> Because text and image data are so dense and rich, not all of the information can be used in a qualitative study. Thus, in the analysis of the data, researchers need to "winnow" the data (as cited in Guest et al., 2012), a process of focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it. This process, too, is different from quantitative research in which researchers go to great lengths to preserve all of the data and reconstruct or replace missing data. In qualitative research, the impact of this process is to aggregate data into a smaller number of themes, something like five to seven themes (p. 195).

Coding is the process of taking the collected data by dividing it into chunks and writing a word that represents a category to which that chunk belongs (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). This can include written data or images. Creswell (2014) describes three broad categories of codes, 1) Codes on topics readers would understand and expect to find, based on the past literature and common sense, 2) Codes that are surprising and were not anticipated early in the study, and 3) Codes that may be unusual but of conceptual interest to the reader (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) notes that traditionally in the social sciences, codes should be allowed to emerge from the data analysis instead of having predetermined codes. In consideration of this, open coding was used in this study, Leedy and Ormrod (2015) write

> The data are divided into segments and then scrutinized for commonalities that reflect general categories or themes. After meaningful categories are identified, the data are further examined for *properties*—specific attributes or subcategories—that characterize each category (p. 297).

Once the data is correctly coded, themes can be shaped into general descriptions. Finally, the data can be interpreted, and trustworthiness can be applied (Creswell, 2014).

This researcher employed the following steps to manage the data and to identify themes that emerged from the data. Step 1) All Zoom interviews were transcribed within ten days of the completed interview. Step 2) To achieve reliability, once the transcriptions were deemed accurate, they were sent to the participants for review to allow them to check for the accuracy of their statements. Step 3) The researcher reviewed and reflected on the total data several times to get a general sense of the information, making notes in the margins of the printed transcribed interviews. Step 4) The data was coded based on emerging themes from the lived experiences, thoughts, and reflections of the participating pastors. The researcher noted recurring words and phrases. With this, the researcher was able to categorize and provide meaning to the data. In speaking about coding data, Creswell (2014) notes,

> It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term) (p.198).

To code the data, the researcher used an excel file to segment chunks of text data into categories and labeled those categories with a term based on the words and phrases participants said. Step 5) The excel file of chunks of data and codes was taken back to the total data to verify and to see if new categories or themes emerged (Creswell, 2014). Once these steps were accomplished, the researcher was able to provide meaning to the data.

The researcher purposed to remain open to both emerging themes and unexpected themes not anticipated at the start of the research project. To add validity descriptive narratives were used to convey the findings offering varying perspectives of the individual pastors concerning a particular theme (Creswell, 2014). The researcher achieved qualitative validity by clarifying the researcher's biases in narrative form, with the use of a reflexivity journal that was also used to take notes during the interviews (Creswell, 2014). As well, participants were sent transcripts of their interviews and given the opportunity to make additions, deletions, or clarifications to their interviews to ensure their statements were truthful, adding to the accuracy of the findings. Finally, in a summary of the findings, the researcher used member checking and presented final themes and descriptions to the participants to allow them an opportunity to determine if the themes and descriptions were accurate. All data collected will remain confidential. All data, including hard copies and hard drives will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the data will be destroyed.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

A researcher can do multiple things to ensure credibility (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Once, a possible multi-ethnic church was identified, an invitational e-mail was sent outlining the study, including the parameters and purpose of the study. After it was determined that a church met the parameters of the study, and the pastor agreed to participate and signed and returned the consent form, an interview was scheduled. In this study, the qualitative interviews were conducted in an environment of the subjects choosing where they felt safe and non-threatened. The interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They each took between

one and two hours to conduct with no breaks. The questions were open-ended, and time was allowed for each participant to fully answer each question.

The interview questions were reviewed in advance by experts in Social Science Psychology, Law, and Pastoral Ministry to help ensure validity. The interview questions were asked as they have been written, and where appropriate, follow-up probing questions were asked. After each interview was complete, the recorded video was transcribed and the researcher delivered a transcript of the interview to each participant to give them an opportunity to add, delete, or clarify any of their responses. In qualitative research, the researcher should present an analysis of outliers and contractionary instances in the data and offer an explanation for the contradictions (Creswell, 2014). In analyzing the data, outliers and contradictions in the data were noted, and possible explanations for these were included. Leedy (2015) notes, "A researcher who uses thick description describes a situation in sufficiently rich, "thick" detail that readers can draw their own conclusions from the data presented" (p. 88). In this study, rich detailed narrative has been included to allow readers to draw their own conclusions. The researcher set aside any possible biases with the use of reflexive journaling. Please note possible researcher bias under Role of the Researcher. Finally, in a summary of the findings, the researcher used member checking and presented final themes and descriptions to the participants to allow them an opportunity to determine if the themes and descriptions were accurate. The coding process used to observe emerging themes is listed under Analysis Methods. All data collected will remain confidential. All data, including hard copies and hard drives will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the data will be destroyed.

Dependability

Dependability in the research study was achieved by noting how the study was conducted so that the study can be duplicated. A log of the records was kept which includes the steps taken in the study, researcher bias, setting, and participant information. Please note, the steps to the study are listed under Analysis Methods. Researcher bias is described under the Role of the Researcher. The setting is described under Setting. The participants are described under Participants. All data collected will remain confidential. All data, including hard copies and hard drives will be kept in a safe, to which only the researcher has access to ensure the safety of the information. After three years the data will be destroyed.

Confirmability

Reflexive journaling was used to achieve confirmability. This journal was created and used to note researcher bias at the beginning of the study and was updated throughout to prevent the researcher's biases from seeping into the research process.

Transferability

Qualitative research is such that most findings are not generalizable to other individuals, groups, places, or sites but instead rest on the particularity of the study (Creswell, 2014). Since qualitative studies are unique by their very nature, transferability is in this study is limited. This study is very specific to multi-ethnic American Christian churches led by senior Christian pastors, over the age of eighteen, and would not apply to any churches or pastors outside those parameters.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research design for this qualitative phenomenological study including methods, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures. The goal of this study was to

investigate what has worked and what has not worked in the success of multi-ethnic American churches. The selection of participants was not random but used purposive sampling along with snowball technique. Senior Christian pastors, over eighteen years of age who were pastoring an American multi-ethnic church were interviewed. A mix of male and female pastors, as well as ethnically diverse pastors, participated. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The qualitative approach to research focuses on the subject's experience from their perspective. This data can take the form of observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, or even looking at written documents (Roberts 2010). Roberts (2010) notes

> Rather than numbers, the data are words that describe people's knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people's actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions. Qualitative research may also focus on organizational processes. In other words, qualitative researchers look at the essential character or nature of something, not the quantity (how much, how many) (p. 143).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. For this study effectively overcoming means that the leader identified practices that have led to a more biblical, cohesive, and harmonious multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission. The study used open-ended interviews that ranged from one to two hours in length.

Chapter four provides an analysis of the research findings from seven senior pastors, from varying ethnicities and both genders around the United States, who were pastoring a multi-ethnic church and who participated in the study. This analysis includes a summary of the compilation protocol and measures, demographic and sample data, data analysis and findings, and an evaluation of the research design.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

This study utilized a qualitative approach and phenomenological implementation that was interview-based, with open-ended questions. The protocol in this study was the use of in-depth interviews to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that

contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have imago Dei-centered relationships. The methodology allowed for senior pastors who were pastoring multi-ethnic American churches to speak about their lived experiences concerning what they felt they have done right and what they have done wrong in building and maintaining their multi-ethnic churches. It also allowed them to speak to any issues related to implicit ethnic bias, if any. Through the analysis of the data, the researcher identified six emergent themes.

Demographic and Sample Data

The sampling was purposive and specific to Christian senior pastors who were pastoring a multi-ethnic American church. Specifically, the interviews were with senior pastors who are American residents and are adult Christians over the age of eighteen. Senior pastors from varied ethnic groups and both genders serving in a multi-ethnic American church participated. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B).

Twenty-seven churches were identified by the researcher as possibly being multi-ethnic based on researching church websites. This was a painstaking process. It required an extensive internet search of churches around the United States and looking through various churches' websites to note first if their leadership body was multi-ethnic and second to see if there were pictures posted on their website of church services and events where a multi-ethnic congregation could be seen. Once it could be concluded that a church might be multi-ethnic, the researcher sought out an e-mail address for the church or the senior pastor from the church website.

The researcher found that many churches do not list a church e-mail address on their websites and if they do it is a general e-mail address and not the e-mail address of a specific

person. The researcher also discovered that most e-mail addresses for senior pastors are not included on church websites. Once a particular church was identified as possibly being multi-ethnic and the researcher did find an e-mail address for either the church or the senior pastor, the initial e-mail was sent. If the initial e-mail the researcher sent was not responded to, a second e-mail was sent. If the second e-mail was not responded to the researcher did not e-mail a third time. A church could not be determined to be multi-ethnic until the researcher could verify that the church met the definition of being a multi-ethnic church as confirmed by the senior pastor. Please note the initial e-mail (Appendix D) and the consent form (Appendix B) defined a multi-ethnic church. As well, conformation was asked for in the first two questions of the pastor interview questionnaire (Appendix C).

In total twenty-seven churches were contacted. Five churches did not meet the definition of a multi-ethnic church where no one racial group is more than eighty percent of the people. Two pastors agreed to participate but were not the senior pastor and therefore did not qualify. One of these two asked his senior pastor to participate, but the senior pastor declined. One of these two said his senior pastor was too busy and could not participate. Six pastors did not respond to the invitation or stopped responding after an initial response. Six declined to participate. One pastor who did agree to participate passed away before the interview could be conducted. Seven agreed to participate in the study and qualified. Each pastor who agreed to participate completed a consent form and returned it to the researcher. Once this was returned the interview was scheduled.

While additional participants would have made for a more robust study, challenges arose in getting churches/pastors to reply to the initial e-mail or agree to participate in the study as noted above. As well, in order to make for a more well-rounded study, pastors of varied

ethnicities and both genders were sought. However, the balance began to shift toward more Black male pastors than any other demographic who pastor a multi-ethnic church and who were willing to participate in the study. This was due to the response rate of Black pastors. Therefore, after three Black male pastors and one white male agreed to the study, the researcher shifted the focus to finding more white, Hispanic, Asian, and female subjects to round out lived experiences. This required additional internet searches to find multi-ethnic American churches led by senior pastors of these ethnicities or the female gender.

Table 2

Non-Participant Demographics

Non-Participant (Number Coded on matching Excel File)	Ethnicity	Gender	Region of the United States	Response Did Not Qualify (DNQ)
4	Asian	Male	Midwest	Declined
5	Asian	Male	West Coast	No Response
6	Asian	Male	Midwest	No Response
10	Black	Male	Southwest	DNQ
11	Black	Male	South	DNQ
14	Hispanic	Male	West Coast	No Response
15	Varied (no one senior pastor)	Varied (no one senior pastor)	West Coast	No Response
16	White	Female	Midwest	Declined
17	White	Male	Midwest	DNQ
19	White	Male	Midwest	Declined
21	White	Male	South	DNQ
22	White	Male	East Coast	No Response
23	White	Male	West Coast	Declined
24	White	Female	Midwest	Declined
25	White	Male	Midwest	DNQ
26	White	Female	Midwest	Declined
27	White	Male	Midwest	DNQ
28	White	Male	West Coast	Stopped Responding
29	White	Male	Midwest	Passed Away
30	White	Male	Midwest	DNQ

Of the twenty-seven churches contacted, three Asian pastors were contacted. One declined to participate. Two did not respond. Fifteen white pastors were contacted. Five declined to participate (33.3%), five did not qualify (33.3%), two stopped responding (13.3%), and as stated above one passed away before the interview was scheduled. Two agreed and completed the study (13.3%). Five Black pastors were contacted. Two did not qualify (40%). Three agreed and completed the study (60%). Four Hispanic or mixed-race pastors were contacted. Two did not respond (50%). Two agreed and completed the study (50%). The national numbers related to the ethnicity of pastors leading a multi-ethnic church in America in 2019 are white 70%, Black 18%, Hispanic 7%, and Asian 4% (Multiethnic.church). Figure 1 gives a visual representation of this data from Multiethnic.church.

Figure 1

Pastors Heading Multi-Ethnic Churches in America

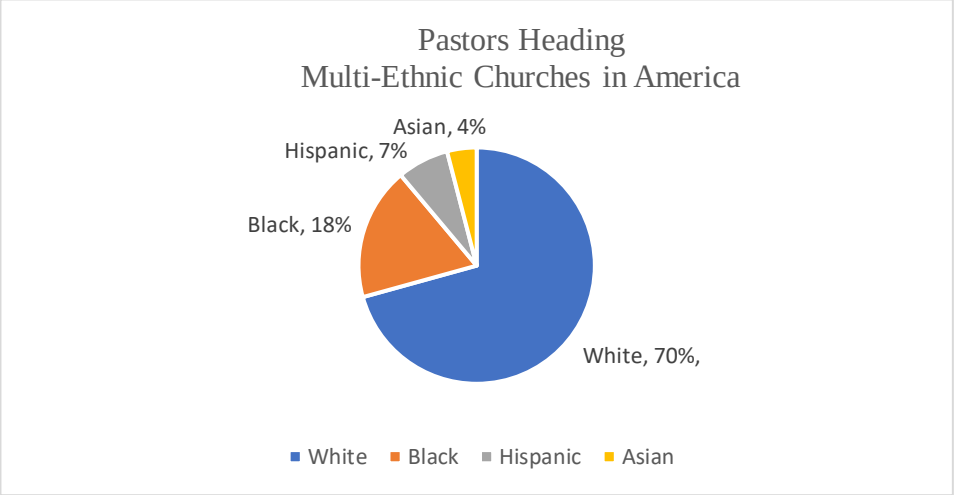


Figure 2

Total Pastors Contacted

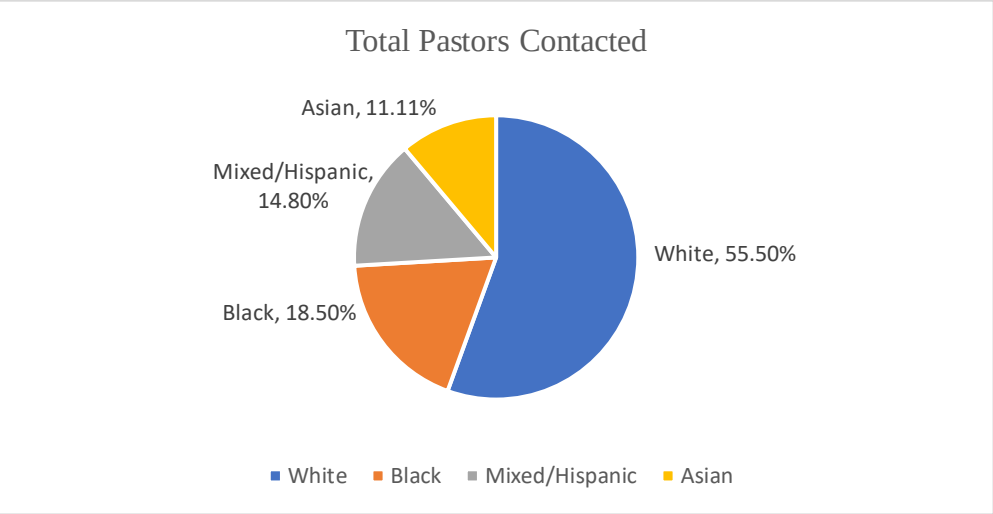
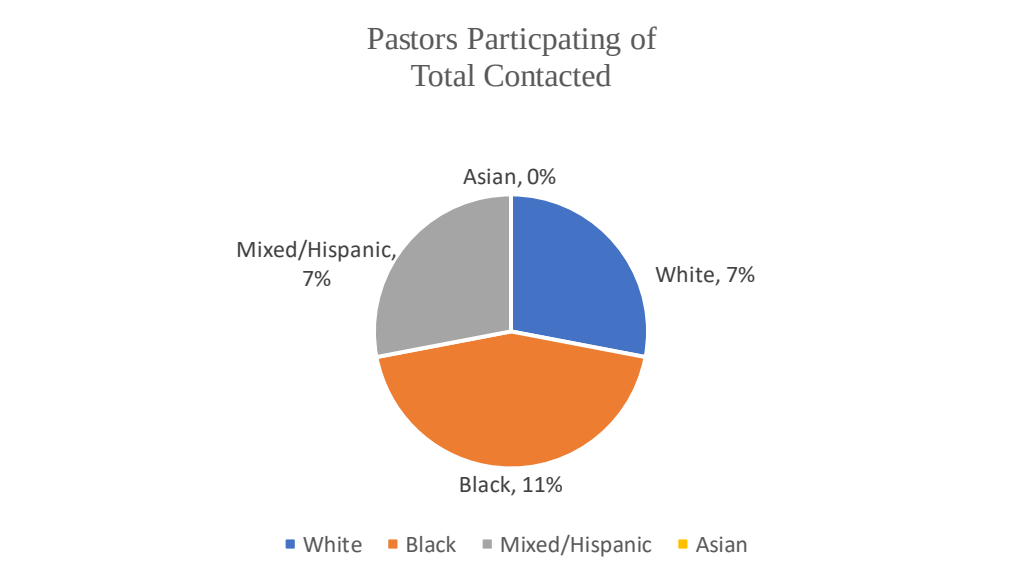


Figure 3

Pastors Participating of Total Contacted



Concerning the final participants who agreed to the study, there were three Black males, one white male, one Hispanic male, one white female, and one mixed race, Black and Hispanic,

female. Seven multi-ethnic American churches were a reasonable number to reach given the limited number of multi-ethnic churches in America and the qualifying factors. It was also a large enough number to be able to include churches led by pastors of varying races and both genders whose churches hold to the aforementioned doctrinal statement to round out lived experiences. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) note

> Phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews (perhaps 1 to 2 hours in length) with a small, carefully selected sample of participants. A typical sample size is from 5 to 25 individuals, all of whom have had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (p. 255).

The following demographic and sample data provide an overview of each participant. To maintain confidentiality pseudonyms have been used to hide identifying information. As well, church names, denominations, and the cities where those churches operate have been omitted. In introducing the following participants their interpersonal interactions by the age of twenty-one, with people who were of different ethnicities are highlighted. These pastors who pastor multi-ethnic American churches all had interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities by age twenty-one. We will explore the theme associated with this data under the Data Analysis and Findings. The demographic information was gathered from the interview.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Total Years as Senior Pastor	Total Years in Current Church	Highest Degree	Interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities by age 21
Jeffrey	White	54	Male	13	13	Doctorate in Ministry	yes
Travis	Black	57	Male	28	28	Some Bible College	yes
Kevin	Black	42	Male	9	9	Doctorate in Ministry	yes
Matthew	Black	59	Male	11	11	Bible/Chaplaincy/ Business College	yes
Isabella	Black/Hispanic	47	Female	3	3	M.A. Pastoral Leadership	yes
Rubin	Hispanic	71	Male	40	35	Some college/ various studies	yes
Marie	White	60	Female	13	13	CNA/EMT	yes

The data shows participants are Male 71.4% and Female 28.5%. Nationally the data for senior pastors are Male, 86.9%, Female, 8.5%, Unknown, 4.6% (Zippia, 2021). The racial breakdown for participants is white, 28.5%, Black, 42.8%, Hispanic, 14.2%, mixed-race, 14.2%, Asian, 0%. The national average for senior pastors in the United States is white, 73.1%, Black or African American, 10.5%, Hispanic or Latino, 8.4%, Asian, 6.1%, Unknown, 1.6%, American Indian, and Alaska Native, 0.3% (Zippia, 2021). The data shows the average total time spent as a senior pastor by these participants is 17 years. Zippia reports, "by looking over 8,501 Senior Pastors resumes, we figured out that the average Senior Pastor enjoys staying at their job for 11+ years for a percentage of 30% (Zippia, 2021). The education level for participants is Bachelors, 0%, Masters, 14.2%, Associate, 0%, Doctorate, 28.5%, Other Degrees, 57.1 %. In the United States, the education level of senior pastors is Bachelors, 49%, Masters, 31%, Associate, 8%, Doctorate, 6%, Other Degrees, 6% (Zippia, 2021). The average age of participants is 56 years

old. According to Barna the median age of pastors in America in 2017 is 54 years old (Barna Group, 2017). In looking at 8,501 resumes Zippia found the majority of Senior Pastors are located in IL, Chicago, and TX, Houston (Zippia, 2021). This may explain why five of the seven participants were located in the Midwest. Concerning the participants, 100% had interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities by the age of 21. There is no national data on this statistic. These interpersonal interactions will be explored further under Data Analysis and Findings. The following is a descriptive narrative of each participant's responses to the open-ended questions as well as reports on the six themes that emerged.

Data Analysis and Findings

The researcher presented open-ended interview questions. See Appendix C. Testimonies of the lived experiences of the participating pastors were used to investigate each of the research questions. The pastoral interviews and resulting data from the seven senior pastors uncovered six emergent themes. The themes included interpersonal interactions with ethnicities by the age of 21, the presence of implicit ethnic bias in the churches, the importance of understanding implicit bias in the churches, being an active part of the community, diverse leadership teams, and political/social movements. The following details the data analysis, findings, and emerging themes from the interviews.

Please note the interviews were transcribed as spoken. When participants used words such as, you know and I mean, they were kept as part of the statements made, even if they were repeated. Some may wonder why people use these words, often repeatedly in a conversation. ABC News Network wrote an article summarizing some of the research that has been done on this phenomenon from the 1960s to 2002 (ABC News Network). There has been some disagreement among researchers over the past 6 decades. Some researchers believe they are used

as conversation managers, such as to avoid gaps in conversation (ABC News Network). Others disagree. ABC News reports, “Noam Chomsky, a renowned linguist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who argued in the mid-1960s that such phrases are simply “errors in applying knowledge of language in actual performance.”’ (ABC News Network). In highlighting this work ABC News Network interviewed Clark & Fox Tree (2002) and noted, “Fox Tree is also tuning into English phrases such as "you know," "I mean," "oh" and "like." Her early studies suggest they're often uttered to adjust the meaning or structure of a sentence as it's being spoken (ABC News Network). Clark & Fox Tree’s research can be read at (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). A full listing of Chomsky’s articles on this topic and others can be seen at (Articles). This research is still evolving. This researcher is not a linguist, therefore would not be an expert as to why some participants may have used these words during the interview.

The following themes helped to answer the six research questions. Table 4 below notes Implicit Bias Responses reported by participants. These relate to RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4.

Table 4

Implicit Bias Responses

Participant	Reported a Negative Personal Implicit ethnic bias Experience by the Church	Reported Problem with Leadership and Implicit Ethnic Bias in Current Church	Church Member(s) Had Implicit Bias Training	Thinks an understanding of Implicit ethnic bias would benefit the Church	Has Addressed Implicit Ethnic Bias in Current Church	Reported Their Own Implicit Biases
Jeffrey	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Travis	Yes	No	Doesn't Know	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kevin	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Matthew	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Isabella	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rubin	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Marie	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

RQ1 RQ 4 Theme 1 The Importance of Understanding Implicit Ethnic Bias in the Church

RQ1 asked, how do participating senior-level pastors describe the value, if any, of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the churches or ministry? RQ4 asked, how can the ministry/Church benefit from increased understanding of implicit ethnic bias? 100% of the participants think the American Church would benefit from a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias. A total of 71.4% (5 of 7) of the participants have addressed implicit ethnic bias in their current church. 57.1% (4 of 7) of the participants reported their own implicit biases. This Recognized Bias is defined under Definition of Terms and discussed more under Chapter 5, Applications.

The following is a descriptive narrative of the participants' thoughts on the importance of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the American church and how the Church can benefit from

a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias. For those pastors who did address implicit ethnic bias in their multi-ethnic American church, or who reported their own implicit biases, those comments are also included here.

Marie

Marie notes:

> I think that we need to understand that. You know, we all come from different backgrounds and different and that doesn't make us bad, it, I think it helps people to understand why that person responds the way they do. Like, you get a lot of people coming from Africa that come to the United States. And they do a lot of things different than we do. The same way with the Hispanics, they do things different than we do. But we can learn from each other, and you can't pick on that person just because they're different.

Rubin

Rubin energetically comments:

> Yes, 100%. Yes. And I want to say it again, yes. Okay. I really believe they don't know that they're being biased. I believe the Church is dormant in this arena. And we need to alert churches, you know, in this, and, and give them options of what they can do to improve that platform in their churches. I really believe it's just, you know, that lack of knowledge, and an ignorance in that, in that arena, I really believe that we need to do that.

Isabella

Isabella is thoughtful in her response. She says:

> As long as it includes our emotional limbic system and what's happening to us, so that we can recognize when our body feels the anxiety that this is a protective mode. This is a reaction. This is not responding in love. I am altering myself if something chemically is happening, and I'm not even aware of it, and I don't have the self-awareness, that mindfulness, to know that I am uncomfortable. And then their likely blowing oxygen, starting to be hindered because their breathing is going to change. And now we're doing stuff that if we saw ourselves on video, we'd be like, “Oh, my goodness”. That's what happens when fear takes over, so that we can override the fear response, like no, I'm not participating in that. I'm gonna take a deep breath. And I'm gonna love.

What Isabella is referencing here are the brains’ anger and fear responses. Myers (2007) tells readers that anger and fear responses take place in the limbic system of the brain and

involve the amygdala. The amygdala is key in associating various emotions, including fear, with certain situations. Fears can be learned (Myers, 2007). Having said this, Myers (2007) is clear,

> The brain is not neatly organized into structures that correspond to our categories of behavior. Actually, both aggressive and fearful behavior involve neural activity in all levels of the brain, not solely in the amygdala (p.73).

Myers writes (2007), "people can be afraid of almost anything, "afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of each other," observed Ralph Waldo Emerson"' (p. 533).

This ties to information previously written in this work, relating to associative learning, perception, implicit biases, and how they are formed. Isabella's point is that having to participate in implicit bias training may trigger a fear or anger response in some people, stemming from past learning due to experiences and environment growing up. She believes if someone is a presenter of implicit bias training, they should lead with information about how it may make some feel uncomfortable to the point of eliciting a fear or anger response in their brain so they can be aware of what is happening to them and manage accordingly.

Recently a church in her area taught on this subject and Isabella attended. Isabella reflects on this and says:

> A 17-year-old bi-racial kid, with a 50-year-old white woman, taught something called Tearing Down Fences and just started some introductory conversations to be and that was at (church name omitted due to privacy). Because we, especially after George Floyd, really pushed the envelope. If we're not leading this conversation, the Church, we're in trouble, you see, look at the dues. This is what happens when the Church doesn't stand up and lead the conversation on something God is clear about Jesus' entire ministry. He was constantly addressing this hierarchy that seems to be in the world and calling his Church to something higher, to be last and serve, wash feet. And that includes a hearing and understanding and lamenting in solidarity, the injustice that other brothers and sisters of color are experiencing, and vice versa. For even the Black folks get to learn what it is to lament and be in solidarity with Asians.

Matthew

Matthew recalls:

Well, for me, I had to, I had to kind of deal with that, you know, when it was out there, I had to deal with it. But I dealt with it from Jesus as my model. I remember one, message, how He related to the tax collector, and different ones. I kind of used Him as some examples. And then we'll follow up, and say, Jesus wasn't prejudiced of this person or that person, He dealt with different people. I used the woman at the well and different ones. And I've tried to kind of paint a picture here, of Jesus as the type of person that dealt with everybody. And as a believer that's what we have to do. We have to learn how to deal with everybody. So, I came from that particular angle there, because I felt, there is people that are not handling things like Jesus did. That wouldn't deal with like the Pharisees and stuff. Let's say they said they were religious, but yet, deep down, they were prejudiced. I dealt with it from that particular angle. And I think it worked. I mean, of course, it's still deeper issues here. And I think that deep down, there's deep issues. And I could have probably, as a pastor sometimes I think about it, that I probably should go deeper, you know, with it, then the way I've had handled it. But, you know, we're still, I really feel that the people here, we have a family atmosphere, we keep it a family. And I think like with every family there's family secrets.

Kevin

Kevin notes,

I do. Okay, so I think, I think if the Church was willing to see that, acknowledging implicit biases weren't a sign of weakness, that it could be amazing. But to acknowledge it, that means that you have to go back and start to right some wrongs and go back and start to admit that some of the things that you were taught and some of the things that were passed down traditionally and all that were wrong.

Kevin continues,

I think if the Church can finally just say, you know what, because deep down, many of us knew that we were messed up. Many of us know that we’re messed up. But it's like, you know, I don't want to rock the boat. I think if the Church can get to the point where we realize that rocking the boat is actually strength, I think that implicit bias can be talked about, and all that stuff can come out and we can start healing, but guide, and I said this last night teaching Bible study, we can't expect God to heal what we what we try to conceal from him. Right? And so, to try to cover it up, but that's not going to help. So yeah, I think we're hurting more people than helping them because of implicit bias.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey notes,

Yeah, you know, I mean, so I've had, I've had people ask that question too, you know, basically saying, okay, so we're here, how do we move this forward? And part of it is that

> I'm tired. You know, this conversation has been vitriolic, it's been filled with pain, it's been filled with people walking out of our lives and saying terrible things about us.

Jeffrey continues:

> And at this point, I don't know that I can give a good answer to that, because I kind of just go, I just don't even know what's next. But I know that at some point, I will clear my mind. And we'll do something. I'm not sure what it's going to look like.
> I do think that bias training can be helpful. It can be helpful, I just don't know if it has, I don't know if the church will ever be successful at it. Because people are either people have either already had it, or they already understand it. And that's why they're there in the churches. So, then you can do more training, but they, they've already had it.

Jeffrey expounds:

> Right now, a good example is a great big church, in our community, it's (church's name removed for privacy), now, big church, 3000, wealthy white people. And (individual's name removed for privacy), who's a friend of mine preached, two or three series on why critical race theory shouldn't be taught in the churches, and basically all the Black people in that church left, and there weren't very many in the first place, but they all left. So, the fact is, you could go into a place like (church's name removed for privacy), and you could say, hey, my name is (participant's name removed for privacy). And I'm a pastor and I do this, and I have a specialty and, you know, race, you know, racial reconciliation, or, you know, implicit bias within systems. And they're just not going to hear it. They're just, they're gonna say, "no, we don't, we're not doing that". It's, um, it's amazing how many people have suddenly become experts on Critical Race Theory. Nobody even heard of it six months ago, you know. So, I don't know, at least in the churches, I think that it should be done in a corporate environment. I think there's benefit to that.

When discussing **RQ1** the frustration and stress Jeffrey was feeling was observable during the Zoom video call. While he believes the church could benefit from a better understanding of implicit bias, he has become frustrated trying to address it in his church. At this point, while he thinks it could be good for the Church, he has nearly given up on it because of the backlash he and his family faced for doing so. This could tie to Isabella's response in saying that the limbic system would have to be discussed. This could also tie back to Gorski (2009) referenced earlier. Gorski (2009) found that when beginning a conversation on social justice issues, it is often best, to begin with, an understanding of what cognitive dissonance is, so

students can recognize it in themselves and have an opportunity to work through their own dissonance to come to a place of understanding about whatever a topic may be (Gorski, 2009). As Jeffrey stated he knows he will do something after he clears his mind, he just does not know what it will look like.

Travis

Travis believes implicit bias should be addressed in the church. Travis addressed both ethnic implicit and explicit biases in his church. Travis chose to address it in a video posted on his church website after the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. He chose to post a video online due to the Covid 19 Pandemic when his church was not meeting in person. After that video was posted a white friend of Travis' called him and expressed his sorrow over not understanding racial issues from the perspective of Black people. Travis' friend said, "until I saw your video, and heard it coming from you. I would have never thought that way at all." Travis went on to say some people may have relationships across racial lines, but until they have a conversation where they can hear the other persons' heart, they may not consider their issues. Travis reported positive responses from his church members to the video.

A total of 100% of the pastors feel an understanding of implicit bias would benefit the Church. A total of 71.4% of the pastors have addressed implicit ethnic bias in their current church. 57.1% of participants reported their own implicit biases. This Recognized Bias is defined under Definition of Terms and discussed more under Chapter 5, Applications.

While 100% of the participants think the Church would benefit from a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias, how to do that effectively and safely, without harm to individuals or repercussions to the local multi-ethnic church seems undetermined. One of the benefits to the Church seems to be having a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias to learn

about and to come to a greater understanding of people, including their cultural differences. Another benefit according to Kevin is that the Church can begin to heal from its past concerning racism, helping to strengthen the Church. As Matthew noted, to be more like Jesus regarding inclusivity.

RQ2 Theme 2 Interpersonal Interactions with Ethnicities by the Age of Twenty-one

RQ2 asked, what perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor? Theme 2 unexpectedly emerged from the data. The researcher noted that 100% of the pastors had interpersonal interactions with ethnicities other than their own by age twenty-one. In the following descriptive narratives, participants described their life up to and including age twenty-one relating to their interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities. To give a more rounded picture a short biography of each participant is included here.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey is a white male who is fifty-four years old and holds a doctorate in ministry. Jeffrey has been a pastor for twenty-four years and a senior pastor for thirteen years. Jeffrey grew up in Northern California, in an area that is a predominately racially white part of the state. This area as he described it to the researcher is about 120 miles south of the Oregon State border. Jeffrey's Hispanic wife grew up about a mile away from Jeffrey, yet the two did not meet until they were about twenty-one years old, according to Jeffrey. Jeffrey states:

> I grew up in rural Northern California. So, I literally grew up around, no people of color. It's very white and still is 90% white. I lived in a bit of a closed community itself. My dad's a pastor, and they, my mom and dad ran a Christian school which was very much what I would maybe describe as the homeschool movement where you sort of kept, you know, we were very isolated and kept ourselves away from, you know, to keep the bad people out and the good people in, that kind of a thing. So, to give you an idea of how exclusive it was, my wife and I didn't even meet even though we literally lived about a mile away from one another, our whole lives.

To clarify the above comments from Jeffrey, his mother and pastor father, ran a small Christian school within this rural community that was isolated and meant to be isolated, from outside influences. While Jeffrey was not the only student and the school was not in his home, he likened it to a homeschool. In today's terms, this could be described as a homeschool co-op. In describing a homeschool co-op, Johnson (2020) notes,

> Defining the term isn't easy because a co-op can encompass a variety of learning options. At its core, a homeschooling cooperative is made up of several families who meet regularly at libraries, churches, community centers, or homes, and work together toward similar goals, which can be based on socialization, education, activities, or any combination of these (Johnson, 2020).

Jeffrey continues:

> Not only did I not know people of color, but it was also a racist environment. And it's been really shameful for me to have to sort of confess, and to admit that, but I grew up in a place that, you know, my dad included, who is a pastor, so it pains me to say it, but where, you know, jokes about people of color were regular, and people didn't believe in interracial marriages. And, you know, I could tell a million stories, all of this stuff that goes with it. So, I had a lot of, I had a lot of unwinding to do in my own life, through the years. So, all that to say, very, very little, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural experiences growing up.

While Jeffrey had very little interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities prior to meeting his wife, that changed once he was involved with her, her family, and her Hispanic community at around the age of twenty-one.

Travis

Travis is a Black male who is fifty-seven years old and has some Bible college as his highest level of education. Travis has been a senior pastor for twenty-eight years. He grew up in Southern Arizona, in a racially heterogeneous part of the state. In his community, there were whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. He describes his neighborhood as, hood or ghetto. About his environment growing up Travis notes:

> So, the school I went to, my grade school, there was a ditch that kind of separated our neighborhood from a, from a little bit more affluent white neighborhood, but we all went to the same school. And my neighborhood was more Hispanic, Black, it had some whites in it, but it's just a little small part of our city. You would say if there was a hood or ghetto that, that's where I lived, that part of town. I went to grade school, though, with some of the more fluent white people and, and we got along fine, I've stayed in their homes, would have sleepovers. You know, the interesting thing, though, is in my growing up years, none of them ever slept at my home. And I don't know, like, I haven't even given a whole lot of thought on why, I can't even remember whether it was because I didn't ask often, or if it didn't work out. But, I can't think of any of them ever staying in my home. But, I stayed at theirs' plenty of times and never felt treated any differently. But it was pretty obvious I was the Black friend, right? Because I would be the only one at anything going on that had to do with those families.

Travis continues:

> But that's where implicit comes in. Because we would, we would see it when there was a fight on the school, at the high school. Everybody got along together. But when there was a fight, the whites, got to the whites, Hispanics, hung with Hispanics, Black hung with the Blacks, until whatever matter was settled, if they thought it was going to be a, you know, not just a fight between these two but get into something worse, everybody polarized.

Kevin

Kevin is a Black male who is forty-two years old. He holds a Doctorate in Ministry as well as an honorary Doctorate in Biblical Studies. Kevin has been a senior pastor for nine years. Kevin's mother grew up in Southern California in a segregated area, "full of crime and dysfunction" according to Kevin. But, Kevin, being raised by his grandparents was moved "to the other side of the tracks," where he encountered other races. Due to academic success, Kevin entered the gifted program in school and was then surrounded by fellow students of all ethnicities. According to Kevin:

> But on the other side of the tracks, that put me at a different school. And from that moment, I was no longer surrounded with just Black people. I was surrounded with, you know, Hispanics, I didn't even know what Filipinos were until the third grade. I didn't know, I thought, I thought everybody who was that color was Chinese. That's just what we, you know, we do. I was, again, like the only Black kid in the class for two years. But what that did was that exposed me to have relationship with other ethnic groups.

Kevin continues:

> I had friends from every walk of life. And it got so much so that when I graduated high school, I had a full ride to Howard and I went and came back because it was a culture shock to me, because it reminded me of what I was, when I was five, six years old, just surrounded by Black people that I was like, that's not life. So, fortunately, because of my upbringing, I've been allowed to learn how to communicate with different ethnicities.

According to Howard University's Website

> Since 1867, Howard has awarded more than 100,000 degrees in the professions, arts, sciences, and humanities. Howard ranks among the highest producers of the nation's Black professionals in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, nursing, architecture, religion, law, music, social work, and education.
>
> The University has long held a commitment to the study of disadvantaged persons in American society and throughout the world. The goal is the elimination of inequities related to race, color, social, economic and political circumstances. As the only truly comprehensive predominantly Black university, Howard is one of the major engineers of change in our society. Through its traditional and cutting-edge academic programs, the University seeks to improve the circumstances of all people in the search for peace and justice on earth (Howard University).

Matthew

Matthew is a Black male who is fifty-nine years old. He has been to Bible college, and Chaplaincy college, and has some business college coursework as well. Matthew has been a senior pastor for eleven years. Matthew was raised in an urban city in the midwestern part of the United States. Matthew recounts interpersonal interactions in both school and church with people who were of a different ethnicity than him. Concerning school Matthew says:

> I kind of grew up in schools that were mixed. So wasn't like all-Black schools. There were more whites in my class than Blacks. Then there were a few times where I experienced, when we went to a new school, I was bussed, you know, I was in a desegregation program where I was bused to predominantly white schools. But mostly, there were always some Blacks in the schools, whites, and Blacks and it never was you know, predominantly just all one race.

Matthew was part of the school desegregation program Brown vs. Board of Education, in 1954. The case that came to be known as Brown v. Board of Education was the name given to five separate cases that were heard by the U.S. Supreme Court concerning the issue of segregation in public schools (National Archives and Records Administration). Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the opinion of the court. United States Courts writes

> On May 14, 1954, he delivered the opinion of the Court, stating that "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. . .
>
> Expecting opposition to its ruling, especially in the southern states, the Supreme Court did not immediately try to give direction for the implementation of its ruling. Rather, it asked the attorney generals of all states with laws permitting segregation in their public schools to submit plans for how to proceed with desegregation. After still more hearings before the Court concerning the matter of desegregation, on May 31, 1955, the Justices handed down a plan for how it was to proceed; desegregation was to proceed with "all deliberate speed" (United States Courts).

Matthew continues:

> I had a couple of incidents, but nothing really major, you know, I actually had a good, well-rounded childhood where it wasn't, you know, being called the N-word and all that stuff. You know, that didn't really happen too much. I mean, I had white friends and Black friends. So, you know, that's the kind of way my mother raised us, you know, and so, I happened to be in schools that, I didn't experience a lot of that. I remember a couple of times, I heard the N-word, but I was real small then, I didn't understand it. My mother explained it to me, she said, there's some people that just don't understand, but I remember on a bus once it was etched in my spirit. I was like, I think kindergarten or second grade, she was taking me somewhere and a bus went by and the kids screamed out, you know, nigger, and, you know, yeah, and it hurt. But I didn't understand what it means. And she explained it. But it wasn't many of those incidents.

Please note, that all participants were treated with dignity and respect throughout the interviews. The researcher sought to protect each participant from harm in every part of the research according to the standard of the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report requires researchers to maximize benefits and reduce possible harm (Hhs.gov). Once, the researcher heard Matthew use the word hurt in his above description of an incident from his childhood, she

chose to not ask about any other negative incidents from Matthew's younger years for fear of harming the subject as a researcher. The researcher turned the question to what positive experiences Matthew had with people of a different ethnicity when he was growing up.

Matthew notes:

> My first church experience was in a Baptist church. It was a white Baptist church that sent the bus out into the projects. I lived in the projects, and they sent a bus to pick up kids. My mom said, I always liked church as a little boy and I wanted to go to church, so I'd get on the bus, and we'd go, and it would be a Bible class. You know they'd have us in Sunday School class and different things like that. And it was mixed kids in those classes there. And so, it was good, a good experience that they reached out and, and we were mixed in there. So, I mean, all the way back, it's always been, you know, relating to white and Blacks growing up, you know, in some capacity.

Isabella

Isabella is a forty-seven-year-old, mixed-race female. She ascribes to both her Hispanic and Black heritage. Her mother is Mexican, and her father is Black, with a mix of Irish and Scottish. Isabella holds a Master of Arts in Pastoral Leadership and has been a pastor for twelve years and a senior pastor for three years. Isabella was raised in a small midwestern town that is predominately white. Concerning her growing up experiences Isabella says:

> There's two moments every Black person has in their life. It's when they figure out that they're different. And the day they figure out it's a problem. Both of those dates, probably, I would say, happened around five years old. I'm thinking it's both because of church. My parents started going to the (denomination omitted to protect participant) church when I was five. Before that, we were very protected and very sheltered. We were probably the only brown kids. The only brown people on that side of town. I was in junior high before I saw any other brown kids besides a couple of Mexican kids that moved in and out of that neighborhood to rental property.

Isabella continues:

> I had really great relationships with teachers. I think it was only because I was bright and quiet and did what I was told and compliant. If I'd been any kind of problem at all, I'm sure it would have been a whole other situation. So, I watched how other minority students and my brothers and what they went through. And these are the same people who had no problem with me but had major problems with my brothers.

Rubin

Rubin is a seventy-one-year-old Hispanic male. He has about five years of college in various studies and has been a pastor for forty years. Rubin was born and raised in Cuba until he was about eleven years old suffering under the communist regime of Fidel Castro. Up until that point, he only had experience with people who were also Cuban. However, because his family was politically inclined, resisting Castro's communistic regime, there was much bias pertaining to that. Therefore, Rubin learned what biases are and what they feel like to the one who is biased against, at an early age. Rubin says:

> So, there was a lot of bias pertaining to that, because of, you know, when you're in the political arena, they think of you as being well off. And really, we were not really well off. We still lived in squalid conditions, in many cases. So, the perception that we were really wealthy is definitely one of the criteria that basically, you know, it was a flaw that we had, and people had, you know, a perception of that. But we still were able to make it. And we did have, you know, a lot of things going on that were good. So, I appreciated that. So, growing up in there, and as a child in Cuba, you know, that was the only thing that I saw, that perception of that.

Rubin continues:

> And, of course, communism came in. And that's when we suffered a lot of hardship. Because my grandfather, as well as my father opposed the communistic regime. And that created a really bad feeling with us, and we suffered.

Rubin's family immigrated to the Bronx, New York when he was eleven years old where he experienced people from varying backgrounds along with a great deal of violence. Concerning his childhood interpersonal interactions in the Bronx Rubin recalls:

> And talk about, you know, hardship, we went from a city, you know, beautiful tropical island, beautiful, wonderful island, the precious people, to the slums of the Bronx, New York. And recognizing, you know, you talk about racism, you know, the Jews that were there when we came to this block, the invading races in that arena, you know, as a teenager, the Jews were basically asked to leave the area because the Afro-Americans and the Hispanic community came in and formed many gangs and a lot of violence, and ultimately, the Jews left, I saw this whole thing in my teenage life. And that's why I did not want to stay in New York. As a teenager, young man growing up, the last thing I

> wanted was to stay in New York. Because of that, you know, I was not that way, I wasn't a Christian, I can't say I was a Christian, you know when I was a young man, but I really did not want that kind of isolation. The people what they thought about was, was violence, and this was culture shock for us, you know, we didn't know this existed because I didn't see that in Cuba.

Rubin continues:

> You know, Blacks against the Puerto Ricans, Puerto Ricans against, you know, the Blacks, and the Jews had to be asked to leave, and, you know, all of this strife, I grew up in all of this. You know, seeing it firsthand, you know, seeing my friends being murdered and seeing the suicide, right, seeing kids growing up in gangs, I experienced all of that. And, of course, me growing up and seeing all of that, you know, I didn't want any part of it.

Marie

Marie is a white female who is sixty years old. Marie grew up in the midwestern part of the United States. Concerning her education, she has Certified Nursing Assistant training (CNA) and Emergency Medical Technician training (EMT). She has been a senior pastor for thirteen years. Her church also operates a homeless shelter. Marie grew up in foster care and recounts the first time she saw a person who was a different color than her. Concerning being placed in an orphanage the first time, Marie says:

> It was a children's home for everybody back then. So, it was more of an orphanage. And so, I was placed in an orphanage at the age of nine. And my caregiver was Black. And there was a Korean girl, there was kids with disabilities, there were African-American kids. So, we were we all belonged together. That was the first time I saw somebody of a different color than myself, when I was nine.

Marie continues:

> One of the cleaning ladies was a Black woman, and she was given permission, so I went home with her on weekends. And I'd be the only little white girl in an all-Black church. But it really didn't seem to bother me. I just remember I'm just with these guys. You know, to me, I was no different. I mean, I'm white, but to me it's just wrapping. You don't judge a Christmas gift by the color of wrapping paper. We became one. I didn't feel like I was an outcast at all. They were all very warm and welcoming. And when she took me to her home, she laid out a spread of food that, oh my goodness, I didn't know there was this

> kind of food on a table. And her daughter and I, we played together, there was no difference to me anyways.

In analyzing the data, it was discovered that 100% of the participants had interpersonal interactions with people who were of a different ethnicity than they are by the time they were twenty-one years old. Some participants had both negative and positive interpersonal interactions with people who were of a different ethnicity than they are by the time they were twenty-one years old. 85.7% of (6 of 7) participants reported having positive interpersonal interactions with people who were of a different ethnicity than they are by the time they were twenty-one years old. 71.4% of (5 of 7) participants reported having negative interpersonal interactions with people who were of a different ethnicity than they are by the time they were twenty-one years old.

It may seem obvious that Americans all should have interpersonal interactions with other ethnicities consistently, but as Barna (2018) reports most Americans stick to those who are most like them. Concerning friendships, Barna writes

> Asked whether their current friends are mostly similar to themselves or mostly different from them in a number of areas, the majority always chooses mostly similar. This is true for religious beliefs (62% similar, 38% different), race or ethnicity (74% vs. 26%), income (56% vs. 44%), education level (63% vs. 37%), social status (70% vs. 30%), political views (62% vs. 38%) and life stage (69% vs. 31%). In particular, evangelicals are less likely than most to have friends who are different than them, especially when it comes to religious beliefs (91% mostly similar), ethnicity (88%), and political views (86%) (Barna Group, 2018).

This emergent theme may be one reason pastors of multi-ethnic churches can be successful; they have had opportunities to have personal interactions with people who are different ethnically than they are and may be better at understanding others ethnically and culturally. As Kevin stated, “So, fortunately, because of my upbringing, I've been allowed to learn how to communicate with different ethnicities.” The positive experiences that Marie had while in foster care with varying

ethnicities may have positively shaped her affective experiences. While Matthew noted he had a few negative experiences concerning his ethnicity, his positive experiences in the white church he attended as a child may have positively shaped his affective experiences. These may have been positive views towards whites and/or positive views toward the Church. Rubin reported mostly negative experiences growing up in the Bronx. Due to the level of violence, Rubin may have developed skills to interact with varying ethnicities as a way to survive.

RQ2, RQ3, Theme 3 The Presence of Implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches

RQ2 asked, what perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor? RQ3 asked, what perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the senior-level pastor's team? 100% of the pastors agree that implicit ethnic bias exists in multi-ethnic American churches. As well, 57.1% (4 of 7) of participants reported a negative personal implicit ethnic bias or explicit ethnic bias experience by the American Church at some point in their life. Interestingly, implicit ethnic bias is not the only bias pastors have seen in churches. Moreover, the pastors have admitted they have some type of implicit bias against others at times, even as a pastor 57.1% (4 of 7). This Recognized Bias is defined under Definition of Terms and discussed more under Chapter 5, Applications. Of this 57.1% (4 of 7), two are people of color, and two are white. According to participants, 42.8% (3 of 7) reported issues with implicit ethnic bias among their team.

In a study of only Black practicing Christians, Barna reports that 29% of Black practicing Christians have experienced racial prejudice in a multiracial Church (Barna, 2021). Barna writes,

> Perhaps you'd assume that a congregation that succeeds in drawing attendees of multiple races would be truly welcoming. The challenges depicted in the following charts, however,

> are profound: Almost three in 10 Black practicing Christians in a multiracial church (29%) say they have experienced racial prejudice on some level.
>
> Granted, racial prejudice may still exist in the monoracial environment; even predominantly Black churches, on average, have a small percentage of non-Black worshippers, and in some cases colorism (prejudice based on skin tone within the same ethnic or racial group) could also be occurring. Even so, just 11 percent of Black practicing Christians report facing prejudice in a monoracial Black church. There is potentially greater cost for the Black worshipper who moves into a more diverse congregation and begins to have more cross-racial interactions in that faith community (Barna, 2021).

Barna (2021), also reports that 28% of practicing Black Christians find it difficult to build relationships in multi-ethnic churches (Barna, 2021).

Yet, with the presence of implicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches, as described by participants, and Barna (2021) implicit bias training remains low. Question number 10 in Appendix C asks, has anyone on your team ever engaged in implicit bias training to your knowledge? Only 42.8% (3 of 7) reported that at least some of their church members had some type of implicit bias training either at their church or at least at their place of employment. Isabella and Kevin are two pastors who have taught implicit bias training in their church. Jeffrey noted a Ph.D. and two educators in his congregation that he knew had participated in implicit bias training through their employment. The other four participants could not determine if any of their church members had some type of implicit bias training at least at their place of employment. The following is a descriptive narrative of participants lived experiences and thoughts about implicit ethnic bias and other biases in the churches.

Marie

Prior to becoming a pastor Marie commonly visited churches of varying ethnicities as an active member of her community. In speaking of implicit ethnic bias in the churches, Marie recounts a time when she visited an all-Black church:

> I did go to some predominantly Black churches. And I can remember going in one night to a special thing they were having, and they thought I might be in the wrong place. I said, “No”. I asked for the pastor by name. I said, “Well, is so and so here.” Now again, I said, “No, I'm in the right place”. And I just went about my business. I think they just thought I might have accidentally stumbled in.

Marie felt the assumption here was that since she was white, she would not purposely be going to a predominantly Black church.

As well, before becoming a pastor, Marie recalls similar situations with implicit bias in general when she was ministering to girls on the streets. She would often take them to a church in their neighborhood. Since she was not trying to build a church at that time, she intended to get them connected to a church in their neighborhood that they could easily attend without transportation issues. Marie says:

> Churches tend to judge them by how they’re dressed. So, if I was ministering to a girl on the north side of town or the west side of town, I wanted to go into that church. So, I would wear my t-shirt and blue jeans and go in. And a lot of times, I wanted to see how they're going to treat me because I'm not going to bring somebody, recommend somebody to their church if they don't welcome me. They usually welcomed me with open arms. But a lot of times they thought I might need Jesus.

Additionally, Marie, whose church also ministers heavily to the homeless, notes that she sees more judgment of the homeless in her church than judgment about one’s skin tone. She notes, “I see more judgment upon the type of clientele that we deal with because they're homeless. You know, it's not even about whatever their skin tone is. It's about their homelessness.” Having said this, Marie did recount a very positive experience with an all-Black church.

Marie says:

> You know, I can remember the first time going to an all-Black church and the way they worshiped was different than the way my church worshiped. But they taught me how to praise. And I taught them how to worship. And we kind of learned from each other. So, I was in an all-Black church, and they asked if I would lead worship acapella. And so, I taught them how to worship. They taught me how to praise. But the whole thing was they taught me how to praise. I didn't, you know, I knew how to just close my eyes and just get intimate with Jesus, but how to praise and be loud and talk, I didn't know that. That was all new to me. Because worship to me, that's just me and him all alone. And so, I helped them enter the throne room that way, but they helped me to praise. And so, we learned from each other, which is awesome.

Marie recalls becoming aware of her own implicit bias (Recognized Bias) during a church service at another time.

> I can remember going to a service and the guy had tattoos all over and you know, and he's leading the worship, and I was like, “oh”, and God's like, “if he had a three-piece suit, would you be thinking that?” And so, I think some of the times we can get so we've forgot where we've come from sometimes. And we can be so righteous.

Marie continues:

> And so, when we look at somebody, because they're different than us, we've already made a judgment call. I remember working at a factory, and this guy is working across from me, and I mean, he just looked like this really rough, tough guy. And God wanted me to minister to him. And he wasn't what he appeared at all. I mean, he was so receiving and tender and I was thinking, well I can't minister to that person. Because we've already made a judgment call. And so, we will miss ministering moments because of our biases.

In speaking of the American Church Marie notes:

> I think we have denominational divides. We automatically judge each other in the body. By what kind of denomination, we are. How many people are in your church? So, I think you know, we're biased by our denominations a lot of times.

Marie reported no problems from her leaders or between her leaders concerning implicit ethnic bias.

Rubin

Rubin states that he has not noticed any implicit ethnic bias in his church, but he does speak about the Church, being divided by race. He notes:

> You know, I've always, felt that, why do we have to have all Afro-American churches or all-Black churches and why do we have to have all-white churches? You know, I mean, what's the reason for that? When the reality is, you know, Jesus died for all of us. And His church needs to be multi-cultural. I don't understand that. I still don't. I mean, I've talked to Afro-American leaders, you know, throughout my ministry and I still can't capture the real reason why this happens. It seems to me like the Afro-American would love to have an Afro-American church and pastor, you know, all Blacks that situation, because they're singing, the worship styles are a little bit different and all that. But the reality is, they see us the same way, the Hispanic is different and, the Anglo Saxon the same way, you know, all three worship styles are different. But when you combine them all together, boy it makes for a most beautiful adoration, very precious to the Lord, that we can all come together. So, you know, that's the question that I have why the, you know, the segregation of this? I just don't understand it. I really don't.

While Rubin has not been aware of implicit ethnic bias in his church, during his time many years ago, as a national director of Hispanic ministry for a denomination Rubin recalls something he felt he had to address. He says:

> So, for the longest time, I always thought this, you know, when I was a national director, how people stereotype the Mexicans, right? The Mexicans were, I don’t know, you see the cactus, and you see a guy sleeping by the cactus with a sombrero. Yeah, that man, he was a Mexican, and they're lazy. Well, that was the stereotype, I had to speak to that, you know, and I would, I would literally paint that on my own. Use it as an illustration as to not perceive that the Mexicans are lazy, because I'm telling you right now, the Mexicans in United States, we wouldn't be in the economy we have right now if not for the Mexicans, you know. They are awesome.

Rubin reported no problems from leaders or between leaders concerning implicit ethnic bias in his current church. When ask if he noticed implicit bias from his leadership team Rubin stated

> I'm Sorry to laugh. The answer is no to that. Because look at the executive director, just look at me. Yeah, I look Black, but I also, look Hispanic and I'm dealing with the majority of, you know, our whites, you know, the people that we deal with, So, why would you be in that position? So, automatically, my, all of my leaders, understand that right off the bat, you know, without reservation, So, I've never had an isolated issue in that arena. Never.

Jeffrey

In speaking of his father who is also a pastor, Jeffrey notes,

> My dad's very educated as well, he's a Ph.D. and, I think, from an external sort of place, or probably even an internal place, he wouldn't think that he was a racist. And he probably by the time, my wife and I married, he probably sort of sifted through some of that himself as well as he was able to in a sort of a monochromatic, cultural environment. So, they were always very loving and accepting towards my wife and her family. Thirty-four years later, you know, they love her very much.

In speaking of his implicit ethnic bias Jeffrey says, "I grew up with that same implicit ethnic bias myself. And didn't even, wouldn't have even thought of that at all."

Jeffrey recalls:

> I've looked at my own life and found lots of simple little things that, that I've had to kind of unwind. Why do I, you know, I could go on and on and tell you but just things that I would, perceptions that I would have, you know, of people of color who may be achieved. For instance, in academia, you know, if I meet a Black pastor, and he says, he's doctor, so and so and I might go, what doctorate? Of what? I want to know. Then I've had to realize that that's this bias. So actually, I'm just gonna call it racism. And so, there were things that had to be rooted out of my own heart, because somehow, I felt like since I was white, my education had more, you know, more prestige, where it actually didn't, you know, and so just things that I'm embarrassed to admit, but things that were there that I had to, I had to root out."

In speaking of implicit ethnic bias on his leadership teams Jeffrey reflects on a situation he had pertaining to one of his Black, female pastors. There was a time when mostly white conservatives in his church seemed to be coming to Jeffrey with concerns about her. Jeffrey notes the situation:

> We were having a lot of problems with people who fit this one demographic, usually of older white people, conservative, not all white. She (the Black, female pastor) is simply one of the most competent, smart, capable, talented, kind people I've ever, I've ever known or worked with, we worked together for 16 years. She's a very strong Black woman. And she carries herself with a, with authority. And so, we kept having these problems with it. And I couldn't figure it out. And I remember several times thinking to myself, if she were a 50-year-old white pastor, she would not, we would not be having these discussions. Now what's interesting to me is that thought never even clicked in my

> mind as being what we're talking about. So, there was something that was happening right within my own church, of which I was the pastor and I, for whatever reason, I couldn't put the dots together until sometime after the George Floyd incident, where all of a sudden, it just occurred to me when I saw the reactions from people. It hit me like, just a ton of bricks, where I had to sort of realize that institutional bias existed within my own church, which is always been a multi-racial church family. And it was one of the most discouraging and disappointing realizations I had ever had in my life. So, there's, there's just simply no doubt that it exists.

Kevin

Concerning his own implicit bias Kevin says:

> I think I'm guilty of it. I think unintentionally, my implicit biases offended some. We had a period of time where we, because I'm a musician, it's like we attract musicians. And this one lady who was singing in the choir at the time, she had a brother, who played keys, white guy, he wasn't a good player. But he played in some soft rock bands. And he did a bunch of horn sounds and it, you know, it kind of filled out the sound or what have you. And then he brought his friend, he started playing for us on Sunday mornings, and then he brought his friend six weeks later, who was a drummer, classic rock and roll drummer. We had to teach him the, you know, the dance music beat, and he was so good. Once he got it, he was good. But we had a problem because we had a log jam with musicians, like we had, three keyboard players, two drummers, all that kind of stuff at the time. And so, I said, "Okay, let's split them up."

Kevin continues:

> We had two services at the time, we split them up. And I put the white guys together, and you know, one service and then the other guys together, whatever. Now my logic was, they play this, neither one of them really know the gospel sounds. So, if they're playing together, we can kind of build some music for them where they can, you know, worship music, where they can kind of flow. And you know, a church that has two or three services each service has a different demographic crowd that comes in. So, the people that come at 11 o'clock, they're coming to dance and shout, so we want the musicians that can push that. But the people that come early morning, they want worship, they want it slow. So, like that's what I'm thinking. Well, it got back in a text message thread that was shown to me that says, "Oh, yeah, Pastor wants all the white guys together and the Black guys together." I was like, "oh". I called him. He was like, "that's not my intent, but I can see how you could feel". I was like, "that wasn't it though". So, I think that that one was mine. It was ignorance on my part because I didn't explain it ahead of time.

In this incident, the implicit bias seemed to come in related to the musical style of the musicians rather than their ethnicity. Kevin may have assumed that because a musician

predominantly played a certain style of music that he or she would not be capable of playing another style of music and separated them accordingly. This seems to have naturally separated the musicians along ethnic lines, even though that was not Kevin's intent. This perception by those involved in the text message thread was that Kevin grouped them according to their ethnicity. This links back to previous information concerning perceptions.

Kevin states,

> And then on another particular occasion, with a minister I had to ask him to find another place to worship. I couldn't let him be on the staff here, older (denomination omitted to protect participant) elder. And the question came up because we're using the (denomination omitted to protect participant) Sunday school books. There's a picture every month. So, there's a new picture, well, one Hispanic lady says, "Well, I just feel kind of uncomfortable, because it's like, every time we get these books, there's a Black face on it, but there's nothing that looks like me or a white person or whatever." I said, "You're absolutely right. So, we're no longer gonna use the books anymore. As a warning, when we get the books, we're to tear the front off of them. And we're just gonna go, you know that route." So, he stood up on a Sunday morning when I wasn't here. He said that if you can't get with the Black church, you're in the wrong church, yeah, I got back about an hour later, right before service and it got back to me what was said, and I called him in the office and said, I need you to find another place to worship. Can't have that spirit here.

Isabella

Isabella has not only experienced implicit ethnic bias in the churches but explicit ethnic bias as well. In recalling instances in the church she grew up in, Isabella speaks about a recent conversation:

> I spoke at a missionary council meeting this Saturday and a gentleman that represented the church that I grew up in, was in the convention, and at the end of my part, and everything was over, he came over to my booth and said, "You know, when your family started coming to church, I had just recently had a conversation with two gentlemen in the foyer and said if Black people ever start coming here, I'm leaving, and taking my tithe with me." And then my father came.

Isabella recalls another story her father tells:

> He tells the story of one gentleman that came, he came with his wife who had been coming and bringing their boys. He had clearly been drinking, came up the front steps into the foyer. And my dad was the head usher when I was growing up. He pushed my dad's hand away as he tried to greet him, and said, "Get your Black hand off of me, I wouldn't touch you…" and went on past him. Then we went into the sanctuary.

Isabella continues:

> I think of those things. And those attitudes, which I knew was there as a child, I could feel it. Like I said, I was about five when I figured out, I was different. And I was problem. It was a problem. So as a child, I remember being sensitive to that and people staring and people talking, whispering, especially because they're a biracial couple. I remember asking my mom, "what does abomination mean?" Because that's what they were talking about me and my brothers. I was just listening to grown folk's business, and I could hear them, and they didn't think I could. And it didn't make sense. And I didn't know why they're calling my brothers and I that. And I didn't know what that means.

Yet, Isabella also felt love at this church. She recalls, "Then I was loved by some of the sweetest, oh my goodness, the purest, sweetest love of some of the fluffiest wrinkled hand old ladies."

Isabella's church is relatively new, therefore, so is her leadership team. She has worked to develop a multi-ethnic team. Isabella comes from a social work background and has taught implicit bias and cultural diversity training in her past work. She has brought this training to her leadership team in an effort to head off any issues with her multi-ethnic team. To date, she reports no issues among her team members concerning implicit ethnic bias.

Matthew

This was already mentioned earlier under Theme 1 however, it bodes well to also mention it here. Matthew does not recall personal negative interpersonal interactions concerning the Church even in his younger years. He recalls:

> My first church experience was in a Baptist church. It was a white Baptist Church that sent the bus out into the projects. I lived in the projects, and they sent a bus to pick up kids. My mom said, I always liked church as a little boy and I wanted to go to church, so I'd get on the bus, and we'd go, and it would be a Bible class. You know they'd have us

in Sunday school class and different things like that. And it was mixed kids in those classes there. And so, it was good, a good experience that they reached out and, and we were mixed in there. So, I mean, all the way back, it's always been, you know, relating to white and Blacks growing up, you know, in some capacity.

Concerning his church members and implicit ethnic bias Matthew says:

What interests me though, is always when we have like events. I look and it's getting better. But it used to be where and this is always where I seen the segregation is when we have like a dinner, all the white people sitting at tables, and all the Black people sitting at tables, and you have a couple of, you know, other tables. But as time has gone on, I've seen that at first when we just had the leadership. Now, I looked over, and there's more people, whites and Blacks mixing at tables. So, it's getting better.

In speaking about his leadership and implicit ethnic bias Matthew recalls:

You know, I've seen it a couple times. I remember a few years back a staff member, white staff member that was a little bit biased toward her team in working with whites versus Blacks. I've seen that, you know, a little bit, you know. At first, I couldn't believe that was it. You know, they're a member of my church, you know what I mean? Your pastors, Black, but I seen it, you know, a couple of times here, and I didn't want to believe what I've seen. This particular pastor is no longer with me. But, you know, I begin to, to see it, you know, in them.

Matthew continues:

I think that, you know, a little bit of favoritism, but also a little bit of, not really adhering to, you know, some of their ideas or, you know, thinking that they were not qualified to do some of you know, the assignments. It's like when it was certain assignments it was delegated more to a white person than a Black person. Yeah, and the Black person that, you know, that was there, was like qualified, said, why did you go over me? And I mean, why didn't you pick me? Yet their perception was that they did not have it, you know, they tried to convince me that, you know, this person didn't have it. But, you know, after that person was gone, we kind of let that other person that they said wasn't capable work. And that person is excellent. And I'm like, you know, I wish I would have used that person a long time ago, because they had the talent there. You know, so why it was suppressed?

Travis

Concerning his church, Travis says he would be surprised to hear of any incidences about implicit ethnic bias in his church with his church members or leadership team. Travis notes:

> I don't want to say our church is a model, but I almost want to say it is because that's we do so much together as a community. Now, obviously, there can be some folks there that come every week that's probably never, that may never have had anyone of any culture ethnic group in their home. But again, I wouldn't know that because the congregation blends so well together.

In looking back at his experiences with the Church in his early life Travis remembers:

> I have been in churches like that and talk about my going to, going to churches all together. I grew up in the churches, I grew up in my grands, it was all Black. And one of my best friends was a white guy, his church was all white. We would have services together on occasion, like maybe twice a year. The way the folks, the way we're worshiping together, you would not see a difference. But the grandfather, the patriarch of the church, there one time stood up, and clearly let us know, Black folks, that it's okay for us all to worship and spend time together, but don't think we will allow any of you to marry each other. I mean, he made that statement pretty clear. And, and so, so I guess, I say that I guess it is possible that people can worship together but may have some thoughts. Now, it was after that, honestly, that my ears got to be more open, then you start hearing things that they said. And you, you could see how they would make some distinctions between us.

In speaking about his own types of biases Travis states:

> Honestly, like for me there's no doubt about it. I fly a lot. I do a lot of flying. If certain people walk down the aisle with certain whatever, yep, I would be concerned. But I'm not gonna stand up in the aisle. I'm not gonna make him noticed on the plane. I'm not gonna turn to him and say, "Don't you sit next to me," you know what I'm saying. But it's one that I am aware of. And if my wife was flying with me, she would probably be praying when the person is walking down the aisle, that the person doesn't do anything that proves what I'm concerned about.

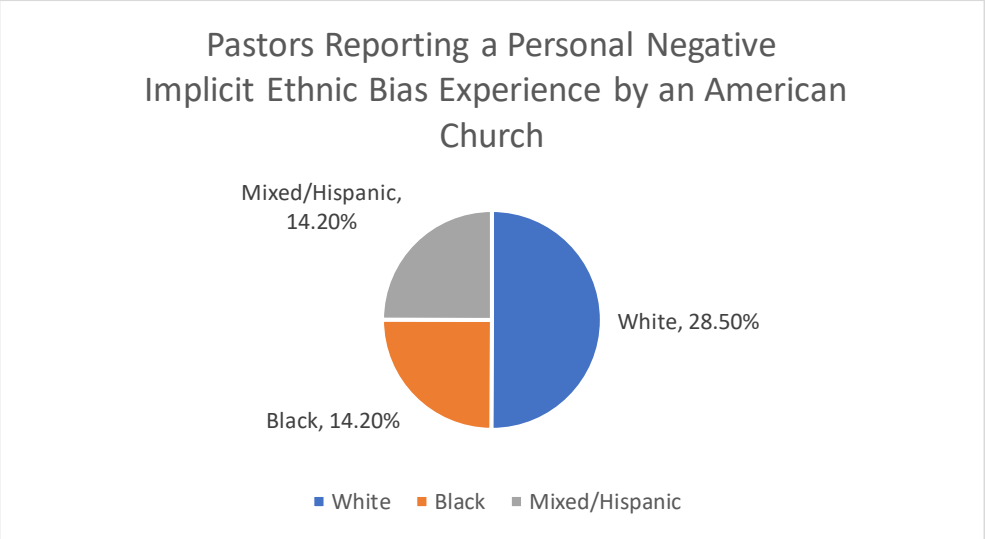
Here Travis is speaking of his Recognized Biases.

In analyzing the data, the researcher discovered that 100% of the pastors agree that implicit ethnic bias resides in American churches, both multi-ethnic and ethnically homogenous churches. Each had a story related to this implicit ethnic bias in the Church. As well, 57.1% (4 of 7) of participants reported a negative personal implicit ethnic bias or explicit ethnic bias

experience by the American Church at some point in their life. Figure 4 shows that it does not matter what ethnicity one is, they can experience implicit ethnic bias against them personally by a church.

Figure 4

Reporting Personal Negative Implicit Ethnic Bias Experience by American Church



Interestingly, implicit ethnic bias is not the only bias pastors have seen in churches. Moreover, the pastors have admitted they have some type of implicit bias against others at times, even as a pastor (57.1% (4 of 7). This Recognized Bias is defined under Definition of Terms and discussed more under Chapter 5, Applications. Of this 57.1%, (4 of 7) two are people of color, and two are white. According to participants, 42.8% (3 of 7) reported issues with implicit ethnic bias among their team.

RQ5 Theme 4 Being an Active Part of The Community

RQ5 asked, what practices are perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church? The word community was referenced 53 times by participants throughout the interviews. Of the 53 references, 25 (47%) times it was mentioned in response to RQ 5. According to the data given by participants, 100% mentioned being an active part of the community. This activity involves, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, youth ministry, evangelism, prayer ministry, and a whole host of other types of community outreach. It does not include political involvement or social marches which will be discussed later under RQ6 Theme 6.

Rubin

Concerning being a part of the community Rubin is extremely passionate. He considers his church a referral source where community members can come for assistance to find out where their needs can be met in the community. Rubin's church has a food pantry, links to get affordable housing, and has a thriving prayer ministry.

Rubin says:

> So, many people that really need, you know, the gospel, especially now, Shirley. Especially with the pandemic virus, and there's a lot of fear out there. And, and what resonates from my heart, in my spirit is what Jesus told the disciples that is not the healthy that need a doctor. It's the sick. Then after that, he says, that his people that are sick, to come to repentance, see? So, if you're saved, you're going to church, you can't just sit there. It's not the healthy, that needs a doctor, we have to get out of those four walls and go after the sick. You know, if you do it to the least brothers in mind, the Bible says Matthew 25:40, you have done it to him. And I live by that, you know, I moved my whole life, for training to the Scripture in Matthew 25:35-40 that says, When I was hungry you gave me Something to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was, you know, naked, you clothed me. When I was sick, you know, you took care of me. You see what I'm saying? When I was a foreigner, you know, you invited me in. When I was a prisoner, you went to visit me.

Marie

As noted earlier, Marie's church operates a homeless shelter in their community as part of their ministry. Marie has had a successful ministry for decades related to as she calls it, "taking girls off the streets." In reminiscing how she got started as a community activist in this ministry Marie recalls:

> God gave me a passion for girls out in the street when I lived in (city removed to protect identity). And I was really oblivious to homelessness and prostitution and all of that, until God removed the blinders from my eyes in '95 and drew me out into a street where girls were selling their bodies. And he really gave me a passion. And then I just started. They needed a place to stay, and I brought them home.

Additionally, Marie says,

> I think it's, it's training people up for leadership or reaching out into the community to have a multi-cultural church because we all need to get to know each other.

Kevin

Kevin says,

> I think, what helped us as a ministry was that you didn't just see me in the pulpit. You saw me at the grocery store. You saw me at the gym. My daughter's in sixth grade now. So, there's no more recess, but from kindergarten to fifth grade, every Friday, I was volunteering recess, you know, and all that kind of stuff. You see me at the basketball games and football games and, and all that. And I think that people, for people that appreciate who we are, they appreciate the fact that we're touchable. They're real people right there. And then not only are they real people, but they're fully invested into this community, right? So, it's like you have so many times where pastors will drive in from four cities away to preach. They're only concerned about Sunday morning. They're not concerned with life Monday through Saturday. Then you have some of us who, we're ready to preach on Sunday. But we realize a Sunday is just a launching pad for us to get out into the fields Monday through Saturday. And so, when I leave the pulpit on Sunday, you'll see me Monday praying for homeless people at 7-11, you'll see one of our staff members Tuesday at the boy's club, talking to young kids and all that kind of stuff. I think that's where we kind of get, like I said that, like, everyone doesn't like us, I guess, but they respect what we do. Because we're involved, you know, we're involved in a community.

Matthew

Matthew says,

> That helps, too, because our team is a multi-cultural team going out here. People see that, and then the food pantry, you know, we have, well, we feed people and the team over there is multi-cultural, that works in that particular team over there. And so, the community has seen us out there.

Jeffrey

While Jeffrey's church does not do a great deal of community work in and of itself, they are a referral source to other agencies and churches in their community that have resources and programs already in place. While this is the case Jeffrey did have some interesting things to say about the future of the Church regarding being a part of the local community. Jeffrey says:

> I think what the church is being called for now is what I would call the integrated pastor, where pastors shepherd a community, but they also do the things that they love, you know, they may play music, they may be authors, they may be school teachers, they may be you know, in law enforcement or academia, whatever it is, doesn't matter. They're gonna be people who are integrated deeply into the community rather than these massive enclaves of people that have no other you know, no other interaction. You know, if you're a Christian in a big church, you listen to Christian media, you watch Christian movies, you hang out with Christian people, you go to your Christian Bible study, you attend your Christian church, you eat at Chick-fil-a, and you listen to K-Love. It's, you know, it's become its own thing, and we were never called to do this.

Isabella

Isabella's church is very focused on the community they serve. Here is what she said about their community development program:

> So, for community development, which includes the cultural diversity training and implicit bias training, we start with emotional regulation and just owning your junk, understanding your stress, and what you're going to do when that rises up in you, because the conversations we're about to step into with your identity, your own trauma and healing, and deliverance, in other words who are they? So, we start with Who am I? Who are they? Who are we? Trust the process. I know that what the Bible says who we are, you want to jump to that process, but you can't skip step one and two, till we get to step three. I know you want to operate there we're gonna get there. But remember that repentance thing, one and two is facing all the things that God wants us to face as we turn around and walk towards him. So then when we talk about community development, the community development piece is kind of some missionary tools and strategies for

> identifying the needs, looking at the assets, not reproducing the wheel and bringing unity and helping holistically those in the most needs. There's a (named section of community removed for privacy) in everybody's community. But we like those people. What we do is multi-ethnic and on purpose. The challenge is to do it multi-ethically on purpose.

Travis

When Travis was asked about what practices he perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church, his response was:

> People ask me that all the time? How do you do it? Because now I've talked to pastors who want to try to deliberately make their congregations, multi-cultural and multiracial. I said, if you want me to tell you how to do that, I can't. I'm not the guy that's going to tell you how to do that. Because what people will tell you to do, is not what I had to do. For me, because of my relationships in the city. And I had engaged in relationships of multi-cultures. I'm just gonna say A) people trusted me and liked me, even though they were a different race and B) God gave me real grace to do it. And C), I am very much able to relate to people on based on who they are.

While Travis did not speak directly about what other churches should do, he was clear about his community relationships. Not only his community relationships, but his purpose to engage across cultures. He stated earlier, “I don't want to say our church is a model, but I almost want to say it is because that's we do so much together as a community.” His above comments A and C may point back to the earlier analysis that 100% of the participants had interpersonal interactions with people of different ethnicities before the age of Twenty-one. Experience that may have been brought forth to current times. Travis was humble in discussing all his church does in their community, but he did say a couple of things concerning community involvement. About this Travis said:

> Again, I don't want to say our church is a model, but I almost want to say it is because that's what we do, so much together as a community. I don't say this, Shirley with any kind of thing. We're pretty well known in town. So, we do a lot in our community.

100% of the participants mentioned being an active part of the community as a reason for their success. This activity involves, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, youth ministry, evangelism, prayer ministry, and a whole host of other types of community outreach. It does not include political involvement or social marches which will be discussed later under RQ6 Theme 6.

RQ5 Theme 5 The Importance of Having Diverse Leadership Teams

RQ5 asked, what practices are perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church? The word leadership was referenced 30 times overall in the interviews. Of those 30 times, 17 (56.6%) were in reference to the importance of having a diverse leadership team in a multi-cultural church. The pastors felt it is important in a multi-ethnic American church to have diversity in the leadership team. 71.4% (5 0f 7) of the pastors mentioned it when asked what they felt works well in a multi-ethnic church. Neither Jeffrey nor Travis mentioned this when asked what works well in a multi-ethnic church. It should be noted that both Jeffrey and Travis do have diverse leadership teams. This was discovered by the researcher after researching the church websites.

Barna reports one-third of Black practicing Christians (33%) feel it is hard to move into a leadership position at a multiracial church (Barna, 2021). Additionally, Barna reports

> Multiracial churches are often previously predominantly white churches that have made an intentional effort to become more diverse. Some of these churches have mostly white leadership (According to attendees of multiracial churches, half have leadership teams that are at least half white. One in four teams is at least 75% white, with 12% being completely white)(Barna, 2021).

In speaking about the importance of diversity in leadership the following narrative description follows.

Marie

Marie notes,

> You know you if you've got all white leaders, how can you call yourself multi-cultural? Yeah, because we really, I mean, if you want to reach the Hispanics, you should have somebody that's a Hispanic. If you want to reach the Black community, you need to have at least one Black leader or usher's and Sunday school teachers, you know, you because we should be a multi-cultural church. If we're predominantly white, how are we going to reach them?

Kevin

Kevin says,

> I think the right thing to do would be to start looking to add diversity to your leadership team. People need to see, you know, some people that look like them serving, right? Praise team, administrative team, what have you. I was very intentional. I was praying to God for a white elder, right? I was like, him and his wife, but then they finally came, after I prayed. I was very intentional for that. Because I wanted people to see this is not just a Black preacher preaching to Black people.

Matthew

In speaking about the beginnings of his church, Matthew says,

> When we started our church, I started with seven people. And out of the seven people, there was two, two white, me and my wife, myself and my wife were Black. We had a Hispanic lady, and a Black guy and a mixed girl. So, we literally planned it, started with the multi-cultural.

In speaking about his current leadership Matthew says,

> My executive pastor is white. And so, I have a mix. If you went to my website right now, you will see a mixed leadership team. I think it makes a big difference when people came to visit our church. And they see that we had, you know, even today that we have, you know, people on our team, we have one lady on our praise team, white, my drummer is white you know, so there is that first impression, when they come in, you know, and then I have usher's that's white, and different things like that. So, you when you come in, you're going to immediately be experiencing multi-cultural soon as you come in, to the church.

Matthew continues,

> You're greeted by a white person, you know, first greeter, then you see some Black people, then you get some coffee, there's a Black lady there, and then you go out, and you look at the praise team, and you know, so the whole experience of you coming in will be

> comfortable for you. If you were a white person, you wouldn't feel out of place. If you were a Black person, you'd be like, wow, this is, this is interesting here. You know, I think it's more interesting for Black people to come in and see a Black pastor, with as many white people as we have, you know, in our church, it's almost like half and half almost.

Isabella

> We have been intentional, as far as leadership to spend the last year to really developing relationship with enough minorities to include them as key leaders, so that we can have Black and white leaders, co-leading in every area. So that has been quite a challenge, because there are many conversations that have to happen, for folks to be able to work together and leave their mentality of what their social norm is, acknowledging their white normative, and the sitting at the table anyway. And Blacks kind of the same work. But opposite.

Isabella continues:

> From day one, you're looking for your next leaders from the community. The church has done a horrible job. I'll take our policy for the (denomination omitted to protect participant) church, we have the local church, there is no church without local church, local churches send representatives to the district level to represent them in the voting and decision making on the district level and sending recommendations and delegates to the global level of leadership. The global makes policies, that's the manual, the district kind of administers those. But if there are no brown people, even being engaged by our white churches, which is predominantly the (denomination omitted to protect participant) church, if they don't know how and never do, the district will never have any minorities to pick from the delegates from the local church to integrate. So, we look at the system, why don't you do something at the top, when truly the only place to do something is on the local level. If we do not make it a mandate that the local church learns this and we disciple and resource, our local church folk, our laymen to do this work it will never change.

Rubin

> Yes, absolutely. If you can find that. You do want to mentor them first and give them inside information, you know, of what questions to ask and how to, first is the conflict thing, you know, how to handle conflicts, and all that. And then being transparent. You know, I always like that word transparency, because you want to be transparent in this, you know, you don't want to be hiding anything, you know. So, yes, having a (diverse) team and recognizing that. That's very important. You know, very important.

Whether a participant specifically mentioned it or not, best practices seem to include having a diverse leadership team. The participants who mentioned it felt that it helps all people

groups to see people who look like them in leadership positions in their church. 71.4% (5 0f 7) of the pastors mentioned it when asked what they felt works well in a multi-ethnic church. It should be considered, that if one has a church in a homogenous ethnic community, it may prove hard to put together, even if the pastor is of a different ethnicity.

RQ6 Theme 6 Political and Social Movements

RQ6 asked, what practices are perceived to have not worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church? When asked RQ6 participants spoke about navigating political or social movements. While 71.4% (5 of 7) addressed implicit ethnic bias and/or explicit ethnic bias in their church 0% participated in marches in their city in 2020 or 2021 when social movements such as Black Lives Matter were occurring. As noted below, Jeffrey did try to address the movements online through his social media but was met with much backlash. There was a concern amongst the pastors about offending different ethnicities in their church or losing members if they partook in the marches or were otherwise vocal about these specific social movements. Two of the pastors did invite the local police into the church to hold a forum trying to address this issue.

Marie

Maries notes,

> I mean, you have the Jews that were annihilated. I mean, it happened. It's history. Them talking about wiping stuff out of our history book. That's insanity. This I mean, it happened. And yes, Blacks were mistreated. And we have to, I think it helps for people to understand "Do you understand why they feel the way they do?" And so, if somebody had an issue to be able to sit down and talk to that person, but you know, I don't know if it's a thing necessarily for the whole congregation because you are going to have some people that are going to think differently, "Well I'm white. I didn't have anything to do with it?" But you still have to understand why some of them feel that way because racism does still happen.

Marie continues,

In fact, it just pushes, I think it pushes people farther away. You know, it's, it's like, and then when, you know, the Black Lives Matter thing went down. And then people are like, well, all lives matter, which is true. But people when people said that, then now all, you know, Black Lives Matter, people got offended, because they didn't realize what this person was saying.

Marie says

You know, I think bottom line is, we've got to stick with Scripture. And when we get involved with things, is it promoting the gospel? Is it? Yes, we need to uphold and take care of widows and orphans, and we need to uphold what's right and wrong. And what was wrong, what was done was wrong. But when we become a voice, because there's been opposite sides, there's been other things that have gotten involved. And I think we just need to be really careful when we uphold some of those things. Is it going to cause a serious riff? And is it you can say, hey, I don't like what happened to that person. But am I going to jump on the bandwagon with everybody else? I don't think God's called us to do that.

In continuing Marie notes,

When we're more concerned about what everybody else thinks. I think then, am I out there to please the people? Or am I there to please God? It doesn't mean, I hate that anybody died. What was done was absolutely wrong. No matter whether he was white or Black. I mean, flip it. It's, it's still wrong. And, and I get it. And I think, a lot of the reason why you have so much segregation, and I know down south there, there was some serious racism going on. And so I understand the way Blacks view us white people, a lot of times, they're cautious, and they don't maybe want to come into our churches, because maybe they're going to be treated differently. So, I think we have to be very welcoming. Also, but not jumping on a bandwagon just to show that you're not racist.

Jeffrey

In addressing his church after the George Floyd murder Jeffrey notes,

We really did make every effort. I mean, with my online profile, I mean, it just blew up, you know, and so it, it, it took me off guard, it was not something that I had anticipated. I thought that this was a slam dunk. In one interview, I said it was sort of like turning around, to preach to your choir, only to find out that half of them weren't your choir. And this wasn't, this just wasn't an issue of embarrassment for the people that left our church, this was an issue of, we were not racist, and we resent being called racist. And institutional bias does not exist, or racism.

In recounting conversations with some of his white members Jeffrey says,

So, I sit down with a white person, he's frustrated with maybe something that I've said, and I say, well, just bear with me for a moment. I will say, what, in your opinion, are the challenges within the Black community? And almost invariably, they'll say something like, well, there's too much criminal behavior. I said, so what is it? Are Black people just more disposed to crime than white people? No, no, no, no, no, no, no. So, then there's something wrong, right? Yes. Okay. What's the next problem that you perceive in Black America? Well, there's, you know, there's too many, you know, single moms with too many kids. So, I said, so there's a lack of parenting, etc.? Yes. I said, well, are Black people just more predisposed to unwise sexual behavior? Are they just sexually unrestrained? Or is there a problem? Well, no, no, no, no, no, there's a problem. What's your next problem? Unemployment, they don't work. I go, well, are Black people just inherently lazy? Or is there something wrong? No, there's something wrong. Now you can see where this is going, you can do this on a half a dozen to a dozen topics, as long as people will want to do it. And then you get you always get to this place, where they either have to concede that what I'm saying, what we're saying is right, and there are problems, or in the end, they just sort of shrug and say, I disagree, Black people just got to get it together. And I say, that's racism. Because what you're saying is, you're saying that Black people are inferior, they're lazy, they're sexually unrestrained. They're given to violence; they're given to crime. They're not, you know, they're not shaping their cultures. And they just, they got to somehow get it together. Where I say, I don't believe that. I believe that all people given equal resource, given equal treatment, given equal access to justice and opportunity will prosper and thrive equally, all people groups will. So that's why I don't take a very conciliatory approach to it. Because I have boiled it down to it's this, this, this moment with a with a dozen white people who have said, I just I'm not going to hear it, I just can't. And then I have to say, well, then you should leave our church because that's racist. And in the end, most of them just shrug and go, well, I don't I don't like the way you said what you said. So, I'm leaving.

Jeffrey says there has been a bright spot in all of this. He notes,

What it's, what it's done, is it’s strengthened the resolve of our young people, that's what it's done. And so, what we, what we ended up with is this very committed, determined group of young, of largely young people 40 and under, who have said, finally, we have a church that we really strongly believe in and with values that are addressing immediately, our own concerns. So that's been the good thing that's been about the only good thing that I can say has happened from all of this is it's resolved. It's gotten our church down to bedrock, which I think needed to happen.

Rubin

Rubin says

I respect you know, as pastors and leaders, you have to be careful, because we are always being judged, in our stands for certain things, and we have to be careful, my decision is always to abstain, and stay in a neutral position. I may be in support of this kind of, you know, movement, but I'm not going to support it. Because, because I may lose some people, I don't want to lose any souls for the kingdom of God, especially those that are my own members of my own church, I don't want to do that. So, a lot of times, the mistake that leaders make, pastors, leaders make is they want to support the political platform, let's all vote, you know, Republican, But I won't, I won't do that, you know, you want to abstain from some of this, you know, you really have to be led of the Lord, to be in the political arena, for instance, you know, or whatever that may be.

Rubin continues:

Now, if it's something real simple, like abortion, for instance, okay, the church has to be against abortion, you know, you are going to see me on the front line, you know, with that, because we're talking about life and death. But you know, outside of that, we have to make the decision, some of us make the wrong decision. And that's why they leave. So, you have to be very, very careful. And the other thing that the pastor should do is really have a meeting before a pastor makes a decision of that magnitude with your board, with your main leaders and if it's not a unanimous decision, by the church leadership, then the pastor shouldn't do it. If you only have one voice that is coming against you to stand on something like that you shouldn't do it. You really have to be unanimous in a decision of standing for a specific move in the world today, because we are living with a kingdom mentality, not a world mentality. So, we got to be very careful, because I don't want to damage or tarnish in any way my image as a minister of the gospel, especially in our area, because I'm being looked like you know, with microscope. I mean, people are looking at me, from every angle from the baseball world to the clergy. So, you have to stand in the right all the time. Sometimes it's better to abstain. And then you're good.

Kevin

Kevin notes:

I didn't have to address with George Floyd because I addressed it with Eric Garner years prior, okay. I think if you waited until George Floyd, you missed it. And I think it was a little bit too late because the water was already boiling to George Floyd, right? And so, we addressed it with Eric Garner and that string that happened that year. And we addressed it first with our police chief and our city staff, they came to the church, and we did a forum. And our whole premise was, we can't control what's happening in Minnesota. Philando Castile had just happened. But we can make sure that we do all we can to make sure it doesn't come here. And so, we had those conversations implicit, we didn't call it implicit bias. I think we called it unintentional bigotry. I think that's what we called it. And we addressed it then. And then when they left, we had a meeting with just our team at the church, and just dealt with stereotypes. We started in a humorous way. You know, where if you're, because we have a couple of white elders, we said, well, if

you're on a ministerial staff, and you're from the white church, you probably think we're gonna get to church in 30 minutes. So, we kind of joked around about that. And then we, kind of dove into the serious issues. So then when George Floyd came, we were ready. I mean, because we had already, we kind of kind of tackled it when it was in its infancy stages.

Matthew

Matthew recalls,

I think a lot of pressure came where this whole thing about bias and racism came up with the George Floyd situation here. That's when, you know, I begin to, you know, we had some bickering going on the internet between some of the members and how they felt. Some people, you know, rose up, and when it came to the marching and different things, and kind of said a few things, because I didn't personally march. We had some people marching here, in our city, I wasn't led to do that, you know, I was led to do it a different way. I had the mayor, and the police chief here, and just done an open forum to talk about, you know, those type of issues, but, you know, I wasn't led to be walking down the street, you know, and with a sign like that, so I was, you know, had a few members say, well, you weren't, we didn't see you out here. But at the same time, there's violence and different things going there. I got a multi-cultural church, you know, I mean, it's just a thin line, I have to walk through, so during that particular time, it was, it was interesting to see where I really stood, was I Black, or was I white? But yet again, there is multi-cultural. And so, I have to constantly position myself, not as white or Black. And I did a message that, you know, I'm part of the kingdom of God, I'm a Christian. I'm a believer, you know, and that was a stand I had, you know, that love everybody and stuff. And so, I had to stick with that. But, you know, I had a few that rose up to challenge that.

Isabella

Isabella notes:

We all have to learn to do this problem in America. My belief is that we have been avoiding this conversation since Martin Luther King died. Yeah, the prayer movement died with him. Because it was all united in prayer and that fear watching him die, shut the whole machine down, the movement. And it doesn't seem to make sense how anybody could think it's okay to stay in that kind of space and avoid this conversation on race. How many years we could have been through it. I don't want to see another generation come and go, that we still haven't felt the feels.

Travis

Travis notes, “I would not do a Black Lives Matter rally. I wouldn't do one. And when they were doing some little rally here, I just told him, I'm not, I'm not doing that.”

100% of participants think the Church would benefit from a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias. 71.4% (5 of 7) of the pastors addressed ethnic explicit and implicit bias in their church. Concerning social or political movements such as marching with Black Lives Matter, 100% said they did not feel called to march. 28.5% (2) dealt with this social movement by hosting an open forum with local police. 42.8% (3) were concerned about offending or losing some members if they participated in the movement. 14.2% (1) talked openly through social media about this social movement and were attacked personally for vocalizing their position.

Findings

Implicit Ethnic Bias Exists in Some American Churches, Including Multi-ethnic American Churches

Seven senior pastors of multi-ethnic American churches described their lived experiences both personally and professionally concerning implicit ethnic bias in the American Church. While this study focused on multi-ethnic churches, based on the lived experiences of these pastors of varying ethnicities, implicit ethnic bias seems to not be exclusive to multi-ethnic churches. 57.1% (4 of 7) of participants reported a negative personal implicit ethnic bias or explicit ethnic bias experience by an American Church at some point in their life, whether the church they experienced this at was homogenous or heterogenous ethnically. Some of these experiences occurred when the participants were in their youth and may have been decades ago. Some were more recent. Since most people have some type of implicit bias (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016), people in the churches would not be excluded from having implicit bias, including implicit ethnic bias. 57.1% (4 of 7) of

the participants, who are pastors, reported their own implicit biases. This Recognized Bias is defined under Definition of Terms and discussed more under Chapter 5, Applications.

Social unrest pertaining to the murders of unarmed Black men such as George Floyd has brought the topic of implicit ethnic bias as well as explicit ethnic bias front and center in the churches (Barna, 2017, 2018, 2021). The researcher discovered that 100% of participants think the Church would benefit from a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias. 71.4% (5 of 7) of the pastors addressed ethnic explicit and implicit bias in their church. According to the interviews, there has been difficulty in addressing it within the local church. As well, best practices regarding how to address both implicit and explicit ethnic bias in multi-ethnic American churches, remain to be discovered. Most of the pastors had and still have a concern with addressing implicit ethnic bias or outright racism in their churches. Some of this was out of fear of offending or even losing some members (42.8%). As well, 100% of the pastors chose not to participate in the social or political marches surrounding incidences such as the murder of George Floyd for fear of looking as though they were taking sides. They wished to remain neutral on the topic.

Potential Benefits of Understanding Implicit Ethnic Bias

One of the benefits of the churches having a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias seems to be to learn about and to come to a greater understanding of people, including their cultural differences. Another benefit is that the Church can begin to heal from its past concerning racism, helping to strengthen the Church. Finally, to be more like Jesus regarding inclusivity.

The participants' early experiences with diverse people were obvious during this study. Having the ability to relate to people from all walks of life seems to have strengthened the pastors' ability to grow and maintain relationships with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Being an active part of the community seems to position multi-ethnic American churches in a unique way to mimic Jesus' ministry of inclusivity. This community activity involves, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, youth ministry, evangelism, prayer ministry, and a whole host of other types of community outreach. It does not include political or social involvement. Having said this, it seems the Church including the local multi-ethnic church, may have imago Dei-centered relationships, having come together for a common cause, but true love and understanding of each other across ethnicities may be lacking. This was also seen in Barna's work (Barna, 2017, 2018, 2021).

Having a diverse leadership team in a multi-ethnic church allows people to see that the church understands that it is important for people to see others who look like them in leadership positions. While no leadership team is perfect, the pastors in this study have sought to have a diverse leadership team. This was regardless of the fact that there have been issues from time to time that needed to be addressed concerning implicit ethnic bias.

Evaluation of the Research Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design that was interview-based, with open-ended questions. In-depth interviews were used to gain an understanding of what methods may have and what methods may not have worked in leading a successful multi-ethnic church. The researcher interviewed senior pastors directly. This was the best protocol for this study as it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions and study the participants fully even though the setting was a video chat platform due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. Participants chose their setting where they felt safe and non-threatened to complete the Zoom interview and the settings varied. See more about settings under Setting.

The sampling was not random, but purposive and specific to Christian senior pastors who were pastoring an American multi-ethnic church. More specifically, the population studied were Christians, over eighteen years of age, from varying ethnic backgrounds and both genders, who were in senior pastor positions in a multi-ethnic American church. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B). As part of this purposive sampling for this research project, both heterogeneous and homogeneous sampling was used. Homogeneous sampling was used because the project is very specific to Christian senior pastors. Heterogeneous sampling was used because the product requires a mix of ethnic and gender characteristics to round out the study. The researcher sought out varying perspectives on implicit bias and what methods may have and what methods may not have worked in leading a successful multi-ethnic church. See more about participants under Participants. Interviewing the pastors directly offered insight into what methods may have and what methods may not have worked in leading a successful multi-ethnic church. It also sought to determine if a presence of implicit ethnic bias existed in these multi-ethnic American churches.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Research Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. For this study effectively overcoming means that the leader identified practices that have led to a more biblical, cohesive, and harmonious multi-ethnic American church where congregants have imago Dei-centered relationships and work together to fulfill the Great Commission.

Research Questions

The following Research Questions guided this study:

RQ1. How do participating senior-level pastors describe the value, if any, of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the churches or ministry?

RQ2. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor?

RQ3. What perceived influence has implicit ethnic bias had, if any, on the senior-level pastor's team?

RQ4. How can the ministry/Church benefit from increased understanding of implicit ethnic bias?

RQ5. What practices are perceived to have worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

RQ6. What practices are perceived to have not worked well in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multi-ethnic American church?

Research Conclusions

The pastors who took part in this research study came from varying backgrounds, are of varying ethnicities, and include both genders. Six themes emerged from the data. In analyzing the data obtained from the participants, the researcher discovered implicit ethnic bias does exist

in some multi-ethnic American Churches. While it seems the Church, including the local multi-ethnic church, may seek to have imago Dei-centered relationships, having come together for a common cause, true love and understanding of each other across ethnicities may be lacking, according to the interviews. Having a diverse leadership team and solid community outreach programs can bring people to the churches, but they cannot substitute for a deeper understanding and belief that all are made in the image of God (KJV, Gen 1:26-27). While Christians in multi-ethnic churches may love their brothers and sisters of all ethnicities according to Jesus' command (John 13:34-35A), it does not mean all are fully understood, valued, and used in the churches according to God's purposes.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. While implicit ethnic bias does exist in some multi-ethnic American churches, attempts to address it seems to have failed for the most part. To date, there have been no good answers on best practices concerning how to approach it. What has been concluded is that partaking or choosing to not partake in political or social movements such as Black Lives Matter can cause division rather than unity in a multi-cultural church. Some participating pastors who tried to address implicit ethnic bias in their multi-ethnic churches suffered a backlash from some members to the point of having lost some members. For others, it may have had a positive effect. Even with multi-ethnic teams, the problem still exists, at times between some team members. It has been concluded by the researcher that ethnically based implicit biases amongst the leadership and congregants in some multi-ethnic American churches have not been overcome. As well, there seems to be no one good answer as to how to do so. Below are the following conclusions.

Implicit Ethnic Bias Exists in These Multi-Ethnic American Churches

All the research participants described lived experiences where either an implicit ethnic bias was perpetrated against them, or they were witness to implicit ethnic bias or even outright explicit ethnic bias by an American Church, including multi-ethnic churches. While some of the lived experiences happened many years ago, they are vividly recalled by the participants. Other experiences have been more recent.

In the Background to the Problem, affective experiences are discussed. Affective experiences are those which begin in the amygdala and are more automatic. If these affective experiences are never challenged, they will not change. The good news is that if they are challenged, they can change (Rudman, 2004). As an example of early experiences, Chugh (2018) remarks that children are often shushed when they stare or make a comment about someone who is different than they are making the difference appear to be a bad thing (Chugh, 2018). An early experience, such as this, can set the standard by which an individual perceives the other. Understanding family of origin, one's culture, early experiences, and affective experiences are key in becoming aware of one's own perceptions and implicit biases and how each may have been shaped.

In examining the lived experiences of the participants, the researcher was able to identify a key element to managing a multi-cultural church. The affective experiences these seven participants had regarding people who were ethnically different than them, must have been challenged at some point in their lives which allowed for them to become aware of how their perceptions of the other may have been shaped or that the other's perception of them may have been shaped in a particular way. This speaks to the term Recognized Bias. Considering Theme 1, interpersonal interactions with ethnicities by the age of 21 may have given participant's an

ability to understand both ethnic implicit and explicit bias as well as giving them the ability to effectively communicate with ethnic groups who are different than their own.

Best practices

Three best practices emerged for the study of the data based on the lived experiences of the participants. They are, being an active part of their community, having a diverse leadership, and while 100% of the pastors think the Church could benefit from a greater understanding of implicit ethnic bias or tried to address it in their church, participation in social or political movements such as Black Lives Matter was overwhelmingly discouraged.

The researcher found that being an active part of the community was vital for these multi-ethnic American churches to build relationships both inside and outside the church. No themes regarding any particular form of community involvement were observed. Some examples of participant community involvement were feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, youth ministry, evangelism, prayer ministry, and a whole host of other types of community outreach. The researcher discovered that engaging with the community as much as possible allows the pastors and their church members to develop relationships with a wide variety of ethnicities and allows the community to get to know the local church on a personal level. Note that this engagement does not include participation in social or political movements such as Black Lives Matter. Yet, while having community outreach programs can bring people to the churches, it does not guarantee that implicit ethnic bias will not exist in multi-cultural churches.

Having a diverse leadership team was mentioned by 71.4% of the participants when asked what they thought worked well in a multi-ethnic church. As mentioned earlier, neither Jeffrey nor Travis mentioned this when asked what works well in a multi-ethnic church. However, it should be noted that both Jeffrey and Travis do have diverse leadership teams. This was discovered by

the researcher after researching the church websites. The 71.4% felt this was important so visitors and members alike can see those who look like them in leadership positions. After analyzing what participants said concerning diverse leadership, it became obvious to the researcher that if one wants a successful multi-ethnic church, they should have leadership that looks like their multi-ethnic church members. This obviousness may be why neither Jeffrey nor Travis mentioned having diverse leadership as a best practice for having a multi-ethnic church. Again, having a diverse leadership may bring people to the churches, but it cannot guarantee that implicit ethnic bias will not exist in multi-cultural churches.

The final practice discovered as a best practice by the researcher, of these pastors of multi-ethnic churches, is that of not participating in social or political movements such as Black Lives Matter, even if they were peaceful. No participant endorsed rioting. For the most part, the participants had a fear of participating in any social or political movements out of concern for offending or shaking up their multi-ethnic church members. This is in stark contrast to the mostly segregated churches of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

At the time of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s most churches were still segregated. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King at the time stated, “Eleven O’clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hour in Christian America” (Spivak, 1960). It must be noted, the Civil Rights movement was led by the Church, but predominately, though not wholly, by the Black Church which would not have feared offending or losing members. The researcher discovered that pastors of multi-cultural churches that partake in social or political movements such as Black Lives Matter have a fear of losing or offending church members. Jeffrey’s story illustrates what can happen when a pastor does openly address the issue of implicit or explicit bias. Jeffrey recalls, “And in the end, most of them just shrug and go, well,

I don't I don't like the way you said what you said. So, I'm leaving." Matthew felt the pressure to walk the thin line between Black and White, preaching the love of Jesus to all, inviting the local police chief and mayor to the church to have an open conversation, and still had some members leave. Kevin also invited the local police chief to his church to have a conversation on race issues. While 100% of the participants agreed the Church needs a better understanding of implicit ethnic bias, or tried to address it within their church, none felt led to address it through social marches and feared repercussions for doing so. While it may work for a pastor of a homogenous church to participate in social marches a larger study would need to be done to determine if this is the case for pastors of multi-ethnic churches in America.

Applications

1. Christians are responsible to educate themselves on implicit bias to not conform to the world when it comes to understanding the other but be transformed by the renewing of their minds, so they can prove what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God (KJV, Rom. 12:2)
2. Christians are responsible to understand their own family of origin, culture, early experiences, and affective experiences and how those may have affected them in relation to all types of implicit bias.
3. Christians are responsible to come to an understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God and that this image applies to all human beings with no exceptions.
4. Christians are responsible to understand that taking a stand against something (implicit ethnic bias) is not the same as living one's life day to day living out

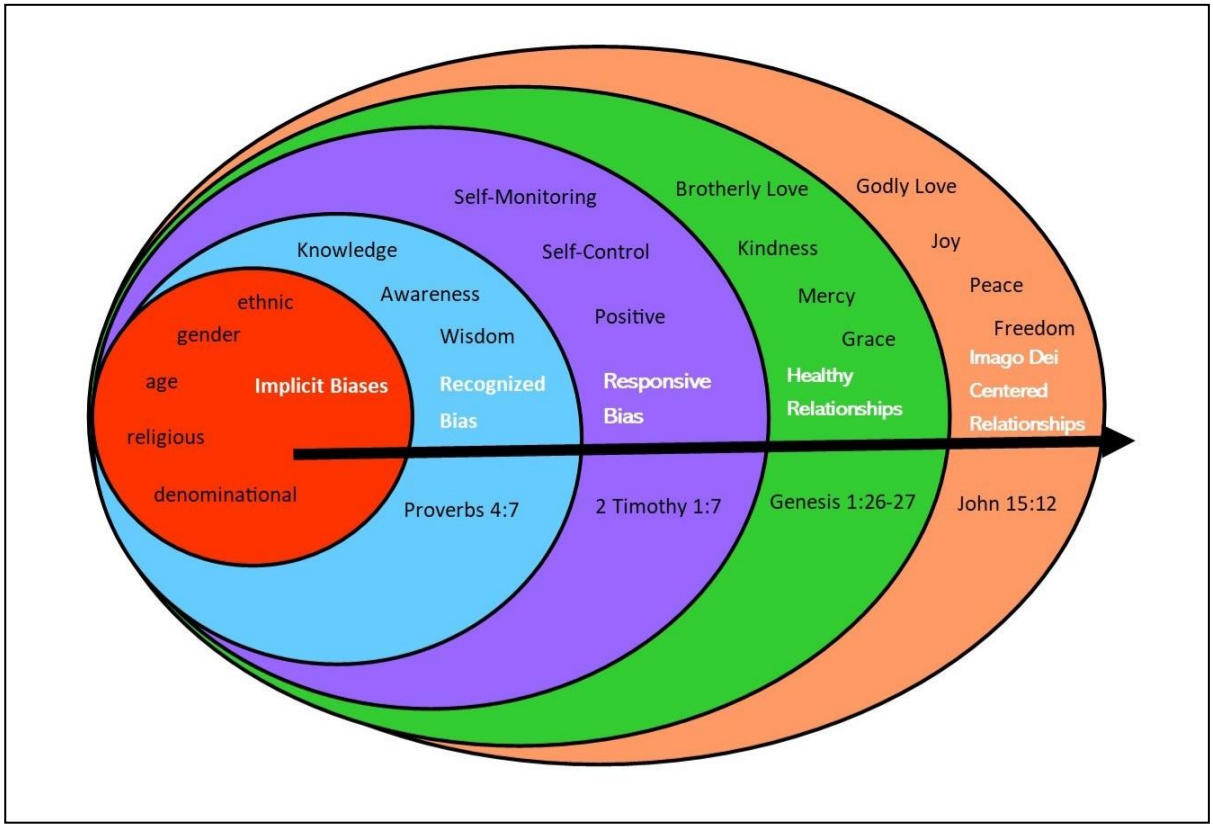
the message that all are made in the image of God. Living one's life accordingly is the stand.

5. Pastors are responsible to teach that all people are made in the image of God and there are no exceptions.
6. Pastors are responsible to teach members how to work out their own salvation by recognizing their own implicit biases according to God's will.
7. The Church is responsible for leading the conversation on implicit bias, grounded on Scripture, so the world will have a way to follow.

Under the Definition of Terms, the researcher is offered two new terms: Recognized Bias and Responsive Bias. Recognized Bias is defined as the self-recognition and acknowledgment of an implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022). Responsive Bias is defined as the active self-monitoring and quick positive response to a recognized implicit bias (Vazquez, 2022). Considering these two new terms and Rudman's (2004) information concerning affective experiences as discussed in the Background to the Problem, this researcher is introducing a flow chart that could be helpful for those who wish to challenge their affective experiences to make positive changes concerning their implicit biases. See Figure 5. The intention of the flow chart is to help those interested, see a path to recognizing and then addressing, their implicit biases to make positive changes toward understanding that all people are made in the image of God (Gen, 1:26-27) and further, toward loving others, including people who are different from them, as God loves them (John 15:12).

Figure 5

Imago Dei Centered Relationships Flow Chart



Research Limitations

The research study was limited to Christians, over eighteen years of age, from varying ethnic backgrounds and of both genders, who were in senior pastor positions in a multi-ethnic American church. As well, the churches' theologies had to align with the doctrinal position statement included in the Participant Consent Form (See Appendix B).

Further Research

In consideration of this study, the analysis and findings, as well as the conclusions, the researcher proposes the following for further research. These studies could be done by a large

organization such as Barna Group, which has done extensive research on the faith community and is well known.

1. Conduct a study involving a larger pool of subjects which would include pastors who are Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and who are of both genders. This study would allow for a larger pool of lived experiences from all ethnicities and both genders. This could be an anonymous survey.
2. Conduct a national study of Christians asking if they have ever experienced any type of implicit bias while being a member of a church, or by attending another church's services. This could be an anonymous survey allowing Christians to speak freely about their own experiences regarding implicit bias in the churches.
3. Conduct a study involving pastors and their concerns regarding teaching about racial issues in their church. This could be an anonymous survey.
4. Conduct a study involving pastors and their concerns regarding participating in social or political movements such as Black Lives Matter. This could be an anonymous survey.
5. Conduct a study of pastors in multi-ethnic churches who did address racial issues in their churches after the murder of George Floyd to discover the outcomes of doing so. This could be an anonymous survey.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 21, 2021

Shirley Vazquez
Gary Bredfeldt

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-723 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCHES THAT HAVE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED ETHNOCENTRIC BIASES AND CULTIVATED IMAGO DEI CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Dear Shirley Vazquez, Gary Bredfeldt:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of Multi-Ethnic Churches that Have Effectively Managed Ethnocentric Biases and Cultivated Imago Dei Centered Relationships
Principal Investigator: Shirley A. Vazquez, M.A., M.Div. Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be over eighteen years of age and currently pastor an American multiethnic church where not one ethnic group is more than eighty percent of the total congregants. You must also subscribe to the following doctrinal statement in its entirety:

- Believe in one God, who exists eternally in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Believe the Father is the first person of the Trinity, the Son is the second person of the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit is a third person of the Trinity. These three are equal but distinct in person and function.
- Believe the Son was born of a virgin birth by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. The Son is both God and perfect man, distinct in nature but united in one person.
- Believe all things were created by God and nothing was made without God.
- Believe both the Old and New Testaments, while written by men, were inspired by God and are fully true and inerrant.
- Believe Adam was the first man and through his disobedience to God brought sin and death into the world. Therefore, all persons are born sinners.
- Believe for the atonement of sin, Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again where He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for all who believe in him.
- Believe all who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved, through repentance of sin, the work of Christ and faith in Him alone as Savior.
- Believe the local church is an assembly of baptized believers who carry out the Great Commission.
- Believe Christ will one day return.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the best practices of successful multi-ethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants and who have cultivated imago Dei centered relationships.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Spend time in a confidential recorded interview with me via Zoom. This interview will be between one and two hours long.

2. Review a transcription of your interview with me to ensure its accuracy. This review will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a greater understanding of ethnically based implicit biases and how to overcome them. This can not only have an effect on the American Church but on society as a whole.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer when applicable or under lock and key if the data is written on paper. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and paper copies destroyed.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Shirley A. Vazquez. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted] You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Gary Bredfeldt, at [redacted]

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____ _____

Printed Subject Name Signature & Date

APPENDIX C

Participant Interview Questions

1. Do you currently pastor a multi-ethnic church in America?
2. If yes, can you give me the approximate breakdown of the demographics of your church specifically race and age?
3. Does your church believe in one God, who exists eternally in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?
4. Does your church believe the Father is the first person of the Trinity, the Son is the second person of the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and that the three are equal but distinct in person and function?
5. Does your church believe the Son was born of a virgin birth by a miracle of the Holy Spirit and the Son is both God and perfect man, distinct in nature but united in one person?
6. Does your church believe all things were created by God and nothing was made without God?
7. Does your church believe both the Old and New Testaments, while written by men, were inspired by God and are fully true and inerrant?
8. Does your church believe Adam was the first man and through his disobedience to God brought sin and death into the world and therefore, all persons are born sinners?
9. Does your church believe that for the atonement of sin, Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again where He sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven interceding for all who believe in Him?

10. Does your church believe that all who believe in Jesus Christ can be saved, through repentance of sin, the work of Christ and faith in Him alone as Savior?
11. Does your church believe the local church is an assembly of baptized believers who carry out the Great Commission?
12. Does your church believe Christ will one day return?

If the answers to the first twelve questions fit the perimeter of the study the following questions will be asked.

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What ethnicity do you ascribe to? Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Other
4. What is your level of education? Seminary? Certificates?
5. How many years have you been a pastor?
6. Describe your childhood/adolescent environment in relation to your experiences with people who were a different ethnicity than you.
7. Do you know what implicit bias means? Can you describe it?
8. Have you ever led people who are a different ethnicity than you?
9. Have you ever engaged in implicit bias training?
10. Has anyone on your team ever engaged in implicit bias training to your knowledge?
11. Have you ever experienced racism personally or seen it occur?
12. What was your response?
13. Have you seen racism or implicit bias occur in your church?

APPENDIX D

Pastoral Recruitment Letter

Dear Pastor,

As a doctoral candidate in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand the best practices of successful multiethnic American churches that contribute to effectively overcoming ethnically based implicit biases amongst leadership and congregants. The purpose of my research is to understand how participating senior-level pastors describe the value, if any, of understanding implicit ethnic bias in the American church. It also seeks to understand what perceived influence implicit ethnic bias has had, if any, on the participating senior-level pastor and their teams. Lastly, the purpose is also to discover what practices are perceived to have or have not worked in managing and overcoming these biases to be a more cohesive, successful multiethnic American church, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be over eighteen years of age and currently pastor an American multiethnic church where not one ethnic group is more than eighty percent of total congregants. Participants must also agree with the doctrinal statement, in its entirety, listed in the attached consent form. Participants, if willing, will be asked to spend time in a confidential recorded interview with the researcher via Zoom. This interview will be between one and two hours long. Participants will be given the opportunity to review a transcript of their interview to ensure its accuracy. This is called member checking. This member checking will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes and will take place via e-mail. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please contact me at savazquez@liberty.edu to schedule an interview. A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, please sign the consent document and return it to me via e-mail as soon as you decide to participate. I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Shirley A. Vazquez, M.A., M.Div.
Doctoral candidate
savazquez@liberty.edu