African American Male Pastors' Perceptions of Managing Racism As Black Men and

Spiritual Leaders

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this psychological phenomenological study was to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and spiritual leaders. The appropriate relationships can endure unforeseen trauma with Erickson's (2013) recognition of the dependability and reliability of the scriptures, as well as Bowlby's (1969/1982) concept of pastors' attachments fostering trust. The research questions were as follows: How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations? What strategies would African American pastors encourage to congregates when addressing racism? How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons in the 1960s? What would African American pastors say their role is in the Black community as a spiritual leaders concerning racism? Who would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure? In what ways would African American pastors say that racism has affected their behavior? The Brief COPE Assessment tool was used as a pre-evaluation method for African American participants to identify coping strategies when addressing traumatic issues, such as racism. The data collection method included semi-structured interviews, cognitive representation and was validated through participant checks. Utilizing Moustakas' (1994) modified Van Kemp method, data analysis consisted of a series of operations: horizonalization, reduction, elimination, clustering, theme development, validation, and description to report the essence of participants' experiences. Data analysis identified the following five major themes and their recurring themes regarding the Black male pastor's perception of racism: 1) Growth of the Black Church, a) Church Growth in comparison to the 1960s; 2) Role of Black Pastors; 3) Influences, a) Influence as a Spiritual Leader, b)

Influence within the Black Community, c) Influence on Racism Strategies and d) Influences

Received by Others; 4) Biblical Perspective of the African American Pastors, a) COVID-19

Pandemic, and b) January 6th Insurrection, and 5) Biblical Character of the African American

Pastors, a) 2020/2021 Killings of Black men, b) Killings of Black Men Affect Black Men in the

Family, c) Racism Affecting Behavior as a Black Man, and d) Killing of Black Men Like George

Floyd and Andre Hill.

Keywords: African Americans, Black men, male pastors, racism, influence, behavior

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter begins with a comprehensive and concise background of the connection between racism and the perception of African American male pastors who are leading African American churches. Next, the chapter reflects on African American men's interaction with racism through slavery and its connection to embracing and directing the African American church. Chapter One and this study emphasized the discrimination of diverse people based on color, culture, or race in the African American community and expressed a spiritual ethnicity toward therapeutic Christian humanity. Chapter One concluded with a demonstration of the significance of the study, an introduction to the research questions, and the definition of specific terms.

Background

This study of the perception of African American male pastors (AAMP) on racism traced the historical experiences of African Americans, their social struggles of African Americans, and the theoretical concept that intertwine with the African American experience towards racism. Racism has concerned the Black community since Blacks were enslaved from Africa to America (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). As a Black pastor, Martin Luther King, Jr. responded to social injustice by believing in God and the validity of His promises. This study revealed if AAMPs respond similarly to such injustices. As a result of being involved in social struggles, many AAMPs have faced a personal cost for their involvement in fighting for justice and leadership (Counted & Miller, 2018).

African Americans and Racism: Theoretical

The racial struggles in the life of a Christian, such as the AAMPs, deemed this study to focus on Christian theology and assumed connection with God with a focus on Attachment theology. These theories were revealed when research questions asked AAMPs to identify someone, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure, who epitomizes the most positive connection during their experience of racial obscurities (McQueen, 2020). In addition, the related literature expressed concepts of the perception of racism with the AAMPs and its connection to biblical theology and Critical theory.

African Americans and Racism: Societal

The study of racism can vary in several different categories or types. For example, the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau collects data by racial categories that reflect a social definition of race recognition within a minimum of five groups: White, Black, African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Other government institutions, such as Seattle, Washington, identified racism by types: interpersonal, institutional, structural, and internalized. Further recognition of African American social struggles was expressed in this chapter under the role of the pastor and Biblical perspectives. It continued under the related literature in Chapter Two when elaborating on the types of racism.

African Americans and Racism: Historical

The study on racism historically is commonly expressed by some theorists as America's original sin with a slavery mindset behavior that continues since its discovery in America, and often in the minds of the oppressed seems impossible to escape (Cone, 2004; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Ponds, 2013; Stanford University, 2020) The limitation of resources should encourage

researchers to consider the validation of the historical perspective of the African American pastor and the African American church to understand the oppressed situation of racism today. The ancestors of African Americans were pursued, purchased, and enslaved solely for the cheap labor they could provide on farms and plantations (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The systematic (physical, mental, economic, and spiritual) and pervasive character of racism at the discovery of America has not changed (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007; Watson et al., 2020).

The African American church has a responsibility in the struggle against racism to discard what is still reflecting a racial structure of slavery that segregates within some churches and demands a Christian model that desegregates in others (Barna Group and Reimagine Group, 2019; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Pastor and Senator Raphael Warnock (2020) asserted that the African American community offers a radical and sustainable response to America on racism since the days of slavery by organizing the African American church and refusing to accept second-class citizenship within Christian communions.

<div align="center">**Situation to Self**</div>

Understanding the perception of pastors, negatively affected and impacted by racism and social unrest, was essential for them and those they spiritually lead. This concern motivated my interest in conducting the study as racial demonstrations were observed by my family and within the African American community. As reported by CBS News (Cohen & Luttig, 2020), Mr. Ahmaud Arbery was killed in February 2020; Mr. George Floyd was killed in May 2020; Mr. Andre Hill was killed in December 2020; Mr. Daunte Wright was killed in April 2021; and Ms. Breonna Taylor was killed in March 2020, among other African Americans.

In my frustration to understand, I petitioned the Lord to help His people, both the just and the unjust. I have a large family, and most are African American men raising African American

men in America, which is supposed to be the land of the free. While seeking God, my mind immediately considered the thoughts of the African American men in my family, church, and community. As the family was watching the news regarding the Ahmaud Arbery case, most of the men started identifying the killers as a lynch mob and connecting the tragedy with an 1860s citizen's arrest law that seemingly justified lynching (Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Hearing these accusations of demonstrations pointed toward our African American children and grandchildren became frightening, especially with approximately 18 males in our immediate family. The family's discussion then turned towards a spiritual conversation, encouraging one another. While conducting this study, it was extremely difficult to separate all biases. It was almost impossible not to recall the pain expressed by my valedictorian nephew when his head was slammed on the hood of the car when pulled over by the police for no reason. As the family watched, everyone was hurt and shouted how God is our refuge and "a very present help" in the time of our need, and "We will not fear" (New King James Version [NKJV], James, 1982, Ps. 46:1-2a).

This study assisted African American male leaders in understanding their reactions or responses in their families, churches, and communities. In addition, the study drew African American men conjugate to develop a vision of change, a long-term perspective, and short-term plans that would ignite hope and faith during these trials and tribulations (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Watson et al., 2020). In further studies, researchers should know what can be done. However, first, the analysis must understand the inductive reasoning and racial impact caused to individuals (families), churches (congregations), and societies (African American community).

This study was geared towards understanding with inductive reasoning into the perception of leaders in the Christian community, particularly the African American community,

who are specifically involved or surrounded by racially oppressed individuals. My choice to use male pastors was based on the challenges African American males face since they face different challenges than African American women. These challenges include fewer educational opportunities, higher unemployment rates, shorter life expectancies, a higher prison rate, and a rapid loss of faith due to racism (Reeves et al., 2020). As a Christian African American woman in the ministry to serve God and the community, this researcher could identify what is felt when discriminated against or abused simply because of her skin color. However, to me, knowing the inner thoughts of the African American male can only be revealed by other African American males. In this research, I better understood how African American male pastors were responding, teaching, and preaching to the African American community during recent racial disturbances, which in the past two years has also included the COVID-19 pandemic. A study that can offer the voice of a culture, particularly the African American culture, which is racially impacted, provided insight. The study brought an awareness of what and how one sustains themselves as an African American man while encouraging African American congregates toward a positive outcome (Kaldor & Bullpitt, 2001).

Some researchers confessed that when analyzing a small view in time, individuals outside the cause's demographics may have the possibility of disclosing the relationship but not the definite cause and effect (Kaldor & Bullpitt, 2001). Researchers must understand that there are risks for African Americans to express their racial concerns to whites; therefore, if that feedback could be offered or shared by church leaders or pastors of that culture, others may consider the source trustworthy and the advice accurate (Stewart, 2020).

My ontological approach was, in reality, due to the need for multiple individual perceptions and explorations of African American male pastors' observable and subjective

experiences regarding racism (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Milacci & Sibcy, 2007). Ontology is the nature of being, identifies "who we are," explains "why we are," and formulates "why we are being" (Milacci & Sibcy, 2007). My philosophical assumption embraces biblical and Critical theory. The critical theory focuses on concerns that empower human beings to "transcend the constraints placed on them by race" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 29). Therefore, the method constructed in the interview had a high probability of revealing the emotional perceptions (e.g., anger, anxiety, long-suffering, belief) experienced by African American male pastors.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there are limited resources of empirically researched articles that express the perception of racism from the voices of African American men serving as church leaders in the African American community. Many peer-reviewed articles, journals, and published research reports exist on racism; however, they do not offer African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism. When seeking specific dialogues of African American pastors or clergy sharing their insight or perception with a focus on racism, these empirically reviewed journals or articles remain limited (Barna Group and Reimagine Group , 2019; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). However, there were a few documents in the focused area 1) a Pew Research Center (2021) article with interviews of 30 African American Christian clergies on how the African American churches' influence for social justice has declined now than 50 years ago; 2) Maxwell's (2020) interview with an African American pastor on his impact on racial and social justice; 3) Barna Group and Reimagine Group's (2019) interviews with 100 African American pastors among 600 senior pastors that there are limited resources of empirically researched articles that express the perception of racism from the voices of African American men serving as church leaders in the African American community to determine if the

church should help repair the damage resulting from racial injustice, and 4) Patterson's (2013) interviews of eight African American pastors to question if their psychological distress relates to racism.

The goal was for this study was to help the African American culture and other cultures grasp how the African American pastor is helping his church navigate interpersonal, institutional, structural, and internalized racism while enduring a pandemic. In addition, it was valuable to understand how the pastor perceives these most recent acts of racism as an African American man, African American father, and African American spiritual leader for others, even during the current pandemic.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the psychological or transcendental phenomenological to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders. In addition, this study sought to gather inductive reasoning related to the participant's experiences that were missing or lacking in the research literature. Wallis (2007) defined racism as a system of oppression to justify slavery and its enormous economic benefits. Patterson (2013) contended that racism takes on various forms and affects the overall quality of life for many African Americans.

In Chapter Two of this study, the theoretical framework introduced the guide to this qualitative study. First, it examined the phenomenological perspectives of African American pastors regarding the prevailing racism that affected their homes, churches, and communities during a pandemic. Next, Christian theology and Attachment theology were used as the theoretical framework to understand the African American pastors' servantry to God and significant connections with others regarding racism. Finally, this visionary concept was

shadowed by the related literature on Biblical theology and Critical theory, with a systematic review of the types of racism that affect the African American churches and communities and the liberation struggle of the oppressed and the oppressor.

Much of the literature on African American pastors concerns their ability to reach out and bring awareness to their congregates regarding mental health or professional counseling. Traditionally, pastors are the first person congregants seek for emotional and spiritual encouragement and healing (Allen et al., 2010; Avent et al., 2015; West et al., 2006). Therefore, the recent recruitment of African American spiritual leaders helped increase vaccination rates because the increasing hesitancy in communities of color only underscored these spiritual leaders' critical position in their communities (Privor-Dumm & King, 2020). A qualitative phenomenology method was used to conduct one-on-one interviews with these spiritual leaders from questions such as, "What are the challenges that African American pastors have when addressing a congregation of African American people on racism?" Although devoted to the cause, pastors do not always meet others' high expectations, even within their congregation (Barnard & Curry, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This study's significance was better understanding the African American male's perception of racism, as it affected their personal and professional lifestyle, by speaking with them directly. Some studies concentrate on a comprehensive critique of how the stereotyping and distorting of social media images encourage fear and prejudices against African American men but limited concentration on the ability to improve societal awareness by providing a different perspective (Harris & Majors, 1993; Maxwell, 2020; Patterson, 2013). Some studies categorize African American men as poor, hypermasculine, and threatening but lack in sharing how those

discriminating thoughts may cause African American men to downplay their feelings of frustration to appease whites (Collins, 2004; Cooper, 2008; Jackson, 2018; Wingfield, 2010).

This qualitative study aimed to provide personal insights by interacting with motivating and social contexts that applied to African American men and the rationale for tolerating such discrimination (Jackson, 2018). Furthermore, studies revealed that African American men share their experiences to embrace their heritage of being vital to dispel fallacies for a healthier mindset and resilience to navigate through life's daily stressors (American Psychological Association, 2020; Helms, 1990; Jung & Hecht, 2004; Mahalik et al., 2006). Therefore, this study captured African American men who are aware of or have experienced such racial slurs and documented the perception and insight from their responses.

Researchers define in their studies that older African American men have unique, developing experiences as husbands and fathers and historical backgrounds as the sociopolitical climate of the 1960s (Mahalik et al., 2006; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). These experiences have variables that affect their relationships, racial identity, gender role conformity, self-esteem, or psychological distress than the younger generation (Mahalik et al., 2006; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). The study suggested examining African American men's experiences to include their self-esteem and psychological distress (Mahalik et al.; Pierre & Mahalik). Without considering the cause and historical flaws that identified the African American man since slavery diminishes the actual perception of any human being raised under constraints and concerns for life and family. Mosley-Howard and Evans (2000) shared that historically, African American families are often under the microscope of study to understand their structure, survival, personal relationships, and status, and should continue.

As researchers attempted to study how African American families survive, the spiritual connection or attachment to their pastor, church, and belief in God encourages them to persevere. As Henderson and Louis (2017) explained, when African American people feel expendable or endure economic exploitation, they turn to African American churches, especially in the struggle and resistance to anti-African American racism. This study broadened that insight from the guidance and perception of African American church leaders over predominately African American congregations. Cone (1984) valued the example of the African American male pastor, Martin Luther King, Jr., who shaped the theology of addressing the oppression of African American people and provided a liberating message to the African American church. Some researchers professed that African Americans think highly of religion in their lives. Many of their family members are affiliated with a church and have a close connection or attachment to God (Levin et al., 1994; Smith et al., 1999). This study further evaluated this family admission through the perception of African American pastors. There are studies about the connection between African American men and racism and the African American church, but this study authenticated if these assessed reports were the African American male pastor's truths.

Research Questions

Understanding how African American pastors perceived themselves across all aspects of their identities was vital to know how they guided their congregations. Broadly the research questions were as follows:

Research Question 1

How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations?

Hollinger (2020), at the Center for Pastor Theologians, inquired about how the church should respond to racism. A research study reported that only 38% of white practicing Christians believe in American races, but 78% of African Americans practicing Christians perceive a race problem; therefore, they are not making progress on racial understanding (Barna Group and Reimagine Group, 2019; Hollinger).

Research Question 2

What strategies would African American pastors encourage congregates when addressing racism?

Understanding how a man of the cloth influences others to manage discriminating pain and frustration is valid. According to Hollinger (2020), the strategy for addressing racism is not monolithic but can be approached in three areas: understanding, reconciliation, and justice. Tisby (2019) reminded Christians about a statement posed by Charles Morgan, Jr., a young white lawyer, about everyone's responsibility after the church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four African American girls. "Did the ministers visit the families of the Negros in their hour of travail?"

Research Question 3

How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches in the 1960s?

Tisby (2019) elaborated on daily national news of outcries, such as the poisoned water in Flint, Michigan, the separation of immigrant children from their parents, and the racism that is still present in politics and the African American community, such as the gunning down, lynching behavior of a young African American boy.

Research Question 4

What would African American pastors say their role is in the African American community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

The African American community has different views on racial discrimination than the white community. For many African Americans, racial equality remains elusive (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Pew Research Center, 2021). It is the pastors' role to guide and care for their church congregates who seek emotional and spiritual encouragement when faced with mental and spiritual barriers like racism (Allen et al., 2010; Avent et al., 2015; Harmon, 2018; Moore et al., 2018; Stansbury, 2012; Thompkins et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2020; West et al., 2006).

Research Question 6

In what ways would African American pastors say that racism has affected their behavior?

LaMothe (2021) expressed that African Americans or marginalized realize they are not only not welcome in public-political spaces, but these spaces are imbued with apparatuses of humiliation. Barton (2009, p. 27) explained that many pastors are trying to "lead their congregations into realities that they are not experiencing themselves."

Research Question 5

Whom would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

The expectations within the African American community set up psychological challenges, reactions, and emotional responses, forcing men to isolate themselves (Boyd-Franklin et al., 1997; Patterson, 2013).

Definitions

As part of the study's constructs within the theories framework, the terms of interest used in this study were defined uniquely.

1. *African American or Black* – the term used interchangeably throughout the study. In the 1960s. Black activists identified as Blacks with empowerment from the slavery name, Negro, whereas the younger generation in the 1980s preferred African American (Chavez, 2020). If there are any differences between the two, an explanation will follow.

2. *Church Leader or Spiritual Leaders* – the term used interchangeably throughout the study of an individual with authority to lead church ministry, religious, or spiritual services for others to understand biblical and spiritual truths and worship (Stewart, 2020).

3. *Enslavement* – the action of binding someone as a slave person; subjugation (Gates, 2021).

4. Marginalized – a person, group, or concept; treated as insignificant or peripheral (LaMothe, 2021).

5. Minority – the smaller number or part, especially a number that is less than half the whole number.

6. *Pastor* – an overseer of a Christian church or congregation (Warnock, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Allen et al., 2010; Avent et al., 2015; West et al., 2006).

7. *Racism* – 1) prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people based on their membership in a particular racial or ethnical group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized; 2) the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Seattle, n.d.; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992/1998; Cone, 2004;

Milacci & Sibcy, 2007; Patterson, 2013; Ponds, 2013; Creswell, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Barna Group & Reimagine Group, 2019; Stanford University, 2020; Thompkins et al., 2020; Moore et al., 2020; Reeves et al., 2020).

8. *Resilience* – capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness (Jones, 1987)

9. *Resilience* – capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness (Jones, 1987).

10. *Slavery* – advantage of labor through, historically, importing workers from a different continent, supervising them to ensure they do not run away, and paying them corporal punishment (Jones, 1987; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992/1998; Cone, 2004, 2010, 1997; Ponds, 2013; Stanford University, 2020; Fortes-Lima & Verdu, 2021; Gates, 2021).

11. *Types of racism:* interpersonal, institutional, structural, or internalized (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; Jones, 2000; Liebow, 2016; University of Missouri, 2020; United Way, 2021; PISAB, 2021; Vanderbilt University, 2021).

   a. *Interpersonal racism*, individuals react in a biased manner when they interact with individuals of a different racial background; a white individual demonstrates prejudgment, bias, or discrimination against a person of color; a common but understudied feature of racism; differential assumptions about a person's ability, motives, and intentions.

   b. *Institutional Racism* – policies, practices, procedures, and culture of an institution or system that work better for white people and may cause unintentional harm to people of color, the motive for an association between socioeconomic status and race in this country.

c. *Structural racism* – legitimizes the process that gives privilege and power, the history, culture, and current reality of racism across institutions and systems that impact people and communities of color.

d. *Internalized* racism – a form of prejudice ingrained in our thinking processes and behaviors towards people of different races and ethnicities. The dominant white society perpetuates racist stereotyping, valuing, imaging, and ideologies about one's racial group. As a result, the stigmatized races accept it.

e. *Internalized Racial Superiority or Privilege* – assigned to lighter skin associated with racial dominance for whites and can be seen as a sign of hope or failure; historical designation of the hierarchy of one's race; acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their abilities and intrinsic worth.

f. *Internalized Racial Inferiority or Oppressed* – Blacks, Native Americans, and other people of color are assumed to be subservient to mainstream culture; individuals of color may internalize oppressive images of their skin color; accepting and acting on an inferior image of themselves based on historical racial designations.

12. *Veteran(s)* – a person with long experience in a particular area; whose skill in the utilization response to racism is more restrained (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018).

Summary

Increased violence against African American men at the hands of members of government institutions and the current social climate during an unprecedented global viral pandemic has created a unique and treacherous path for the African American community to navigate. As the leader of the African American community, the African American pastor finds himself leading his congregations through uncharted waters. As an African American male, the

African American pastor identifies with the individuals victimized by violence. Still, as a spiritual leader, he is being called upon to help other victims negotiate these tragedies in a manner consistent with the Christian faith and dogma.

The purpose of this study was to explore the psychological or transcendental phenomenological to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders. In gathering information, the goal was to understand better how African American male pastors coped with their experiences of racism, violence, and health-related inequalities, with their Christian beliefs and roles as leaders of churches and communities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter begins with the theoretical framework that has guided the development of this study to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders, Christian theology, Attachment theory, Biblical theology, and Critical theory are used as the theoretical framework. In addition, the related literature provides a systematic review of the types of racism that affect the African American church and community and the liberation struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. The themes include the birth and growth of the African American church, the role of African American pastors in church and community, influences on African American pastors and the African American community, biblical perspectives of the African American pastors, and the biblical character of the African American pastors. Unfortunately, there were limited resources of empirically researched articles that expressed the perception of racism from the voices of African American male pastors serving as church leaders in the African American community.

Theoretical Framework

The phenomenology approach was deemed appropriate when considering which research method should be facilitated for this study. Limpanichkul and Magilvy (2004) used phenomenology to focus on the culture of a specific group, their environment, and the meanings people perceive their culture to be. The study participants were narrowly defined to be African American pastors, and their experiences and insights through responses to the research questions. This qualitative study examined the phenomenological perspectives of African American pastors regarding the prevailing racism that affected their homes, church, and community during a pandemic. The theoretical framework of Christian theology, Attachment theory, Biblical

theology, and Critical theory, accented with literature observations and theme demonstrations, express concepts of the perception of racism with the African American male pastors.

Johnson (2019) shared how African American (male and female) pastors handled pressure resulting in Bible readings and prayers, dialogues with colleagues, and listening to music. Bowlby et al. (2019) emphasized that acquiring extensive information about a situation is crucial to handle any major changes successfully. As a pre-evaluation, African American pastors who are experiencing or have experienced racism and want to identify coping strategies might find the COPE inventory tool helpful (García et al., 2018). In addition, it was beneficial to examine African-American pastors' experiences, who historically served as pillars of the culture and community, and perceive psychological distress, such as racism (Gilbert, 1987; Patterson, 2013).

Erickson's Christian Theology

Erickson (2013) noted that Christian theology updates were needed when discussing doctrines of atonement, justification, and divine foreknowledge in the Christian faith. Erickson explained that when discussing theology in a Christian context, it is a discipline that seeks to understand a biblically revealed God and to provide how it applies to the reality of the Christian understanding. Erickson (2013) through philosopher Albrecht Ritschl implies that religion is applied to Christian theology based on moral judgments, and philosopher Immanuel Kant deemed religion as a matter of ethics. In addition, Erickson postulated that the model of Christianity was that of European and then North America. Theology was often coached in Euro-American form. Specifically, as missionaries, they identified their practices as a biblical norm, prescribing to the exclusion of more indigenous nuances of belief and practice (Erickson), attempting to convert the enslaved to the entire message of Christianity (Gates, 2021). Therefore,

studying the connection between biblical practices and African American leaders, such as pastors, and how it relates to the discussion of racism was valuable for this study.

Erickson (2013, p. 496) elaborates on William Jones' question, "Is God a white racist?" terming it "divine racism" in his writings of a phenomenon of racial prejudice. Erickson also shared how some white racists deny African Americans' humanity or that African Americans have souls to justify the inequality of slaves and slaveholders. Erickson expressed Jones' pseudo-theological arguments that Noah's son, Ham, was born a Black. In contrast, his decedents of the African American race were cursed because Ham's wickedness resulted in the servitude of Noah's son, Canaan. Erickson (2013, p. 496) further stated that another part of the argument was the contention that "Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, was placed in servitude and turned black (the mark set upon Cain---Genesis 4:13-15)" (p. 496); however, no such Biblical statement of turning black is interpreted within those verses. As Erickson continued with Jones' argument, Blacks constitute another species of two-footed beasts since Adam is only the ancestor of the white race. Erickson concluded Jones' pseudo-theological arguments with the claim that racial discrimination and even slavery are justified since Blacks are not human and are not blessed with human rights. According to Diamond (2018), Blacks take the Bible or Holy Scripture very literally compared to people in other racial or ethnic groups. Therefore, discussing with Black pastors could bring clarity to this information about the marginalization of Blacks using misinterpreted biblical passages.

Most African Americans identify religion as necessary, unlike half of America's general population reporting the same belief (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2009). Erickson (2013) asserted an outbreak of Pentecostalism organized by an African American holiness preacher named William J. Seymour, known for initiating the Azusa Street Revival.

However, the Pentecostal movement was isolated within Christianity for many years. Islam multiplied in the United States, especially among African American males. In addition, Erickson signified those other religions compete with conventional Christianity, such as numerous quasi-religions, countless psychological self-help systems, and cults that practice virtual brainwashing and mind control. Finally, Erickson acknowledged that the optimism of postmillennialism proclaiming the gospel seemed unjustified; therefore, the percentage of the population practicing Christianity declined.

Erickson (2013) posed a practical concern in the discussion of biblical inerrancy among churches regarding the dependency and reliability of the scriptures. Erickson posited a practical concern in the discussion of biblical inerrancy among churches regarding the dependency and reliability of the scriptures. These scriptures are theologically, historically, and epistemologically significant. Erickson stated that some groups determine that the Holy Spirit is the chief authority for Christians; however, it is the combination of the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit that constitute authority. One pastor expressed that the Bible without the spirit is dry, and the spirit without the Bible blows out, but the combination of both develops growth. Obtaining more insight into how African American pastors might view utilizing the Holy Spirit and biblical practices as an authority when reflecting on racism could add value to this study.

Counted (2017) explained that religious followers are likely to model their identity and perception of self based on the values of the religious attachment figure to whom they are devoted. For example, the AAMP's perception of self significantly affects how he will lead his congregation based on his religious beliefs. Biblical depiction of humanity's origin is that an all-wise, all-powerful, and caring God created humanity to love, serve, and enjoy a relationship with

Him. Reinert and Edwards (2014) shared a proposed concept that Attachment theory can help explain the dynamics between humanity and a personal relationship with God.

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby (1969, 1980), incorporating psychological, evolutionary, and ethological principles to explain how humans connect and develop relationships (Reese, 2018). Bowlby et al. (2019) discussed how he formulated a new conceptual framework as an alternative to Freud's metapsychology and drew upon etiology as a reasonable basis for psychoanalysis. Bowlby et al. described an enduring, intimate attachment to another human being as the pivotal point of one's life, not only when one is an infant or toddler schoolchildren, but throughout adolescence and adulthood. Bowlby et al.'s work presents a compelling account of the inevitably slow and painful processes involved in changing beliefs about the self, others, and life after major psycho-social transitions to what might be viewed as loss or trauma (Schnider et al., 2007).

Historically, research suggests that healthy attachments are necessary after trauma. Therefore, considering changing societal norms and their impacts on attachment is a continued research opportunity (Reese, 2018). Granqvist et al. (2012) found that God as an attachment figure is heightened when threatened and provides access to a positive and secure base-related concept. Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992) recalled how Bowlby argued that attachment models and self-concepts tend to complement one another. People who think attachment figures are loving and caring think of themselves as loving and caring too. All humans, including pastors, have an emotional attachment that contributes to attunement and trust.

Gabler's Biblical Theology

Biblical theology was emphatically announced by Johannes Philipp Gabler, who sounded the death knell for proposing that dogmatic theology (accepted beliefs of religious faith) could be derived from the Bible (Walsh & Elliott, 2016). Gabler associated the Bible with the unchanging religion of Christianity as its source (Walsh & Elliott). With this biblical-theological acknowledgment, African Americans grew to understand Christianity for themselves, especially during and after the time of slavery (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007). In addition, Gabler aimed to liberate practical dogmatics in preaching from a proof-texting approach to the Bible (Walsh & Elliott). Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defined biblical theology as the study of the Bible from the perspective of its thought categories and conventions of interpretation. The task of Biblical theology is to develop an academic understanding of the Bible and to serve God by caring for the church (Walsh & Elliott). Even centuries later, it was clear that only eternal truths directly derived from the Bible could be used in theology, as both Gabler and theologian Martin Luther asserted would ultimately persist as guiding notions for contemporary Christian doctrine (Walsh & Elliott). By conceptualizing this study, African American pastors can express how biblical and spiritual concepts are foundational to empowering the African American community, mainly when dealing with racial bias.

Tyson's Critical Theory Today

Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that the Critical theory perspective focuses on concerns that empower humans, such as African American men, to overcome and transcend the constraints placed on them, such as racial limitations. The central themes in this study include social institutions, such as Christian churches, and their transformations through interpreting the

meanings of social struggles, for instance, racial profiling and discrimination (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Tyson (2014) shared how many Critical theory students, including senior English majors, were unacquainted with major milestones of African American history. These milestones included the Middle Passage, the Underground Railroad, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights Movement, the African American Power Movement, and African American Arts Movement. Tyson (2014) explained how critical theories could explain the operation of language, including how language carries ideological content as a means of influencing or criticizing without being aware of it. As an African American researcher writing this study, it was imperative to consider the culturally mixed audience, which also determines the kind of language written, even academically. Racism, including the systematic denial of employment, housing, and education for qualified people of color, can frequently occur when those doing it expect to get away with it (Tyson). To do this, one needs membership in a group that controls most political, judicial, and law enforcement positions (Tyson). Tyson described what students should learn and how their interests can be cultivated to become passionate enough to pursue more knowledge. This concept is a process that was pursued while critically thinking in this particular study of African American men of the cloth, or pastors, and their perception of racism. A common misinterpretation is that racist attitudes and behaviors in the white community are supported by institutionalized power structures. In the African American community, racist attitudes and behaviors are not institutionally supported (Tyson).

Related Literature Research

The majority of literature found for this study focused on the history of African American men's interaction with racism since slavery and how it connected to embracing and leading the

African American church. When considering the existing literature, the problem was that there were limited resources of empirically researched articles that expressed the perception of racism from the voices of African American men serving as church leaders in the African American community. Understanding how African American pastors perceive racism could help extend the empirical research from personal expressions resulting in this study.

Types of Racism Affecting the African American Community

Various types of racism exist 1) the struggle of the oppressed, 2) the establishment of the African American church, and 3) the role and influence of the African American pastor. Some theorists describe racism as America's original sin, permeating principles that the United States is an integral part of the racial fabric (Cone, 2004; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Ponds, 2013; Stanford University, 2020; Wallis, 2007). A systematic review of racism that government institutions define and organizations embrace that affects or impacts African Americans or African Americans, their church, and their community will be given. These are categorized into types of racism: interpersonal, institutional, structural, or internalized (Jones, 2000; Liebow, 2016; PISAB, 2021; United Way, 2021; Vanderbilt University, 2021). By examining the African American pastors' perceptions of racism, it may also be possible to identify whether any of these categories are present.

Interpersonal racism interactions take the form of the act of demonstrating prejudgment, bias, or discrimination by a white individual toward a person of color, a characteristic that is one of the most common and least researched features of racism; differential assumptions about the capabilities, motives, and intentions of others based on their race. Regarding interpersonal racism, acculturation in the United States makes it familiar for Americans to hold racist and prejudicial views of non-white groups (Rattani, 2021). Although there has been some discussion

on interpersonal racism, the mechanics of the racism experienced daily by African American professionals, including pastors, have not been explored (Rattani). The experience of interpersonal racism is different for individuals of different ages, genders, and sexual orientations (African American Experience Project, 2017).

A typical example of institutional racism is being viewed as suspicious or having negative interactions with public or legal institutions. Institutional racism is where people of color are carelessly affected by the policies, practices, procedures, and culture of a system or institution that favors the white community. Institutional racism is the motive for an association between socioeconomic status and race in this country. While the middle-class reformers in America helped cement a professional, managerial, and bureaucratic position for the white middle class, African Americans lacked independent organizations outside the church (Allen, 1972).

Structured racism legitimizes how privilege and power are granted while acknowledging the history, culture, and current reality of racism across institutions and systems that impact communities of color (Barton, 2009; United Way, 2021). In the United States, structured racism encompasses institutions, culture, history, ideology, and codified practices that generate and perpetuate inequity among racial and ethnic groups and significantly contribute to violence within society (Hardeman et al., 2016). Outside of the African American church, most of the critical institutions in the United States are white-dominated (Jones, 2000). Institutional practices have been written and implemented by white individuals. White men have written many historical and academic documents. As much of American higher education has deeply ingrained ties to white supremacy (Jones, 2000), confronting white supremacy history is difficult for many

universities. These practices have led to a skewed distribution of power and privilege to the people making the rules and writing the history (Jones).

Internalized racism is a learned technique based on valuing, imaging, and stereotypes specific to a particular race perpetuated by the white majority and accepted by members of a marginalized group. The concept of internalized racial superiority or privilege is connected to lighter-skinned individuals associated with racial dominance, the hierarchy of how one's race is perceived, and the accumulation of negative messages about one's abilities (Pyke, 2010; Williams, 2008). Discussing internalized racial superiority or privilege has been taboo for centuries due to the ideology of white superiority and non-white inferiority propagated by all members of society, including racially subjugated people (Pyke, 2010; Williams, 2008). According to David et al. (2018), there is a belief that internalized racism may be interpreted to be a distorted view of oneself and one's racial group, as well as of others (e.g., white people as superior and people of color as inferior) brought about by experiences in the environment.

Bowlby (1973) explained that an environment in which man evolves and adapts throughout life is an attachment bond necessary for survival. When African Americans face racial discrimination or grow up in high-crime areas and can look beyond their surroundings, it can be empowering and transformative (Bryant-Davis, 2005). Internalized racial inferiority is the acceptance and act of an inferior view of oneself rooted in historical racism perceived by African Americans, Native Americans, and other people of color. An obstacle in disproving the racist myth of African American inferiority is the rise of independent African states, which focused world attention on the underlying problem of white racism (Allen, 1972). Similarly, Nelson Mandela was accused of high treason after fighting institutionalized racism and fostering racial harmony to dismantle the legacy of apartheid. Americans cannot deny that African American

people are a racially oppressed, powerless group, so it is essential to hear the voice of African American male pastors regarding such oppression (Allen, 1972).

Liberation Struggle Between the Oppressed and the Oppressor

When considering racism as America's original sin in discrimination, it is often in the minds of the oppressed, where oppression is discrimination carried to its extreme (Community Tool Box, n.d.; Cone, 2004; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Ponds, 2013; Stanford University, 2020; Wallis, 2007). Liebow (2016) recalled how the psychologically oppressed believe they cannot exercise autonomy.

African American leaders, especially church leaders, such as pastors and ministers, encouraged the oppressed when seeking guidance within the church's walls. Garnet, an African-American minister, and educator, spoke to slaves regarding past and present oppression and cruelties where the choice would be to die freemen than to be slaves (Library of Congress, n.d.). Martin Luther King's eloquent oratories are still indicative of the internal struggle within a spiritual leader for non-violence in the face of violence and feelings of oppression. As an intellectual, economic, and religious center of great power since Emancipation, Du Bois (2010) described how the priest expresses the longing, disappointment, and resentment of distorted and oppressed people.

According to some, in a society where African American people face oppression, there should be an African American theology that unreservedly identifies with the interests of the oppressed and interprets the spiritual significance of their struggles for liberation (Cone, 2010). African American families use spirituality to cope with systemic oppressions, such as overt racism, and family stressors, such as parenting, which may explain why African Americans are less mentally challenged than others (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011). The African American

church provided oppressed African Americans with a sense of freedom rarely seen in everyday life (Avent & Cashwell, 2015).

The Birth and Growth of the African American Church

The African American church has sustained the African American culture since slavery. African American churches were founded with the same basic framework as white Christianity, which African Americans allegedly represented, but provided various subtleties and emphases to Critical theory. For years, slaves worshipped at white churches, but they could not be free physically or spiritually because they were under the control of those labeled as their masters (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). It took a long time for white slave owners to accept the enslaved worshiping in their churches (Gates, 2021). Godwyn, an Anglican minister in the 1660s, made a forceful argument of "baptizing the enslaved" to be converted but not to equal freedom (Gates, 2021, p. 38). African Americans eventually found comfort in the Biblical message of spiritual equality and deliverance, opening a door for many Africans to embrace Christianity (Masci, 2020).

Despite conversion being perceived as a threat, missionaries persuaded slave owners that "race is the reason people are enslaved" (Gates, 2021, p. 38; Jones, 2000). Whiteness and white supremacy became the new method to justify enslavement (Gates; Jones). According to Young (Gates, 2021, p. 38), plantation owners only allowed enslaved people to join Protestant churches if the theology was submission and docility. African American slaves came to terms with dignity and worth for everyone, not just the slave owners (Calhoun-Brown, 1999), for there is no partiality with God, as is illustrated in Romans 2:11 (NKJV, James, 1975). With such restrictions within the white churches, slaves would gather in the forests and bayous of plantations, called the invisible institution, for secret, independent worship services (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Despite slavery's oppressive limits, African Americans found methods to build sacred spaces where they could covertly worship (Gates, 2021). This invisible institution was embraced to worship God freely, in their voices and images in the church (Gates). African American churches were established out of a passionate desire to worship freely, but they were never truly included equally in the rituals of white churches. According to Ratoeau, it is "hidden from the master's eyes," where African Americans could be themselves and create a spiritual world that was nourishing, catharsis, and hopeful (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Gates, 2021, p. 24). Enslaved Africans did not come to America without God. Their rich cultural heritage was filtered through African American churches [praise houses] shaped by a rich cultural heritage (Gates).

Slave quarters softly echoed passages from the Bible learning of an all-powerful God who frees the oppressed (Gates, 2021). Murmurs could appear in makeshift constructions made from branches and brushes, singing Negro spirituals, "I am going to lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside" (Gates). Slaves would quote from the Bible, such as "Moses and Aaron walked in and told Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Let My people go" (New King James Version, James, 1975, Exodus 5:1). This exodus motif in the Holy Bible seems to identify God in understanding the captives, and how a slave-born Moses spoke with moral courage and clarity to people who abuse the enslaved in petitioning to let the enslaved people go (Gates). African American men having preached in these African American churches were beaten and harassed by whites, yet these slaves continued to organize African American churches and preach to other slaves (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

A clear and longer-lasting manifestation of the African American culture was the African American church, the longest-standing and most influential humanistic organization in African

American history (Gates, 2021). These enslaved Africans were dehumanized when deported across the Atlantic Ocean (Fortes-Lima & Verdu, 2021). Aside from an abundance of psychological and physical abuse and violence, they were repeatedly separated as a loss from their families and prohibited from using their names, languages, and religion, behavior that resembled slavery (Bowlby, 1980; Fortes-Lima & Verdu).

The extraordinary character of the African American church makes it particularly powerful and vulnerable simultaneously; it is a place of refuge and safety for African American people (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Gates, 2021). During the era of slavery, most African American people could not read; they could only accept what white Christians imparted from the Bible. Cone (1997) explained how African Americans would express liberation (oppressor-oppressed) and transcendence of their struggle where white people perceived the only reason God created African Americans were to serve the white culture (Keeley, 2008). As a result, the African American church expressed a culture with creative survival options despite 250 years of slavery and 100 years of racial segregation in the North and South (Gates). Having emerged from a climate of cultural divisiveness, the role of African American pastors is different from many of their white counterparts in offering service, justice, and peacemaking to the African American community (ABC News, 2021; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Shabazz, 2016; Wallis, 2007).

African American churches were more than simply a refuge for spiritual comfort; they also served as the meeting place for business and education (Gates, 2021). For example, during an interview with Oprah Winfrey, a television producer talked about the African American church providing a sense of belonging, worthiness, and importance to African Americans (Gates). In addition, the African American church gave African Americans "individual and institutional armor to protect their mental sanity" (Gates, 2021, p. 21).

African Americans Military Servants

As a result of the efforts of Anglican missionaries, some slave owners were not threatened by slave conversion since race identifies some people to be enslaved, and using whiteness and white supremacy to justify enslavement became the norm (Gates, 2021; Jones, 2000). However, some slave owners in Washington feared that this freedom could cause other disturbances. For example, when African Americans joined military forces, guns in the hands of African American people, especially slaves, could bring about a rebellion (American Battlefield Trust, 2020). While evangelical preachers attempted to convert as many souls as possible during the First Great Awakening, white slave owners in the British colonies resisted converting African Americans for fear of creating press for their freedom (Gates). During the 1700s, colonial seaboards witnessed a wave of religious fervor known as the Great Awakening that had become the impetus for the American Revolution (Porterfield, 1982). Many African American immigrants, slaves, and freemen participated in the American Revolution as gunneries, spies, and other valuable positions in the United States' formative struggle (Ayres, 2020; Dennis, 2021; King Mountain, 2015). However, African American Revolutionary War veterans who migrated to the United States were still bonded (American Battlefield Trust, 2020).

The African American church, born out of persecution by white Christian churches and finding solstice in the plights of Jesus, Moses, and many other biblical figures, became a haven in the storm, especially during enslavement. Some academics argued that after the Civil War, the African American church lost its passion for freedom, while others consider it holistic, including body, soul, and spirit, as defined in scripture (Walker, 1997). Foner (2011) explained that slave resistance gained traction after the Civil War when slaves forced the issue of emancipation onto Lincoln's agenda. The Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863, but it was

accompanied by an "affliction" for the four million African Americans who could not build proper communities (Walker, 1997, p. 54). In addition, church leaders were perplexed after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, and the non-violent civil rights movement was eclipsed by the Vietnam War (Gadzekpo, 1997). Nevertheless, pastors have served as advisors, political agitators, and advocates for civil rights for many years (Strong, 2017).

The Role of Black Pastors in Church and Community

Traditionally, pastors are usually the first-person congregants who seek emotional and spiritual encouragement and healing (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Avent et al., 2015). Many pastors follow the scriptural role as the overseers, spiritual leaders, or shepherds, who guide and care for their church congregates or flock (Avent et al., 2015; Harmon, 2018; Stansbury, 2012; Watson et al., 2020). The African American community, particularly individuals or family members who attend church, seek support from pastors when facing mental and spiritual barriers (Avent & Cashwell; Avent et al.), such as racism.

African American church leaders face a unique challenge in the current cultural and community climate to strongly identify with individuals to whom discrimination is directed. However, they also must help their congregations navigate the same racist environment (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011). Historically, African Americans have sought spiritual and mental resources from their churches and spiritual leaders rather than professional therapy resources (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). The African American church remains the only institution that much African-American community trust as always having their interests at heart and having experienced differential treatment from the government and medical entities based on their race (Gamble, 1997). Many African American communities are unwilling to take vaccines in the new COVID-19 pandemic due to mistrust of government and medical institutions, influencing their

vaccination decisions. As a spiritual leader, the African American pastor must help his congregation navigate the difficult times that most influence his response to the acts of violence against African Americans. He must navigate the continued difference between the availability of health care between African Americans and white Americans or any other issues that continue to plague African American communities (Gamble, 1997). When confronted with unpleasant conditions, such as racism, African American men and women are perceived to become loud, confrontational, and menacing, exhibiting what is known as African American furious tendencies (Jackson, 2018). This internalized racism has contributed to the stereotypical portrayal of African American men as criminals and a threat to society (Jackson, 2018; Thomas et al., 2008). African American spiritual leaders who respond with venom to acts of violence are often labeled as instigators of violence (Stene et al., 2015).

Pastor's Role: Civil Rights

African American pastors and churches have played significant roles in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Pew Research Center, 2021), continuing into the present struggle against race-based discrimination as victims of racism and mediators of congregational responses to racism. The Barna Group and Reimagine Group (2019) stated that many groups might be victims of discriminatory attitudes or behaviors in the United States, but a primary example is racial or ethnic minorities. However, compared to the Civil Rights era, it was reported that largely African American churches had lost influence among the younger Generation Z demographic of African Americans (Pew Research Center, 2021). Validated statistics on African American culture's engagement in movements that represent and support the culture are required to stimulate and enhance the culture's identity.

The civil rights movement was one of the most critical causes championed by members and leaders of the African American church. Attempting to separate the African American church from its liberation struggle is to miss the fact that "the African American church cannot be understood simply in terms of programs or structures" (Walker, 1997, p. 55). This is what it means to misunderstand the African American church's role in the liberation struggle. According to Reverend William J. Barber II, an NAACP activist and pastor, an African American church's focus are threefold. First, when held together, "the church has been a powerful force against the sin of racism and the sin of the world" (Gates, 2021, p. 184).

Role of Pastors: COVID-19 Pandemic

African American pastors often address congregates who have encountered racial attacks as their spiritual, emotional, and physical concerns have heightened, specifically while suffering disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic (Moore et al., 2018; Thompkins et al., 2020). In addition, some pastors question the use of "God bless America" in the U.S. currency amidst the recent racial discrimination against African Americans (Alexander, 2020).

Starting in early 2020 and continuing today, African American communities have been faced with two simultaneously crippling crises that have not equally affected white communities: 1) the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African American communities underlining the disparity between white and African American communities concerning access to health care and the resulting overall health and 2) the increased law enforcement violence and brutality directed against African American men. COVID-19 cases have been disproportionately high in African American communities (Moore et al., 2018). African American pastors are addressing congregants with spiritual, emotional, and bodily issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, notably during recent racial demonstrations (Thompkins et al., 2020).

African American communities are less likely to seek vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic because of a history of distrusting the government and medical institutions, which affects their vaccination decisions (Avent et al., 2015; Privor-Dumm & King, 2020). Just as racial disparities were implicated in the influenza pandemics of 1918 and 2009, where African Americans were at a survival disadvantage, comparable disparities are indicated through COVID-19 (Holmes et al., 2020). Many African American pastors are being recruited by medical institutions and government officials, who are notoriously not trusted by African American communities, to assist in getting congregates vaccinated. This leaves spiritual leaders in an unenviable position: help to save their community but do so at the cost of trusting the institutions that have notoriously disappointed African American communities (Foco, 2011).

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck America, in-person church services, the heart of the African American church community, stopped, triggering an uncomfortable emotional stance among people who attended church up to three times a week. Church leaders had to freeze participation in funerals, weddings, and various activities within the sanctuaries when realizing the church was one of the sites spreading the pandemic for the lack of distancing six feet from one another (Gates, 2021). The level of stressors caused by COVID-19 has affected everyone in the United States and around the world, specifically people of color, where significant stressors are reported more than there are with whites (APA, 2020). The disparity of cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 only served to underline the higher incidence of exacerbating health conditions such as diabetes and limited access to adequate healthcare in African American communities compared to the rest of the American population. As of March 2021, the confirmed coronavirus case count globally is 113,820,168. In America, it is 50,595,663, and among people of color and whites, it is 71% versus 59%, respectively (APA, 2020).

Pastors' Role: Healthy Community

A common barrier to African Americans' mental health help-seeking behaviors is their preference for African American counselors, cultural norms within their communities, and cultural mistrust (Avent & Cashwell, 2015; Avent et al., 2015; Awosan et al., 2011; Townes et al., 2009). African Americans seek African American pastors, especially within the African American church community, to call out the issues that may cause inappropriate responses and to declare and offer peaceful processes (McQueen, 2020). The Tuskegee study, which examined untreated syphilis in African American men in 1972, exposed African Americans' mistrust of the medical profession (Alsan & Wanamaker, 2018). Once again, a racial spectacle has been perpetrated against African American men who died, became blind, went insane, and suffered other life-threatening ailments (Valentine, 2019). Health workers from the United States Public Health Service offered the men only placebos such as vitamins and aspirins in this trial, no matter how much they complained or how obvious the consequences were (Valentine, 2019). Unfortunately, one of the sites used to recruit African American men for this study was the Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church in Macon County, Alabama, whose pastor, Reverend Charlie Simpson] led these African American people (Valentine, 2019). Much as African Americans want to trust the government, medical professionals, and even good research tools, if the researcher does not conduct the research themselves in a qualitative study, there is the possibility that mistrust will prevail, and the data will be lost. Inadequate information by health care practitioners remains a concern, as was in the Tuskegee syphilis study (Scharff et al., 2010).

African American pastors need to become knowledgeable about mental health professionals because they are often consulted about non-spiritual matters, from unemployment, poverty, HIV/AIDS, incarceration, anxiety, and depression (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). The

pastor or spiritual leader must provide comfort, emotional support, resources, social support,

meals, clothing, and financial resources. However, the congregation also desires a "stable

theology of suffering" and spiritual healing through biblical teachings, programs, and ministries

(Worthington et al., 2016). This is sought explicitly through the preachment and leadership of

their spiritual leader. As illustrated in Romans 10:14 (NKJV, James, 1975), "How then shall they

call on Him in whom they have not believed? Furthermore, how shall they believe in Him of

whom they have not heard? Furthermore, how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Many pastors think they must conduct pastoral care and counseling roles within their

ministry toward mental health services while ministering to family concerns within the

congregation (Watson, 2017). However, some pastors with emotional or spiritual problems have

suffered internal uncertainties that go against their faith in biblical standards or God (Salwen et

al., 2017). It has been reported that some pastors have committed suicide, causing an uproar in

the Christian community on whether their decision to commit suicide voids the ministry God

placed these pastors in to oversee and influence congregants. These spiritual leaders were Pastor

Eugene Keahey (Johnson, 2019), Pastor Jim Howard (Blair, 2019), Pastor Andrew Stoecklein

(Branson-Potts, 2018), and Pastor Isaac Hunter (Knudsen, 2014).

Many African Americans believe, and rightly so, that the medical or psychological

treatments they receive could be different within the health care system, as in the example of the

Tuskegee deception, triggering an impulse of mistrust that the medical professional is not

genuine (Gamble, 1997). The perception seems to be a reality that the United States identifies a

dominant white culture in receiving better mental health services than people who identify as a

minority or African American culture (Helms, 1990). Some perceive whites seek mental health

care voluntarily while African Americans, particularly the male population, are coerced through

the judicial system to receive mental health treatment (Takeuchi & Cheung, 1998). For future references, researchers must focus on religion when exploring the mental health behaviors of African Americans (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). It is not typical to ask a pastor about his emotional, spiritual, or mental well-being, as they often look after their congregations. The Christian or religious community expects their pastors to be optimistic, positive, strong, willing, and available, not depressed, discouraged, cynical, angry, or hurt, but perceived above being stressed with humanistic issues, such as mental and emotional stress (Gilbert, 1987; Patterson, 2013).

Black Lives Matter Movement

Since the collective cry for Trayvon Martin in 2013, Black Lives Matter has been establishing a movement with demonstrators in the 18-34 age bracket, which was sparked by the shooting of George Floyd in 2020 and continues to stand or sit for all African American lives to yearn for liberty (Garza et al., 2021). Several organizations claim that African American churches have become a venue for struggles against prejudice (Henderson & Louis, 2017). People who are marginalized or oppressed have little place in the public-political arena, which is "filled with humiliation mechanisms" (LaMothe, 2021, p. 5). A free social, political, and legal system, access to good schools, food, and infrastructure that allows for easy mobility, and access to quality health care are among the rights that Black Lives Matter and other anti-racist organizations are advocating (LaMothe, 2021). It is not appropriate to call someone a racist, as it is not appropriate to question someone's Christianity because it is a profound moral blow and judgmental (Stewart, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement continues to "demand radical restructuring" of African American society (Barber, 2020, para. 3), with many churches and spiritual leaders on the front lines of the fight against racial inequality.

Influences on Black Pastors and the Black Community

Many African American pastors fight against violence in response to the many types of racism and call for justice that overwhelms the African American community (ABC News, 2021). The juxtaposition of the African American pastor's role in the fight for civil rights and the leadership of the African American community is further underlined by the personal cost many spiritual leaders have faced because they participated in social struggles (Counted & Miller, 2018). Various efforts of concern within the Christian or African American community can cause complacency in other areas, positively or negatively (Allen, 2018). Concerns such as the bombing of an African American church in Birmingham, killing four African American girls, and the massacre at the Charleston Church, killing nine African Americans during bible study (Henderson & Louis, 2017). These merciless actions give credence to the mindset of desegregating some white and African American churches today. What influences African American men's beliefs or experiences of racism? Most African American culture, particularly the African American church community, holds on to their spiritual belief that death has no sting. God does not give them a spirit of fear (NKJV, James, 1975, 1 Corinthians 15:55, 2 Timothy 1:7). This strength is stated and demonstrated by hundreds of clergy and Christian believers, both white and African American (e.g., Jimmie Lee Jackson and Reverend James Reeb), who marched, protested, and died for the rights of the African American culture.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) is the ultimate example of an African American pastor who paid the highest price for his dedication to his role as a civil rights activist and leader within the African American community. Dr. King touched on interpersonal (bias), institutional (practices), structural (culture), and internalized (inferiority/superiority) racism in his speeches:

- Christian Online Services (2020) shares MLK's quote: "Do not even [sic] be afraid to die; no man is free if he fears death, but the minute you conquer the fear of death, at that moment, you are free."

- Siegfried (2015) shared MLK's quote: "We have got some difficult days ahead, but it really [sic] does not matter with me now…!"… "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life."

Martin Luther King Jr. often pointed out in his speeches the promises that seemed to be made by the American government that was not upheld to the same degree within African American communities. MLK, as with others, would frame their response to the social injustices by his faith in God to not only stand for the church but also demand justice (ABC News, 2021; King, 1963). This validity can be demonstrated through quotes from MLK's letter from Birmingham jail. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."…" If today I lived"…where…." Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws."

Today's pastors must also determine their position on social injustices and violence in the context of their faith. Some African American pastors confess to demonstrating in the streets and preaching sermons with a spirit of protest against anything believed to be an injustice (Pew Research Center, 2021). However, it is essential that the initial calling of the African American pastor to spread and share the word of God is not foregone or misplaced by worldly concerns.

Recently, the African American church appeared free to "constitute a major drive for praxis" not only within the walls of the church but outside as well, without fear of retaliation or whipping (Henderson & Louis, 2017, p. 51). The presence of African American pastors in certain places can cause controversy or unease even when words are not spoken. For example,

Reverend Al Sharpton spoke about the African American face being racist, degrading, hostile, spiteful, inexcusable, disgusting, and hurtful; however, he appeared to increase racial tensions because many consider him, especially "among whites that Sharpton is a racially polarizing figure" (Grant, 2002,). Pastors are well-known personalities who can influence public opinion. However, "an expectation of humility to focus on salvation above contentious public problems diminishes this influence, although others are eager to overcome supposed barriers" (Inabinet, 2011, p. 169).

Racism against African American men can be overwhelming, not to overlook racial injustice against African American women, such as Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old woman killed in her home on a botched drug raid. However, African American men are targeted, especially by some police officers. Utsey (1997) declares that African American men have historically been most vulnerable to the deleterious effects of racial discrimination, in one form or another.

A million African American men can be found in prisons and jails, causing a passionate plea from Louis Farrakhan for a million African American men to gather in Washington, DC, for a day of atonement and recommitment to their families and communities (Alexander, 2012). Ebony Magazine stated in an article that the African American community would find our African American men when we rediscover God, family, and self-respect (Alexander, 2012). However, there is very little, if any, research from AAMP sharing their perspective on the effects of racism in their homes, their church, their community, and particularly, as African American men themselves.

In his address on April 16, 2020, Reverend Al Sharpton demanded criminal charges be brought against police and others for their role in the protest movement, saying, "no more excuses" (Galofaro, 2020). Unfortunately, these are a few examples of injustices African

American pastors have found grueling in the past couple of years. February 2020: Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old African American man, was gunned down and killed by two white men after viewing the inside of a vacant house under construction during his morning jog. Their attorney stated, "this is not just another act of violent racism" the case will be exonerated because his clients thought "he looked like a suspect in a series of recent break-ins," but there was "no such string of break-ins reported," according to the police (Silverman, 2020). May 20th, George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was murdered when one police officer held his knee on Floyd's neck, and other police officers pressed down on his body, with no resistance, while consistently pleading that he could not breathe. This caused "94% of pastors in the United States"…" agree that the church has a responsibility to denounce racism, especially on the unrest stemming" from this African American man's death (Roach, 2020). In December 2020: Andre Hill, a 47-year-old African American man, was shot several times by a police officer with arms holding up his phone and handcuffed while dying on the garage floor of family and friends, "with no medical assistance" …taking "more than 15 minutes for paramedics to respond" (Bruner, 2021). In April 2021: Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old African American man, was killed when police pulled him over for expired tags in a "majority non-white suburb"…" while handcuffing him he pulled away" …and "was killed when another police officer believed she mistakenly fired her handgun" when she meant to use her taser (Holcombe, 2021).

There is no doubt that African Americans are enduring racial attacks, but the harrowing statistics of the unequal destruction of COVID-19 in the African American community prove that racism is real (DeSouza et al., 2021). Studying how African American pastors perceive inequality and reality within a biblical and spiritual community may offer researchers more insight than expected.

Biblical Perspectives of the African American Pastors

The concerns quoted by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are words impressed to encourage those who walk in the leadership of others, especially those in the African American church. African American pastors must make sure that their fight for social justice or thoughts of African American liberation theology does not neglect the spiritual leadership component needed within the African American churches (ABC News, 2021; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Mark 4:13-20 (NKJV, James, 1975) stated, "And He [Jesus] said to them… the Sower sows the word… Satan comes immediately and takes away the word' …' when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble."

African Americans and Coping

Researchers have declared that African Americans possibly use John Henryism (a coping strategy involving prolonged exposure to stress and high effort) to cope with discriminatory experiences (Barajas et al., 2019; Geriatr, 2011). However, in this study, as a pre-evaluation with the African American participants to identify coping strategies, the Brief COPE inventory tool is considered the approach (Buchanan, 2021; Carver, 1997, 2019; Carver et al., 1989; Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999; Dein et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2012; García et al., 2018; Henman, 2001; Ozcan et al., 2021; Pargament et al., 2011; Rogers-Dulan, 1998; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003; Xu, 2016). Therefore, the instructions would ask participants to focus on stressors, such as racial discrimination and the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the African American community in the past two years.

Coping strategies include cognitive and behavioral activities that regulate one's emotions when encountering traumatic stressors. Bryant-Davis (2005, p. 409) listed several coping strategies, such as "religious belief, denial, and optimism, to include problem-focused activities,

such as information seeking and resource generation." Perry et al. (2012, p. 340) focused on educating African Americans with a "strong behavioral disposition to manage an environmental stressor through hard work and determination directly." Bryant-Davis (2005, p. 409) expressed two thoughts on how African Americans cope: "when growing up in a violent environment, the youth would have to find ways to cope in their schools and neighborhoods: and "adult African Americans cope through spirituality, activism, cultural pride, and reliance on kinship ties and other forms of social support."

These are good thoughts when trying to decipher what and how African Americans do to build coping strategies that would assist when facing traumatic issues. However, it would be feasible to research what coping strategies are accurately effective after receiving insight from African American pastors within this study.

A phenomenology research study by Bryant-Davis (2005) was conducted to determine the coping strategies used by African American adults who survived childhood abuse. Almost all researchers agree that the most effective ways to cope with trauma are social support, family support, and coping strategies such as hope, acceptance, and practicing spirituality (Limpanichkul & Magilvy, 2004). Gray (2006) compared youths and middle-aged adults using problem-focused and emotional-focused coping strategies. This comparison best relates to assessing African American male pastors. During stressful situations, young adults use problem-focused coping strategies to change the nature of the problem. In contrast, middle-aged adults use emotion-focused coping strategies to distract the affected person's attention (Gray, 2006). Similarly, researchers have determined that African Americans value the positive coping mechanism of prayer.

There are community programs, if utilized, that can have a significant improvement in one's nutrition of fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and medication adherence (Spencer, 2010). In addition, when applying 20-30 minutes a day of physical activity up to five days a week, there can be changes in one's physical structure and assist in the care of diseases, such as heart disease, cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, and obesity (Spencer). However, it is not proven that the physical activity of clergy or pastors prevents stress or depression (Harmon, 2018). The difference in racial tension with African American District of Columbia police is that "the city has been spared some of the worst excesses of police brutality" but is now policed by white officers (Alang et al., 2017; Iweala, 2016). This society does not care where African Americans live, how large their house is, or what car they may drive; this society separates all Americans by the color of their skin. Racial oppression should not be separated by classification or moral competence. Separation by classification is like how Jonah described the Ninevites: While the crowds were thickly gathered together, He [Jonah] began to say, "This is an evil generation." (NKJV, James, 1975, Luke 11:29).

Using various tools, we should aim to dismantle the master's house. Our research shows that this is needed for fighting racism in more nuanced ways (Henderson & Louis, 2017). Although this article was valid in this research, Kahn et al. (2013) revealed a homogeneity limitation in their study, stating, "our sample was primarily African American (90%), and this may limit the generalizability of our findings to other ethnicities." However, this writer does not find limits in using one culture, which is why the research surrounds that particular culture.

Summary

The theoretical framework trusts Erickson's Christian theology that God is not a white racist where there is a phenomenon of religious and racial prejudice. Therefore, denying the

humanity of African Americans to justify inequality is not what God intends for any human being. Instead, Erickson's Christian theology delves into God's relationship with His creation and that His word is a biblical depiction of how humanity should love and serve Him. In addition, Bowlby's Attachment theory explains how humans connect and develop relationships with one another. Attachment theory is an analyzing process of understanding and changing one's beliefs regarding others and life after major psycho-social transitions or traumas. The connection between how one sees themselves and how God sees them intertwines with a Christian attachment that is learned and shared amongst others, especially among the church and leadership.

Additionally, understanding the types of racism that affect the African American community gives credence to understanding the struggles taken to liberate the oppressed from racial oppressors. This comprehension can only come from addressing what has been avoided historically, such as America's sin of a slave mentality and exemplary behavior. As a result, the African American pastor, the African American church, and the African American community today stand on the shoulders of those who stood for non-violent liberation and justice for all (ABC News, 2021).

Pastors, who are not minorities, make it seem as if they are responding to peaceful longing by attempting to lead their congregations into realities they are not experiencing for themselves (Barton, 2009). This study allows African American pastors and church leaders to demonstrate their transforming selves for the benefit of research and other cultures (Barton, 2009). Therefore, this study is intended to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders. Similarly, Jesus called Peter to watch over his people. John 21:17 states, "Jesus asked a third time, "Simon [Peter] son

of John, do you love me" …" Feed my sheep'" (Contemporary English Version, American Bible Society, 1995, John 21:17). Using the theoretical framework described here, a phenomenological study using surveys will help to evoke conversations, providing better insight into the African American pastor experience through the COVID-19 pandemic and the divisive interracial relations surrounding recent events.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter starts with a brief description of the research design of a phenomenology approach. Next, this chapter describes the research questions designed to provide data about African American male pastors' experiences of racism as African American men and church leaders. A brief overview of the tools and participants used in the study follows the research questions. The study's procedures are discussed next, along with the researcher's role relating to the study's setting and participants. Data collection and analysis methods are then clarified. In conclusion, techniques for assessing the study's trustworthiness are explained, ethical concerns are addressed, and solutions are provided.

Design

The research design plays a crucial role in meeting the research goals. Qualitative research is an appropriate research method, and a phenomenological approach was chosen to achieve its objectives.

Qualitative Research Design

As stated in Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Creswell and Poth (2018) described qualitative researchers interpreting phenomena according to the meaning of the participants. Therefore, the reason for utilizing the qualitative method in this study was to uncover the meanings that African American pastors contribute to this phenomenon through their stories.

Creswell and Poth (2018) stipulated that a deficiency or gap in the qualitative research literature is a strong focus on issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups. Clemons and Johnson (2020) agreed with Bryan (2005) that church resources are often overlooked or not used, specifically among racial and ethnic minorities who are oppressed. In one-on-one interviews

with African American pastors, phenomenological qualitative methods were used to describe the perceptions of church leaders' experiences with racism.

Phenomenology

Creswell and Poth (2018) described phenomenology as a descriptive and interpretive process. Empirical, psychological, or transcendental phenomenology focuses on the description of the participants' experiences. Hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on the interpretation of the participants' experience. The difference between these two types of phenomena is their description: the researcher's interpretation versus the researcher's description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are challenges in the phenomenology process, as with the other qualitative research approaches (e.g., narrative, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study). Specifically, Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that challenges are likely to arise when moving forward and describing "the emerging directions associated with the approach" (p. 77).

Meaning depends on the context in which something was created and interpreted. According to Patton (2014, p. 334), "the meaning of the text may only be determined based on community consensus." As Patterson (2013, p. 1254) argued, psychological and transcendental phenomenology are intimately tied to intentionality, the "object of intent," like "perception in consciousness." Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 75) cited Stewart and Mickunas (1990) for their emphasis on one philosophical perspective in phenomenology as "the intentionality of consciousness."

There were challenges of intentionality: discerning the features of consciousness (noema) and explaining beliefs of experiencing what is being experienced (noesis). A philosophy without presumptions is to "suspend all judgments of what is real" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75), but "suspension is called epoché" by Husserl and Kersten (1980). Patterson (2013) informed that the

first step toward phenomenological analysis is epoché, in which one refrains from judgment or ordinary perceptions. The research focus of examining the research problem served as a guide when exploring the study's objective; however, a more specific concern "leads to the need" for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 66). Therefore, the psychological approach was used in this study for the specific concern of racism.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the phenomenological study describes the essence of several individuals' lived experiences of the phenomenon. Therefore, it was valuable for qualitative researchers to hear personal stories from those who experienced the phenomenon. Understanding African American male pastors' experience with racism can encourage other African American male pastors and enlighten those interested in African American male church leaders' perceptions of racism. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 75) explained that a "feature that is typically included in all phenomenological studies"…is an emphasis on a "single concept or idea" like the psychological concept of an African American man's perception of racism (p. 75). Therapists, counselors, teachers, mentors, coaches, and other professionals can be better prepared with knowledge of these cultural and gender phenomenal experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

The following research questions framed this study:

Research Question 1

How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations?

Research Question 2

What strategies would African American pastors encourage congregates when addressing racism?

Research Question 3

How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons in the 1960s?

Research Question 4

What would African American pastors say their role is in the African American community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

Research Question 5

Whom would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Research Question 6

In what ways would African American pastors say racism has affected their behavior as African American men?

Setting

An invitation to recruit male senior pastor participants of the African American cultural community was sent by message or email. However, using the social media Facebook (FB) messaging platform was more effective in grasping the attention of organizations or groups, such as the African American Pastor's Network or the National African American Fellowship. In addition, petitioning individual pastors recommended or referred by other senior pastors received the invitation by FB messaging.

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addition, petitioning individual pastors recommended or referred by other senior pastors also received the invitation by FB messaging.

<center>**Participant Selection**</center>

The participants required in this study were African American male pastors. The male gender was chosen because of the extensive racial discrimination in various categories towards African American men (Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992).

Criteria for Participants

The following criteria were used for the selection of participants. 1) African American or Black male pastors: a) one of the cultures reported experiencing 50%-75% discriminatory treatment (Lee et al., 2019); b) were incarcerated at disproportionate rates compared to whites; for ages 20-29, 23% were in prison, jailed, on probation, or parole (Archer, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). 2) They experienced and/or consulted congregate on racial discrimination. 3) They held a senior pastor position for over 20 years. Reachright (2019) reported Lifeway's compensation chart for many church pastors with over 20 years of experience could reach over 50% more than those under 20 years of experience. With this type of experience, the participants learned the pros and cons of leadership, especially when considering traumas such as racism. 4) They were currently married and experienced raising children. 5) They were married spiritual leaders who could reveal the characteristics of being stable and balanced. 1 Timothy 3:2 describes the Shephard as "blameless, one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach" (NKJV, James, 1975). Raising children of color demands the conversation to train and teach them how to interact when police approach (Murray, 2014). However, former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio struggled to tell his biracial son Dante

how to deal with the police (Murray, 2014). He experienced racial oppression or ministered to individuals through traumatic experiences of racial oppression and COVID-19.

The participants were petitioned through suggestions from known senior pastors or through the social media Facebook (FB) platform. These pastors or groups in FB, such as the African American Pastor's Network or the National African American Fellowship, provided a better outcome for participants. The study anticipated at least six to ten participants but was open to as many as the timeline of the process could accommodate effectively.

Data Collection Procedure

An invitation to recruit male senior pastor participants of the African American cultural community was sent by message or email (Appendix C). Using the FB messaging platform was more effective in grasping the attention of groups and individual pastors recommended or referred by other senior pastors. The invitation had a return contact email if any pastors were willing to move forward in the first step of the study, which included taking the Brief COPE Assessment (Appendix D). The assessment was given to determine the participant's ability to cope when discussing, interacting with, or considering acts of racism. Upon receiving their interest email, parties received an assessment and consent form (Appendix E). When the completed assessment was returned with the signed consent, the Brief COPE assessment scoring commenced.

The participants' continuation towards a one-on-one interview was based on the individuals' coping methodology total score of items in the Brief COPE Assessment, with over 50% categorized as a problem-solving, approach, positive, and active coping strategy.

An email went to everyone who took the Brief COPE Assessment providing their scores, an appreciation for their participation, whether further information was required, and their

qualification to participate in a drawing to win a $100 Amazon gift card. Individuals scoring the majority in problem-solving/approach/positive/active coping strategies received the same message; however, they were asked for more details (available dates and times) to send an invitation for the interview. A list of suggested dates and times was provided within the email to meet the expectations for the study's process.

Researcher's Role

I am an African American woman from a large family, primarily African American men born in this country that seems unprotected (O'Harrow, 2021). I am also a Christian author, Christian leader, and a Christian woman who is one of the spiritual leaders in my family and community. My book, called *Man of God We Need You*, has over 250 YouTube videos and over 2K followers on Facebook, and I am the second of six elders in my family. These individuals trust the influence on a spiritual and relationship level (Fryback, 1999; Kumar, 2004). However, in the past two years (2020/2021), the violence against African Americans, especially from police, and particularly during a pandemic, has raised the curiosity of racism towards African Americans that only African American men can answer (ABC News, 2021; Bruner, 2021; DeSouza et al., 2021; Galofaro, 2020; Holcombe, 2021; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Roach, 2020; Silverman, 2020; Wallis, 2007). As African American men themselves, what are the pastors saying to the African American community about these racial acts of discrimination?

I am not a man; therefore, I cannot express or verbalize their personal or emotional experiences; therefore, my role in this study was not of the same gender but as an objective observer. This study needed an understanding African American pastors' experiences of racism as African American men and church leaders. However, since the researcher and the participants were African Americans but of different genders, it was academically proper to ensure there

were no biases or common interpretations in the study. By understanding this psychological

concept, not only would the African American community was helped, but other cultures of the

Christian faith came to understand the oppressed mentality on racism.

Data Collection

A web-video teleconferencing tool was used for the interview. Participants received an

invitation (Appendix C) to discuss the perception of African American male pastors of racism. A

semi-formal interview, recording, and transcription took place using the tool. In addition, a list of

questions were asked, such as an introduction, research and related concerns, and polling

questions that pertained to the purpose of the study. This phenomenological study's applicable

data collection method utilized the Brief COPE Assessment as a screening tool, web-video

teleconferencing tool, and semi-structured interview questioning. In addition, a list of

participants and the transcripts of those recorded interviews were documented.

Brief COPE Assessment

All male pastors of the African American culture who consented to participate in this

study received and returned an assessment in coping. The Brief COPE Assessment measured the

participants' coping strategies and ability to self-regulate in response to experienced stressors.

The assessment aimed to screen the coping strategies of participants experiencing racism and to

measure the individual's current level of psychological distress before participating in the study.

Those pastors who scored over 50% of the assessment's total score in problem-solving, approach,

positive, and active coping strategies were considered for further participation. The focus was on

16 of 28 items categorized described as problem-solving/approach/positive/active coping

strategies (Items 2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, and 28), which indicated a

more effective ability to managing anxiety or facing distress (Buchanan, 2021; Carver, 1997;

Carver et al., 1989; Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999; Dein et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2012;

García et al., 2018; Henman, 2001; Ozcan et al., 2021; Pargament et al., 2011; Rogers-Dulan,

1998; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003; Xu, 2016).

Semi-structured Interviews

Participants were asked the following questions to participate in individual interviews.

Interviews were recorded during the study for later transcription.

1. What is your name, residence, and faith (Christianity or other)?

2. Are you married, and for how many years?

3. Do you have children, how many, and what are their gender(s)?

4. What is your church name, location, and the number of years you served as a pastor, regardless of where you served?

5. As a Black man and preacher, how would you say the Black church differed from the hidden church during slavery?

6. How would you describe the major differences in preaching about racism today compared to the 1960s?

7. In what way would you describe how the 2020/2021 killings of Black men, like George Floyd, affected your perception of the future for Black men?

8. How have the killings of Black men like George Floyd and Daunte Wright affected you as a man of color, or how have they affected the males in your family?

9. How do you explain to your Black male family members what they should do when confronted by police?

10. What strategies are you currently using to address racism with your young congregates?

11. What steps have you taken to demonstrate to the African American community your concern with racism?

12. What would you say your role is in the church and Black community?

13. How do you influence the Black community concerning racism?

14. What triggers you to address racial concerns within your family or community?

15. Who supports you when faced with racial issues and discrimination, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

16. In what ways would you say that racism has affected your behavior as a Black man?

17. In a word, how would you describe your initial emotional response when realizing the COVID-19 pandemic was escalating?

18. In a word, describe your initial emotional response to the African American culture while watching a Black man being killed in front of America (e.g., George Floyd, Andre Hill).

19. In a word, describe your initial emotional response to the insurrection in the U.S. Capitol.

Questions 1 through 4 were asked to build rapport and trust with the participants. To build rapport and support in-depth discussion, interviewers engaged in active, supportive listening that involved paraphrasing and questioning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rossetto, 2014). Questions 5 through 16 were asked to understand the participant's perception of racism as a Black man and leader. This phenomenological study allowed African American male pastors to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. In addition, this qualitative study aimed to gather inductive reasoning related to the participant's experiences that were missing or lacking in much of the research literature today.

Questions 17 through 19 were asked to help the participant identify emotions to actions concerning racism or the pandemic. The Critical theory focuses on concerns that empower those

enduring or have experienced "constraints placed on them by race" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 29). These interviewing poll questions helped to reveal the emotional perceptions of racism managed by these African American male pastors (Harmon, 2018; Hoyt et al., 2021; Inabinet, 2011; Ponds, 2013; Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). COVID-19 also emotionally affects the individual's perception of insecurities or tension (Bartsch et al., 2020; Obenland, 2012).

To help identify the emotions, but not limited to, there was a list of six categorized emotions (excited, scared, angry, sad, tender, and happy) (Appendix I) with seven related reactions to choose from regarding the participant's initial emotion regarding racial oppression or experiences and COVID-19. These categories were: 1) excited (antsy, aroused, cheerful, ecstatic, energetic, lively, and nervous; 2) scared (anxious, frightened, jittery, nervous, panic-stricken, tense, and terrified); 3) angry (annoyed, furious, irritated, mad, raging, resentful, and upset); 4) sad (blue, dejected, depressed, down, grieved, heartbroken, and mopey); 5) tender (intimate, kind, loving, soft, sympathetic, touched, and warm-hearted); 6) and happy (complete, contented, fulfilled, glad, optimistic, pleased, and satisfied).

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the modification of the Van Kaam method outlined in Moustakas (1994). Once the interviews were completed, the participants received a follow-up appreciation email letter. Data were analyzed using a modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data as described by Moustakas (1994). These were the steps that were taken once the data had been collected: 1) "Listing and Preliminary Grouping" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). A list of statements from the participants concerning their experiences was created. This process is called horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), in which all statements are considered equally. 2) "Reduction and Elimination" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121). Each

participant's expression by specific requirements was recorded: a) What is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding? b) What are overlapping, repetitive, or vague expressions? and c) Present in a more exact descriptive term. 3) "Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The transcribed statements were taken and formed into a thematic label of experiences, with similarities from the initial concept: 1) the Birth and Growth of the African American church, 2) the Role of African American Pastors in Church and Community, 3) Influences on African American Pastors and the African American Community, 4) Biblical Perspectives of the African American Pastors, and 5) the Biblical Character of the African American Pastors. Validation of the themes (Moustakas, 1994) within each theme was transcribed records and checked for the validity of the themes against the participants' expressions, according to Moustakas (1994, p. 121): a) Expressions are explicit. b) Expressions are compatible, and c) expressions are relevant to the study. 4) "Textural Description" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) These were the original themes that could be adjusted based on what the participants expressed. Verbatim quotes were used as a part of the process. 5) "Structural Description" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). These were meanings of what was said and reported by putting the statements into context "based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation." 6) "Composite Descriptions," or the external and structural descriptions, were combined to describe the "meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the data was achieved by using more than one method to construct a clear description of the African American male pastors' shared experiences regarding racism. Following were some methods to validate the data's trustworthiness for the researcher's

interpretation of what the participants intended (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Methodologies can be categorized according to their trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, or transferability.

Credibility

Credibility for phenomenological studies means the likelihood that the researcher's description of the participants' experiences corresponds with the reality of their actual experiences. Qu and Dumay (2011) emphasized the semi-structured interview as the primary method of collecting data in qualitative psychotherapy research because it is flexible, accessible, and intelligible and can reveal hidden aspects of human behavior. In a concerted effort to ensure credible data through interviewing, Lutz and Knox (2014/2013) argued that researchers should rein in any pre-existing suppositions as they conduct rigorous analysis. Credibility was ensured through several means, including epoché and participant checks.

Epoché

Kvale (1996) asserted that compelling interviews involve skillful questioning and active interpretation by the interviewer, who listens and can hear what the participants say. In Husserl & Kirsten's view of philosophy, presumption means suspension of all judgments of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl & Kersten, 1980). Patterson (2013) noted that epoché is the first step to phenomenological analysis, which involves refraining from judgment and ordinary perception.

It was possible that biases could have been perceived during the interview due to my gender. Comments were made during the interview that may have triggered defensive responses regarding minimizing racial acts against daughters "Driving while Black" compared to sons. Therefore, supportive listening was provided that involved paraphrasing and questioning

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rossetto, 2014). Using listening skills to understand what the participants were actually saying and what they were not saying was valid during this process of eliminating biases. For example, probing questions for clarity were administered to remove any doubt that would bias the data analysis. The participants were not minimizing racial acts against their daughters but rather expressing their experiences and conversations with their sons.

Patterson (2013) informed that the first step toward phenomenological analysis is epoché, in which one refrains from judgment or ordinary perceptions. As a woman and a mother, refraining from the type of gender judgment and perception had to be eliminated as much as possible by listening to understand rather than jumping to judge. Black men are expected to defend their family, defend their dignity, and defend their culture, but that expectation may not be realistic in light of the consequences. This is why this Black woman, this Researcher, and Interviewer had to be cognizant of any expectations of biases that may deflect from stories told by Black men. In addition, because this study focused more on the descriptive psychological approach, understanding personal biases is a must. My immediate family is composed of 18 Black males, many of whom have experienced racial discrimination, it was extremely difficult to separate all biases. It was almost impossible not to recall the pain expressed by my valedictorian nephew when his head was slammed on the hood of the car when pulled over by the police for no reason. However, I had to suppress any preconceived thoughts or perceptions to allow participants to share their personal stories that ultimately described similar traumatic encounters. Therefore, limiting personal biases and allowing participants to express their thoughts or share their stories can be helpful to find similar descriptions or connections. The study can validate various connections between the reader, writer, and participants.

Therefore, to set aside any bias that lead me to judge rather than understand, I followed the bracketing exercise and journaled any prior knowledge or gender concerns throughout the research process (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). In addition to the supportive listening, paraphrasing, relative questioning, and journaling, getting participants to check the transcripts was also used to validate the credibility of the data.

These pastors' lived experiences of racism were described in a phenomenological study. This study focused more on the descriptive psychological approach in order to prevent biases since I am an African American, and the participants conducting this study are African Americans. My immediate family is composed of 18 Black males, many of whom have experienced racial discrimination, it was extremely difficult to separate all biases. It was almost impossible not to recall the pain expressed by my valedictorian nephew when his head was slammed on the hood of the car when pulled over by the police for no reason. However, I had to suppress any preconceived thoughts or perceptions to allow participants to share their personal stories that ultimately described similar traumatic encounters. Therefore, allowing participants to express their thoughts or share their stories can be helpful to find similar descriptions or connections. The study can validate various connections between the reader, writer, and participants.

Participant Member Checking

According to Williams and Morrow (2009), direct quotes generally exemplify the researcher's interpretation of the participant's views on the subject. Interpretations made by the researcher corresponded to the meaning of the participant. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended member checking. Williams and Morrow (2009) stated that member checking is where participants evaluate the transcripts for accuracy and clarity. Some researchers assumed

that there is a better basis for believing that would agree with a multiple-investigator interpretation than if only one investigator had advanced the interpretation (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Sometimes, participants were asked if they could explain the reliability of specific patterns that the researcher had noticed (Appendix G) (Shenton, 2004).

The transcripts were sent to each participant for their review to ensure that the correct or appropriate interpretation of the quantitative interview transcripts corresponded to the meaning of the participant's direct quotes. The transcripts were emailed to each participant for their review and approval. Each participant's checks were returned, indicating approval of what was transcribed to be true to their direct quotes and perceptions on the subject. The only concern addressed was grammatical errors, which did not affect the meaning of the data analysis.

Dependability and Confirmability

The second sub-category of trustworthiness is dependability and confirmability. A study's dependability is similar to its reliability, but the stability depends on the time and nature of the study (Connelly, 2016). During the research process, the researcher took notes of all activities and decisions, including interview schedules and observations (Connelly, 2016).

Peer/Expert Review

In order to confirm the study's reliability and confirmability, the researcher solicited peer and expert reviews. The chair provided insight on the use of extensive direct quotes and the appropriate process of paraphrasing the participant's direct and indirect perceptions without losing the meaning. Additionally, it strengthened the credibility when the nature of the excluded text from the analysis was disclosed to prevent biases from one person's perspective (Lindgren, 2020; Connelly, 2016).

Transferability

The final sub-category of trustworthiness and transferability referred to the findings as practical and how applicable the findings were to the study (Connelly, 2016). Qualitative studies focus "on the informants and their stories" without generalizing (Connelly, 2016, p. 436). To capture readers' attention, researchers must paint a vivid picture that will inform and inspire (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016).

Specific questions during the semi-structured interview provided readers with insight into how applicable the findings were to the study. In reading the participants' stories, readers gained a deeper understanding of how they perceived the subject

Ethical Considerations

A study's ethical implications influence its usefulness and integrity (Connelly, 2016). Therefore, some ethical guidelines, such as privacy and confidentiality, should be notified to protect the interviewee (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Ideally, the reports provided standards of ethics and the proper disclosure of information (i.e., accuracy without plagiarism) but did not disclose information that could have potentially harmed participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study included a consent form (Appendix E) that shared the mandated ethical considerations. In addition, as with any privacy and confidentiality process, any hard copies of the study were maintained in a secure and locked location. Digital formats of journals, interview transcripts (audio and written) and focus group transcripts were password protected. Finally, the African American pastors were offered a choice in the web-video teleconferencing tool (video or no video) and the option to opt-out if the participant was uncomfortable with the settings or the process.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology for the research study of African American male pastors' experiences of racism as African American men and church leaders. The design section provided a brief rationale of why the qualitative researchers interpreting phenomena method was utilized (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There are two approaches to phenomenology research: descriptive (empirical, psychological, or transcendental) and interpretive (hermeneutic). The phenomenological study described the essence of these pastors' lived experiences of the phenomenon of racism. Since an African American and the participants conducting this study were African Americans, this study focused more on the descriptive psychological approach to prevent biases. There were six research questions outlined that were addressed in the interviewing questions. The demographics setting revealed the steps taken for the email invitations through Facebook. The participant section identified the required culture, gender, and position as African American male pastors. The procedure outlined the email invitation, participant consent, and the Brief COPE Assessment. The web-video teleconferencing recordings were used for the semi-formal interviewing session, and a chance for a $100 Amazon gift card was given. The researcher's role described the initiating drive from the researcher to understand the scope of the study.

Additionally, the data collection described the criteria for participants' coping strategies through the Brief COPE Assessment tool and the layout for the qualitative interviewing process. The criteria were based on the individuals' coping strategy scoring to fall within problem-solving, approach, positive, or active coping strategies. The data collection continued with the questions addressed in the semi-structured interviewing process. The 19 questions were outlined to clarify the purpose of this study of giving African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders. The first four questions were

to build rapport, the following ten questions surrounded the central focus of the study to include

research questions, and the last three required the participant to choose an emotional expression

triggered by the subject. The data analysis outlined seven practical steps that guided the method

of analysis of phenomenological data, as suggested by Van Kaam through the writings of

Moustakas (1994).

      The chapter closed with types of trustworthiness that should be administered throughout

the study: credibility, dependability, confirmability, or transferability. Credibility includes

epoché and participant checks; dependability and confirmability strongly suggest peer/expert

review. Transferability ensures the reader understands the study as a story coming to life.

Finally, the ethical consideration outlined the assurance that the researcher and the participants

were safe through the confidentiality and security of required documents.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This psychological or transcendental phenomenological study aimed to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as African American men and church leaders. Chapter Four begins with a description of the participants and their experiences, insight, and perception of racism. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and validated through participants' member checking of shared experiences regarding racism as stated in the interview transcripts. The Brief COPE Assessment was used to identify the participants' coping strategies and ability to self-regulate in response to any previous and current experienced stressors, specifically racism. The African American male pastors who participated in this study scored over 50% of the assessment's total score in problem-solving, approach, positive, and active coping strategy categories. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

Research Question 1

How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations?

Research Question 2

What strategies would African American pastors encourage congregates when addressing racism?

Research Question 3

How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons in the 1960s?

Research Question 4

What would African American pastors say their role is in the African American community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

Research Question 5

Whom would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Research Question 6

In what ways would African American pastors say racism has affected their behavior as African American men?

Finally, the collected data were analyzed, and a common description of the participants' shared experiences was developed.

Participants

When strategically choosing participants for this study, it effectively served the study of the African American Pastor (AAP), sharing their racial perception and having a tenure serving the church's spiritual community for over 20 years. Following Burns et al. (2013), the description of veteran pastors served a tenure of more than 14 years (p. 265). This criterion indicates stability, such as being married (NKJV, 1975; 1 Tim 3:2). Raising children within the African American culture (Murray, 2014) also strongly serves this study. The fifth interested pastor (AAP5), who received the pseudonym consent and assessment package, verbally decided not to participate since his wife died after agreeing to do the survey; therefore, the pseudonym numbering skips from four to six. These qualified participants were raising African American children, specifically, a son to whom they had to talk about driving when pulled over by the police (Holcombe, 2021; Warren, 2006). The participants in this study acknowledged their

religious faith as Christians, demonstrating their support for the demand for Christian leadership models (Barna Group & Reimagine Group, 2019; Hulteen & Wallis, 1998). Three of the participating pastors' churches are in Virginia (Alexandria, Chantilly, and Dumfries), two in Maryland (Beltsville and Capitol Heights), and one in Utah (Salt Lake City).

Table 1 lists the participants' prequalification for completing the 28-item Brief COPE Assessment to measure their coping strategies and ability to self-regulate in response to any stressors experienced, specifically racism. As a result, the participants were selected based on their ability to achieve 50% or higher in problem-solving, positive, and active coping strategies within their overall assessment total. Table 2 shares similar scores in response to the assessment.

Table 1

Participant Criteria: **Brief COPE Assessment: Racial Coping Strategies**

Pseudonym	Assessment Total	Positive Coping	Positive Strategy Percentage
AAP1	70	51	73%
AAP2	70	52	74%
AAP3	49	37	76%
AAP4	74	48	65%
AAP6	70	51	73%
AAP7	66	42	64%

Table 2

Participant Responses: Brief COPE Assessment: Coping Similarities

Brief COPE Assessment	AAP1	AAP2	AAP3	AAP4	AAP6	AAP7	Total
You have observed racial violence and discrimination conduct in 2020/2021 such as Black men (George Floyd), women (Breonna Taylor), and children (Daunte Wright) killed by police officers for minor concerns, such as jaywalking (Kurt Reinhold); and many others.							
Q20: I have been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.	4	4	4	4	4	4	24
Q22: I have been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	4	4	4	4	4	4	24
Q27: I have been praying or meditating.	4	4	3	4	4	4	23
Response to Assessment: 1) I have not been doing this at all; 2) A little bit; 3) A medium amount; and 4) I have been doing this a lot							

Participant Overview

The six participants listed in Table 3 are described by their assigned pseudonyms. All participants approved their assigned pseudonyms as listed in all tables. This section provides a brief description of each participant.

Table 3

Participant Demographics: African American Pastor (AAP)

Pseudonym	Interview Date	Religious Faith	Years Currently Married	Number of Children	Pastoral Tenure	State
AAP1	5/11/2022	Christian	40 years	1 son / 1 daughter	24 years	MD
AAP2	5/27/2022	Christian	over 50 years	3 sons / 2 daughters	56 years	VA
AAP3	5/27/2022	Christian	Two years	1 son / 2 daughters	34 years	MD
AAP4	5/12/2022	Christian	28 years	Three sons	24 years	UT
AAP6	5/25/2022	Christian	22 years	1 son / 2 daughters	20 years	VA
AAP7	5/26/2022	Christian	34 years	1 son / 1 daughter	21 years	VA

AAP1: Pastoral Tenure over 20 years

The first African American Pastor (AAP1) served as a pastor for 24 years in the state of Maryland. He has been married for 40 years and is the father of two adult children: a son and a daughter. AAP1 shared how he fears the future of Black men, especially his son, after the recent illustrations of racism in the United States in 2020/2021. During the interview, he stated

>…it causes me to rely on my faith that things will get better because this has really been hard. It is stressful. It never goes away. I don't have confidence in the political arena. I don't have confidence in the church.

While AAP1 shared his concern for his children, specifically his son, driving during this day and time and possibly getting pulled over by the police officers. As he spoke, he showed emotion, with a pause, head down, a heavy gulp, and nervousness in his voice. AAP1 said, "… every African American household must have. We call it the talk, which is the conversation we have in our [Black] homes, and I gave the talk to my son."

This African American father, and pastor, AAP1, stayed optimistic, even with the thought of possibly losing his son in some racial incident with the police. He shared this type of talk with his white colleagues in seminary. One, in particular, stated that they would still be alive if they had followed the rules. AAP1 shared,

> You know what it's like to be a successful man of color, yet you know what it's like to be pulled over and pulled out of your car and spoken to like you're less than human. That was an eye-opener for a lot of our white colleagues in the room.

As a Black man, AAP1 leaned toward the camera when expressing his emotional response to the recent killings of Black men, saying, "I think the imagery of it was just brutal. We had to see someone's life being taken."

AAP2: Pastoral Tenure Over 50 Years

The second African American Pastor, AAP2, served as a pastor for 56 years in Virginia. He has been married for over 50 years and is the father of five adult children: three sons and two daughters. AAP2 shared the dark days in the future of African American men if the culture is not deliberate with a plan. During the interview, he stated, "Black males are extremely at risk in this nation." AAP2 was very slow in sharing how his son may not want to be polite when confronted by police, especially if he believed to be racially profiled. AAP2 eyebrows raised when he expressed his conversation with Black men, saying, "My son might never be polite, but I still try. I try to convince the Black males in my family that it's better to walk away and live."

This veteran pastor of over 50 years was very calm but emphatic in his disposition when he expressed his experience with racial acts while holding the position of a 42-year police chaplain stated, "I can place myself into the situation of the George Floyds of the world, but I can also look at it through the lens that some others do not have the privilege to look through."

This Black man altered his posture by leaning more toward the camera when sharing his emotional response to the recent racial violence against Black men. He expressed it in one word, "…rage. To the point, like others, I thought we were past this kind of a situation. It was so brutal and played out right in front of our eyes every day. So, there was a lot of rage around that. We shouldn't be at this place."

AAP3: Pastoral Tenure over 30 years

The third African American Pastor (AAP3) served as a pastor for 34 years in Maryland. He is in his second marriage for two years, a father of two adult daughters and a young stepson. AAP3 leaned up and, with hands gesturing, expressed when learning to discern acts of racism when working with 300 employees in Livonia, MI., he shared that in the entire facility. "So, I saw anything and everything that would have been spoken or felt like it was racist when it sometimes may not have even been."

AAP3 somberly shared the unfortunate privilege of having to speak to his son about being confronted by police during the act of being pulled over by the police. During the interview, he stated, "Unfortunately, there is a set of rules and regulations that others of other races don't have to have. A conversation that they don't have to have. Training to encounter a police officer." AAP3 confidently revealed his response when racially confronted through words rather than physical by stating, "I think I do have a great sense of refrain, but now am I going to articulate…am I going to speak about it? Am I aggressively going to respond to it, rather than…it's not always good – but rather than let it go, let it happen?"

AAP4: Pastoral Tenure Over 20 Years

The fourth African American Pastor (AAP4) served as a pastor for 24 years in Utah. He has been married for 28 years and is a father of three adult sons. With a straight face and a direct

approach, AAP4 shared how some believe the discussion of racism is not needed as it was during the 1960s. During the discussion, he shared that "People think we live in a post-racist society because legislator of improvements and legislative accomplishments, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the election of the first Black president in Barack Obama. So, people are saying, no further action."

Initially, AAP4 was direct but very careful in his choice of words until he became comfortable with our interaction and rapport, knowing that the interview was a safe place to share his perspective on racism today. He stated, "Many pastors back in that era saw that as a sign that they needed to speak boldly. Today, it has to be measured. We can't just say things that we want to say."

While explaining the process of being confronted by police, as a Black man, AAP4 used hand gestures to describe and emphasize how he needed to instruct his three Black sons and his three Black men what to do. During the interview, he shared that "I tell my boys, put your hands on the wheel, make sure your registration is up to date, don't speed, don't break the law, don't be disrespectful…and live!"

AAP6: Pastoral Tenure Over 20 Years

The next African American Pastor (AAP6) served as a pastor for 20 years in Virginia. He has been married for 22 years and is the father of one son and two daughters. AAP6 was hesitant and very careful with his responses, often clinching his lips. He shared his perspective on the open racial acts demonstrated towards Black men in 2020/2021, pausing often, but determined to express his perspective. During the interview, he stated, "It made us all angry. It made us want to retaliate. It made us want to take up arms. Stand our ground. It made us want to meet violence

with violence. But because of our faith…for my faith. Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord, I will repay."

AAP6 had a posture of somberness as he provided the emotional response and description of how the African American culture is reacting towards the continuous killings of African American men as revealed and demonstrated to the nation. He said,

> We continue to watch it over and over and over again, and every time you watch it…it goes from disbelief to anger, to accept it. So, it saddens you to the point that you're heartbroken. It is a trauma that you experience every time you hear this man [George Floyd] say I can't breathe, and he begins to call for his mother.

AAP6 described the process he shares with his son, the only child driving. His head was often lowered, his tone was low, and his speech was slow, but he often lifted his head as he thought before speaking. During the interview, AAP6 shared his experience, stating, "I continue to give. Being a man of the cloth, clergy is pray first. I can only speak from my personal experience. So, whatever you need to do, humble yourself. Comply as much as possible, but the greatest thing is to live beyond the stop. To be able to talk about it."

AAP7: Pastoral Tenure Over 20 Years

The final African American Pastor (AAP7) served as a pastor for 21 years in Virginia. He has been married for 34 years and is the father of two adult children: a son and a daughter. AAP7 put a smile on his face and shared a proud and joyous gesture of shaking his head when confirming his wife is his confidant and friend when needing to address or discuss racism. During the interview, he stated, "My wife, who is my best friend in the world, is my confidant, my number one. Then I have about four or five senior pastors, who have pastored for about 40-50 years that I could go to, and then I have a circle of friends…so I can I let my hair down."

AAP7 was emphatic as his body swayed, using hand gestures and slightly raising his tone with the intention to share his perspective of how racism has a traumatic response. He stated, "Yes, it's traumatic. It affects how you live from then on. It changes your quality of life." AAP7 looked up, swayed a little, and hummed before sharing his thoughts regarding his white partners in an organization geared toward helping the community. He hesitated prior to sharing how some of their actions held biases before assisting with social justice issues. During the interview, he stated, "…they are in an organization that I'm in. A lot of, the majority of our White people, do some good work. When it comes to social justice, Black issues, this particular organization doesn't want to put that on the agenda."

AAP7 was very calm and slow with his words when sharing how he addresses his son and other young men in his congregation on their actions when confronted by police officers. He stated, " When this happened with George Floyd, you know, I had to reset my son. I talked to him personally, then even with the young men in our church."

Results: Phenomenological Descriptors of Pastors Perspectives

The Results section details the theme descriptors of the pastors' perspectives that emerged using data from the semi-structured interviews. An overview of the themes that emerged, the research questions expressed through the semi-structured interview questions, as well as repeated words and phrases are listed in this section. Nineteen semi-structured interview questions were used. This served as a platform for African American men to share their perceptions, experiences, and stories on racism. This freedom resulted in the emergence of five main themes and subthemes. Validation of the five major themes and research questions was derived from this allowance. Cognitive depictions were revealed as participants responded with words or phrases to semi-structured questions 17 through 19. The narrative provides a "textural

description" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120) of the participants' responses to research questions that follow the thematic descriptions. The study's analysis would be compromised if pivotal knowledge and experiences from the participant's narratives were eliminated.

Theme Development

Participants in semi-structured interviews with cognitive representation repeated several equivalent words and phrases with similar meanings (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). Each participant's expression was evaluated for vague expressions to present in a more precise descriptive term, called "reduction and elimination" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120-121). The repetition of words and phrases, along with the relevance of the participants' explicit expressions to the purpose of the study, allowed this study to identify specific themes (Moustakas, 1994). Five major themes manifested themselves as a result of the data analysis regarding the African American male pastor's perception of racism: 1) the Growth of the African American Church; 2) the Role of African American Pastors; 3) Influences; 4) Biblical Perspective of the African American Pastors; and 5) Biblical Character of the African American Pastors (Table 4). Similarly, themes were divided into subthemes.

Table 4

Associated Themes: **Quotes from Data Analysis**

Themes	# of Quotes
1) Growth	178
2) Role	27
3) Influences	527
4) Perspective	113
5) Character	356
Grand Total	1,201

Quotes Associated with Theme: **Influences** appears most often.
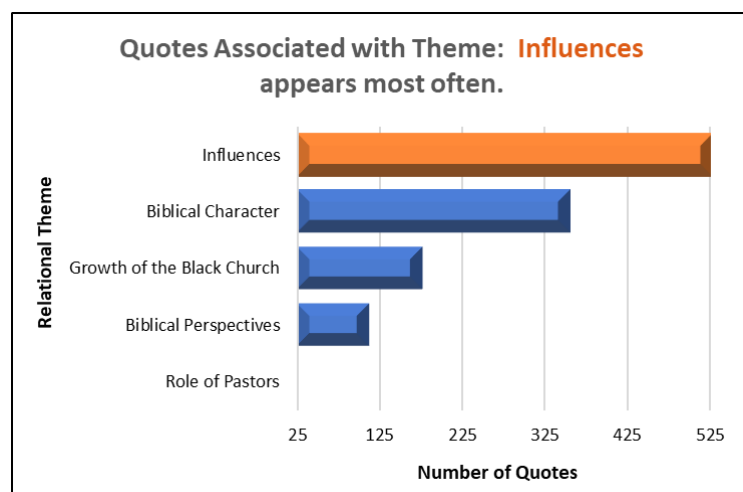
Theme One: Growth of the Black Church

Throughout history, the Black church has played a significant role in shaping and defining the identity of the Black community. In the semi-structured qualitative interviews, it became evident that understanding today's oppressed racism requires a historical perspective from Black pastors of Black churches. Therefore, theme one, The Growth of the Black Church, is based on research question one. Compared to the 1960s, its subtheme is based on research question 3. In Theme One, the participating pastors cited freedom as the most significant difference between the Black church during slavery and the Black church today. Freedom to worship, assemble and gather, openly worship and praise God, and freedom for Blacks to express themselves.

Subtheme One: Comparison to the 1960s

Research question 3 pertains to how Black pastors address the congregation on racism in Black churches today compared to the 1960s. A well-known Black pastor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached against social injustice, held on to the promises of God, and called on his congregation to do the same. Some pastors, like those who addressed their congregations during

the 1960s, may still find it challenging to make a case for nonviolence in today's difficult racial times.

Theme Two: Role of the Black Pastor

While all pastors are responsible for leading and guiding their congregations spiritually, Black pastors are also obligated to guide those oppressed by racism. In the current cultural and community climate, Black church leaders face a unique challenge, as they must identify strongly with the discriminated individuals and help their congregations navigate the racist environment (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011). In this theme, research question 4 focused on ministering to the Black community and serving as a spiritual leader in addressing racism in the community. Therefore, the role of the Black pastor is to equip church members in their response to racism regardless of how society is currently labeling or perceiving them to be.

Theme Three: Influences

In this study, there are several influences the participants could have on their families, church congregations, and communities, with a strong focus on being Black men, Black pastors, and living in Black communities. Based on the semi-structured qualitative interviews and the affiliated research questions, there are three influence subthemes: 1) influence as a spiritual leader in response to research question 4, 2) influence within the Black community also in response to research question 4, 3) influence on racism strategies in response to research question 2, and 4) influences received by others in response to research question 5. Each subtheme is expressed through the participants' responses to the semi-structured interview question.

Subtheme One: Influence as a Spiritual Leader

Pastors of every church are expected to show and demonstrate their spiritual strength and endurance to congregations and communities, regardless of trauma situations; however, such demonstrations can be challenging. While enduring racism, AAMPs find it challenging to influence their families, congregations, and communities to hold on to their faith.

Subtheme Two: Influence Within the Black Community

In the semi-structured qualitative interviews, participants were cautious and wise when they stated that some people in the Black community believe they no longer struggled with racism; therefore, Blacks should not be discussing racism. However, with the current impending imagery of brutality demonstrated within the Black community, Blacks cannot ignore the discussion of racism.

Subtheme Three: Influence on Racism Strategies

Under this subtheme, a few aspects of the research question where the Black pastor can influence others while addressing racism strategies: confronting police, being a positive role model, and recognizing triggers. Each participant shared how important it was for every Black family to train their children, especially their sons, to respond strategically when confronted by police while driving.

Subtheme Four: Influences Received by Others

This subtheme draws from the research question about the support that a Black male pastor requires when faced with the challenges of racism. Christian pastors are the pillars of the African American community and often the first sources of emotional and spiritual encouragement in the Black community. However, as each participant in this study elaborated, they are first human, husbands, fathers, family men, and spiritual leaders who have experienced

racism emotionally and spiritually. Pastors first acknowledged the wife, and blood-brother, either before or simultaneously with veteran Black male pastors who may have experienced racism more deeply.

<div align="center">**Theme Four: Biblical Perspective**</div>

In this theme, the pastors shared their personal, professional, and spiritual challenges when coping with traumatic issues. Based on the semi-structured qualitative interviews and the related research questions, two subthemes were found 1) the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) the January 6th Insurrection. Theme Four and its subthemes are in response to research question 6 regarding how the pastor's behavior is affected through these traumatic times.

Subtheme One: COVID-19 Pandemic

With the unexpected need to conduct church services online and the inability to gather and provide comfort and celebration to the church community, anxiety and exhaustion develop. The lack of gathering and addressing these issues was increasingly challenging, especially if the church was not flourishing enough to provide the essential technical requirements. The Message Version (2018) of Hebrews 10 expresses, "Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going." (Message Version, 2018, Hebrews 10).

Subtheme Two: January 6th Insurrection

The observation of a real-time attack on our Capitol by U.S. citizens caused fear in the Black community of what could be permissive and authorized next. Black pastors discussed how they encouraged the Black community to hold onto God's unchanging hand after observing the Republican Party's lack of tenacity on the issue of the January 6th uprising. The NKJV (1982) of Hebrews 13:6 states, "…we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Theme Five: Biblical Character of the African American Pastors

Christendom qualities were identified in the semi-structured qualitative interview, and the results were validated by analyzing how racism affects their behavior. This theme and its four subthemes: 1) 2020/2021 killings of Black men, 2) killings of Black men affect Black men in the family, 3) racism affecting behavior as a Black man, 4) killing of Black men like George Floyd and Andre Hill are also in response to research question six as it relates to pastors' behavior.

Subtheme One: 2020/2021 Killings of Black Men

Participants talked about how even pastors find it hard to be hopeful. Another participant said that America's goal is to make Black people lose hope, but they still keep their faith.

Subtheme Two: Killings of Black Men Affect Black Men In the Family

Black male pastors discussed racism towards their sons, the Black church, and the apparent brutal killing of Black men. Their hearts and minds were filled with angry expressions of vengeance; however, their conclusions were grounded in their faith.

Subtheme Three: Racism Affecting Behavior as a Black Man

During the trying times of killing Black men, a reporter expressed how a Black female behaved while in the car where a police officer shot her boyfriend several times. He recalled the scene by saying, "She still has the presence of mind to be deferential to the policeman…clearly Black people never forget their training" (Noah, 2017). Although a woman acts out this behavior, it is reiterated by a man, who confirms it as a strategy taught throughout the Black community.

Subtheme Four: Killings of Black Men Like George Floyd and Andre Hill

The participants' determination to be a model for Christianity, and to encourage the Black community to do the same, was validated with expressions such as, "If it wasn't for Christ,

I don't know what other tangible evidence there is that looks promising or looks hopeful"

(AAP4). In Table 5, several repeated phrases are given from which the themes and subthemes

were developed. It was through these expressions from the participants that the five major

themes were validated.

Table 5

Repeated Words or Phrases Constants from Data Analysis

Phrase or Words	Research Question	Themes
less than human	affects behavior	Biblical Character
hard to be hopeful	affects behavior	Biblical Character
racism affect my behavior	affects behavior	Biblical Character
disregard for human life	challenges faced	Biblical Character
was just shocked	challenges faced	Biblical Perspective
had to change	challenges faced	Biblical Perspective
allowed it to happen	challenges faced	Biblical Perspective
address the anger	challenges faced	Biblical Perspective
freedom to worship	sermon different from 1960s	Church Growth
open in sharing faith	sermon different from 1960s	Church Growth
freedom to express ourselves	sermon different from 1960s	Church Growth
worshipped despite penalty	sermon different from 1960s	Church Growth
church informs	the Black community	Church Growth
civil rights changes	addressing congregation	Influences
be cautious	addressing congregation	Influences
unchurched	addressing congregation	Influences
stress heightened	affects behavior	Influences
had to have the talk	strategies addressing racism	Influences
while driving Black	strategies addressing racism	Influences
come home alive	strategies addressing racism	Influences
walk away and live	strategies addressing racism	Influences
nonviolence	the Black community	Influences
be supportive	the Black community	Influences
those kinds of conversations	who provides comfort	Influences
be a model	role as a spiritual leader	Role as a pastor
be voice for church	role as a spiritual leader	Role as a pastor
be father for youth	role as a spiritual leader	Role as a pastor

Table 6

Associated Research Question: Quotes from Data Analysis

Research Question	# of Quotes
RQ#2: strategies addressing racism	346
RQ#6: affects behavior	299
RQ#3: sermon different from 1960s	177
RQ#6: challenges face	156
RQ#4: role in the Black community	105
RQ#5: who provides comfort	61
RQ#4: role as a spiritual leader	47
RQ#1: addressing congregation	10
Grand Total	1,201

Quotes Associated with Research Question: **strategies addressing racism** and **affects behavior** appear most often.
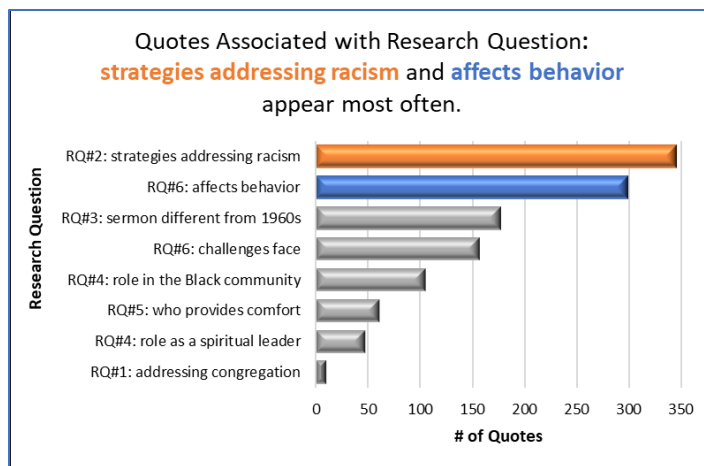
Research Questions Narrative

The purpose of this psychological or transcendental phenomenological study was to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. The semi-structured interview questions were intended to understand Black pastors' guidance on racism and how they see themselves in all facets of their identifications as Black men and spiritual leaders related to racism.

This study included participants' perceptions, experiences, and stories to analyze the data. The semi-structured interview questions gave transparency in responding to the research questions, primarily focusing on the themes developed for this study.

As a result of these 19 semi-structured interview questions, Black pastors were allowed to express and share their perceptions, experiences, and stories regarding racism. It was from this allowance that the five major themes and research questions were validated. Eliminating pivotal knowledge and experiences would be detrimental to the study's analysis.

The first four semi-structured interview questions developed a rapport with the participants before diving into the remaining questions that illuminated the study. An interviewer's active, supportive listening involves paraphrasing and questioning to build rapport and support in-depth discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rossetto, 2014). These interview quotes greatly value the purpose of this psychological phenomenological study of giving African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders.

Semi-Structured Interview Quotes: Theme and Research Question Data Analysis

This section contains the five major themes, the research questions, and the interview questions to connect the perceptions, observations, and stories of the study participants. Similarly, themes can be divided into subthemes. As part of this study, semi-structured interview questions (see Table 7) were posed to participants to address the themes and answer the research questions.

Table 7

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Semi-structured Interview Questions	
5	As a Black man and preacher, how would you say the Black church is different from the hidden church during slavery?
6	How would you describe the major differences in preaching about racism today in comparison to the 1960s?
7	In what way would you describe how the 2020/2021 killings of Black men, like George Floyd affected your perception of the future for Black men?
8	How have the killings of Black men like George Floyd and Daunte Wright affected you as a man of color or how have they affected the males in your family?
9	How do you explain to your Black male family members what they should do when confronted by police?
10	What strategies are you currently using to address racism with your young congregates?
11	What steps have you taken to demonstrate to the African American community your concern with racism?
12	What would you say your role is in the church and Black community?
13	How do you influence the Black community concerning racism?
14	What triggers you to address racial concerns within your family or community?
15	Who provides personal support to you when faced with racial issues discrimination, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?
16	In what ways would you say that racism has affected your behavior as a Black man?
17	In one word, how would you describe your initial emotional response when realizing the COVID-19 pandemic was escalating?
18	In one word, describe your initial emotional response to the African American culture while watching a Black man being killed in front of America (e.g., George Floyd, Andre Hill)?
19	In one word, describe your initial emotional response to the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol?
*Note: Semi-Structured Interview Questions 1 through 4 are rapport questions; therefore, not included.	

Table 8

Associated Theme, Research Question, and Interview Question Data Analysis

Themes	Interview Q#	RQ#1	RQ#2	RQ#3	RQ#4	RQ#4b	RQ#5	RQ#6a	RQ#6b	Related Quotes
Growth	5	66								66
	6			112						112
Role	12				26	1				27
Influences	7							1		1
	8							3		3
	9		118							118
	10		84							84
	11				1	47				48
	12		22							22
	13				6	57				63
	14		62		2					64
	15						61			61
	16	1						4		5
	17	8								8
	CR		48		2					50
Perspectives	17				3				33	36
	19								77	77
Character	7							98		98
	8							94		94
	16				3			99		102
	18		12		4				46	62
Related Quotes		75	346	112	47	105	61	299	156	1,201

*Research Question Section: Embraces Larger Values Quoted | *Note: CR = Closing Remarks*

Data Analysis: Raw Data

The raw data analyzed that assisted in developing each table's associated outline structure included columns 1) participant's identifiable pseudonym; 2) each participant's phrases or quotes applicable to the study (totaled 1,201 lines); 3) affiliated research question; 4) associated semi-structured interview question; and 5) applicable theme. Table 9 shows a sample of raw data.

Table 9

AA	Quotes: Perceptions and Phrases Pertinent & Valuable to Study	Research Question	Q	Themes
3	it had certainly enraged them, because now some of them have sons as well	RQ#6a: affects behavior	8	Character
4	have three Black sons and I got to worry about them constantly	RQ#6a: affects behavior	8	Character
3	African Americans by far are persons, who are respectful to some degree	RQ#2: strategies addressi	9	Influences
3	one of the persons presented there when going to address the President of the	RQ#4b: role in the Black	11	Influences
3	one of the persons who speaks to him directly with regards to his antics	RQ#4b: role in the Black	11	Influences
3	one of the persons who speaks to him directly with regards to lifting a Bible u	RQ#4b: role in the Black	11	Influences
3	one engineer older than I, were the only two African American persons [of 30	RQ#2: strategies addressi	14	Influences
6	got rid of a little black sports car, for a number of reasons, and I wouldn't allc	RQ#6a: affects behavior	16	Character
6	doesn't touch the hurt or begin to scratch the surface of the mothers whose son	RQ#2: strategies addressi	CR	Influences

Theme One: Growth of the Black Church

This section explains the data obtained concerning the first major theme responding to research question 1 through semi-structured interview research question 5.

Research Question One

How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations?

Semi-structured interview research question 5. As a Black man and preacher, how would you say the Black church differed from the hidden church during slavery?

In the discussion, participants describe racial challenges within the church, which are more simplified and less dangerous than during the Hidden Church era. Gates (2021) described how the church embraced this invisible institution to worship God freely through their voices and images.

Freedom. Although slaves worshipped at white churches for years, they were not physically or spiritually free since their masters controlled them (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). AAP1 stated, "They were willing to risk everything to worship God…despite what lay ahead if they were caught because they didn't have the freedom."

Avent and Cashwell (2015) reported that the Black Church significantly impacted the sense of freedom of oppressed Blacks. AAP4 expressed, "One of the organizations in this country that is not under the thumb of the majority race" and that "We no longer have to hide our faith and how we practice our faith." When asking the participants open-ended questions, it gave them the greatest latitude and freedom to respond about the growth of the Black church (Wright, 2012). AAP6 stated, "From the backwoods till this present time, it had been a place where

prominence was found, for relevance or purpose and worth, as well as the value found in each other."

Growth continues. African American churches play a crucial role in organizing and advocating for their members, according to Scott and Wolfe (2015). Participants defined its challenges when comparing the Black church with the Hidden church. AAP2 shared, "There has been some progress, but not that far with the church bombings and burnings, so we still have to be careful." AAP3 stated, "We are not hidden because we're open in sharing faith and congregating and gathering together" AAP7 shared, "It was the Black church, especially during the civil rights days, which kept the church and kept people informed."

Subtheme: Church Growth in Comparison to the 1960s

This section explains the data obtained concerning theme one's subtheme responding to research question 3 through semi-structured interview research question 6. The participants discussed the growth of the Black church with its similarities and differences compared to the 1960s.

Research Question Three.

How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons in the 1960s?

Semi-structured interview, Research Question 6. How would you describe the major differences in preaching about racism today in comparison to the 1960s?

This subtheme touched on remembering the Civil Rights era, how discussions on racism have changed, and a time for moving the masses. In the 1950s and 1960s, Black pastors and churches played a significant role in the civil rights movement (Pew Research Center, 2021). AAP1 expressed, "…during the 60s, it was clear, especially for the Black Church, that we had to

address the issue of civil rights." Racial or ethnic minorities are a primary example of groups that may be discriminated against in the United States, according to Barna Group and Reimagine Group (2019). AAP1 said, "We still have challenges concerning health care, education, our homes being undervalued, and more people that look like me are in the prison system than in the academic environment."

Remembering the civil rights era. Some participants have experienced the 1960s, knowing first-hand what it is like to live through the challenges and changes. Against the sins of racism and the sins of the world, "the church has proven to be a powerful force" (Gates, 2021, p. 184). Especially in Black churches, Blacks ask Black pastors to speak out against issues that may cause inappropriate responses and to declare and offer peaceful processes (McQueen, 2020).

AAP2 acknowledged, "I grew up and nurtured in that social justice era to protest and to speak out against injustice, and I still do today." Based on how the Black church has grown and what is being preached today regarding racism, AAP3 said, "We've been taught to be African American people coming up from our oppression and moving on from that, but by no means are we subjecting anyone else or any other race to something, or superiority on our end, but more inclusivity."

Discussions of racism have changed. Considering how much has changed in the Black church and the Black community since the 1960s, discussing racism in today's society can be challenging. According to Barna Group and Reimagine Group (2019), only 38% of white Christians perceive America as having a race problem, while 78% of Black Christians see it as having a race problem: therefore, progress is not being made on racial understanding (Hollinger, 2020). Some Black pastors share how some in the Black community veer away from racial discussions. AAP4 shared, "…even the word racist, there are people, who are arguing…careful

about using that word, so, there's this overly cautious attitude that wasn't that present in the 1960s."

Moving the masses. The participants shared that there are some changes, but just as many challenges today with encouraging the Black church. This perception is expressed by AAP6. "In terms of moving the masses, I feel like the 1960s was just right for growth and right for the pendulum shift to take place." Even with the violence so precedent in today's society, the Black church may not have the desire to fight back as they did, or did not, in the 1960s. As AAP6 continued, "Look at these senseless acts of violence, and receiving text messages telling us don't go…" to certain areas "…because Black people are being targeted." MLK's quote is shared on Christian Online Services (2020), stating, "Don't even fear death. A man is not free if he fears death, but when you conquer the fear of death, you are free." In the 1960s, some Black churches hesitated to invite MLK because they feared trouble. AAP7 shared, "Most of our people are older and feel indifferent now; they're comfortable where they are and don't feel the need to preach on those things."

Theme Two: Role of the Black Pastors

This section explains the data obtained concerning the second major theme responding to research question four through semi-structured interview research question 12.

Research Question Four

What would African American pastors say their role is in the Black community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

Semi-structured interview research question 12. What would you say your role is in the church and Black community?

Participants shared how their ability to lead and endure is vital for those who observe them on a regular base. Black pastors are pivotal in helping their congregations navigate the difficult times that most influence their response to racial violence. Focusing on those who need spiritual and relational interactions during trying times must be apparent and transparent to others. African Americans traditionally receive spiritual and mental support from their churches and spiritual leaders rather than from professionals (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). This theme on the role of the pastor is shared through the pastor's awareness of the need, even in a fatherly figure, and specifically when leading by example.

Aware of those needing care. Despite the challenges pastors face, they are still responsible for recognizing those who need help. For emotional and spiritual encouragement and healing, pastors are typically the first-person congregants seek (Allen et al., 2010; Avent et al., 2015; West et al., 2006). AAP1 recognized this need by expressing, "I found out by just engaging and listening we had people, young people, men, women, boys, and girls dealing with all the issues we see in the news, such as depression, suicide, drugs, employment, and housing." This awareness includes bringing clarity to the Black community, especially the Black man, in knowing how to be prepared for today's society. AAP6 expressed, "When cataclysmic events and massive shootings are taking place, we're better prepared because we've got a perspective that helps us to cope when entering to engage, a perspective of compassion."

Fatherly figure. The roles of Black pastors include being a fatherly figure for young congregates in times of concern or despair. AAP7 stated that it is also best to be there when there is a cry, a need, or desperation for help. He shared, "It is to be there no matter what time of the day or night or whatever happens, not to judge but to help…the fatherly side to see all the young men in our church as a son." AAP6 reported, "If we listen, if we look, if we pay attention…we

must have a pulse of where this generation is…meaning we got to get our hands dirty and be present."

Leading by example. Participants in the study perceived their role as one to lead by example. By guiding young congregants towards stereotypical perceptions of Black culture that have unfortunately become prevalent can be avoided. Most congregants seek out pastors when they need emotional and spiritual encouragement and healing (Allen et al., 2010; Avent et al., 2015; West et al., 2006). AAP2 shared, "I'm called to equip, to bring understanding, and to be a model; therefore, when reading negativity that Black males are criminals, drug addicts, drug dealers, and gangbangers, they have a model to look at, in me." There is a relationship between internalized racial superiority and lighter-skinned individuals associated with racial dominance, the hierarchy of how one's race is perceived, and the accumulation of negative messages about one's abilities (Pyke, 2010; Williams, 2008).

Theologian James Cone (1997/1975) explained how Blacks would express liberation (oppressor-oppressed) and transcendence of their struggle where white people perceived the only reason God created Blacks were to serve the white culture (Keeley, 2008). AAP4 shared on leading to not only "preach about equality and social activism and principles of Christ, or this liberation theology that was popular in the 60s through James Cone and some other authors, but to live it out in my life." Psychological distress and self-esteem should be considered when examining Black men's experiences (Mahalik et al., 2006; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005). In response to unpleasant conditions, such as racism, Black people are perceived to become loud, confrontational, and menacing (Jackson, 2018). AAP3 expressed his thought "to steer us in the direction of a positive action towards negative impulses and actions, and to refocus us to better ourselves, so we're able to handle this negativity through articulation."

Theme Three: Influences

This section explains the data obtained concerning the third major theme, responding to research questions through semi-structured interview questions. This section elaborates on four subthemes of influence: 1) influence as a spiritual leader, 2) influence within the Black community, 3) influence on racism strategies 4) influences received by others. Each subtheme has a related research question with an interview question that guides each participant's response. Subthemes one and two cover research question 4 as answered through SSQI11. Subtheme three covers research question 2 as responded to through SSQI9. Finally, subtheme four covers research question 5 as responded to through SSQI15.

Research Question Four

What would African American pastors say their role is in the Black community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

Semi-structured interview research question 11. What steps have you taken to demonstrate to the African American community your concern with racism?

Subtheme One: Influence as a Spiritual Leader

The participants revealed how to be influential as a spiritual leader when dealing with the issues of the community. The influences could manifest through preaching God's word, providing practical workshops, having a safe place to vent concerns, participating in protests, and partnering with others with more expertise. AAP1 shared, "If we do not preach the word of God in the environment we live, it has the potential to become watered down, diluted, and of no value; however, the value of the gospel is always." Workshops involving other cultures may be incorporated to influence the community appropriately. AAP shared, "I head workshops and invite experts of different viewpoints, including my white brothers."

Responding with nonviolence. It was unclear how the peace movement would survive after MLK's assassination, and the Vietnam War eclipsed the civil rights movement (Gadzekpo, 1997, p. 105). The Black pastors of that era would respond with nonviolent resistance when others exploited them. In the struggle against racial inequality, many churches and spiritual leaders are on the front lines of the Black Lives Matter movement (Barber, 2020). AAP3 shared his spiritual influence with other pastors when addressing a former president regarding the Black Lives Matter protest, after being hit with rubber bullets and affected by tear gas (Fahs & Swank, 2022). He stated, "I was one of the persons who spoke to him directly regarding his antics with lifting a Bible upside down." In some instances, it was difficult for Black pastors to influence those participating in the protest that day spiritually, but it was imperative to encourage nonviolence. As LaMothe (1921, p. 5) pointed out, marginalized or oppressed people have little place in public politics, which is "filled with humiliation mechanisms." AAP3 stated, "I'm on that side of Martin Luther King, where there were, obviously, differences of opinion with Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X and others, as it relates to what they felt on nonviolence, and then taking things by force."

Providing a safe place. Unfortunately, finding places where you can express your concern, hurt, and frustration amongst others enduring the same ordeals is difficult. Black churches have a special character that makes them particularly powerful and vulnerable at the same time as places of refuge and safety for Black people (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Gates, 2021). Many organizations claim that Black churches have become a place where prejudice is confronted (Henderson & Louis, 2017). As a spiritual leader, AAP4 shared, "I have a concern for I am Black, my wife and my boys are Black, and my 106ongergation is mostly Black," needing "a safe place to have crucial and tough conversations."

Involving experts. Some spiritual leaders understand their limitations and the limitations their church could provide to the congregates and church community. According to Bryant-Davis (2005, p. 409), coping strategies include "religious belief, denial, and optimism, as well as problem-focused activities, such as finding information and generating resources." Participants shared their steps to partner with other organizations, churches, or individuals with different perspectives regarding addressing racial concerns. AAP6 confessed, "If I notice that my church does not have presence or prominence or even the expertise to do, I partner up with churches that may be a little more progressive." AAP7 shared, "At our church, we invited the community so African American young men could listen to what the police had to say and for them to know their rights."

Subtheme Two: Influence Within the Black Community.

The participants shared their influence with their church congregates on racism; however, their influence goes beyond the four walls of the church. It is impossible to preach to a congregation without understanding that those same members encounter whatever actions are directed at the community. People are hurting, and some say that hurt has come from inside the church walls. The church separates itself from those in the same community. Therefore, how can the community trust the church? AAP7 admitted, "I think racism has had a great influence because we were not as engaged with the community before these things started to happen." The younger generation is still trying to understand where they stand with the church, church members, and especially in the God that the church professes. Participants shared what influences they may use to encourage the Black community with whatever devastating tragedies they may endure.

Keeping it real. The participants received responses mainly from the younger generation; however, they are not looking for preaching. They are looking for guidance. Bryant-Davis (2005, p. 409) stated that when African Americans grow up in a violent environment, the youth must find ways to cope. "Young people look for whether you're genuine, if you're fake with them, if you're honest yourself, and if you're authentic."

The unchurched. Some of the Black community desire spiritual help and godly influences; however, if those in the church hurt them, they may seek other means of support. Compared to the Civil Rights era, Black churches are losing influence among the Generation Z demographic (Pew Research Center, 2021). AAP1 shared about knowing that some "people left the church because they were abused in the church, verbally, physically, sexually, and think that the church is no longer relevant to address today's issues." Throughout the Black church's history, Blacks have been provided with "individual and institutional armor" designed to protect their mental sanity (Gates, p. 21). The participants in this study all agreed that the connection to the young generation, including young adults, must be open, particularly when applying biblical truths. Why should they stay if they do not believe that the Black church can regularly connect with them on issues they encounter? AAP1 shared, "That's why you have a lot of these parrot churches and coffeehouses…even the word church sometime will trigger those who have been traumatized in the church…this Churchism is something that needs to be addressed, as well as racism."

Christian principles. As illuminated throughout the study, many pastors addressed their influence within their homes, church, and community. Additionally, they expressed some internal influences with principles that follow biblical and Christian principles. Through this biblical-theological acknowledgment, African Americans understood Christianity themselves,

especially during and after slavery (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007). AAP3 shared, "My way of influencing is showing and offering a different outcome, which sometimes can be viewed as weak or sheepish, but it is closely related to Christian principles." Following major psycho-social transitions involving loss or trauma, Bowlby et al.'s (2019) work revealed the inevitably slow and painful processes involved in changing beliefs about oneself, others, and life. AA3 also stated, "We are Christians in this country, but this country is certainly not Christian in its behavior and handling of humanity."

Wholeness. In the past, the Black church filled the void created by the secular mental health care system's bias and neglect. As June and Black (2011) noted, the Black church filled the gap left by the secular mental health system's bias and neglect for years. However, the pastors in the Black churches were also therapists, healers, psychopathologists, social workers, financial counselors, lawyers, job counselors, and pastors, teachers, and administrators (June & Black, 2011). AAP6 hesitantly confessed that "our community is being plagued right now with mental health issues that have triggers like Trayvon Martin and brother Floyd, which causes a mental instability that if we're not in tune with those triggers, we won't be able to reach them."

Participants delved into recognizing the wholeness of their community; therefore, their influence is geared toward addressing those negativities. "Matthew 25 referenced making sure that the church is involved in those social, economic, mental health, all around the wholeness and wellness of individuals; therefore, doing it in a way where they can see it in the community."

Triggers of racial influence. It is common for people who have experienced trauma to experience triggers that may influence or bring back memories of the trauma. As a result of trying to avoid these situations, a person can become a prisoner and experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Wright, 2012). The threat of oblivion is fear-some, and it triggers an

instinctual panic and rage in the human psyche to resist and to escape being thus over-whelmed (Watson, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1998). Some of the participants in this study expressed how triggers influence the community as it relates to traumas. AAP1 shared, "…triggering can often be parallel processes…because one of the things I find about both Churchism and racism is that proximity helps to address those issues." AAP2 shared, "When I see racism of any kind…it triggers me towards anger…but the Bible says be angry, but sin not." In this study, participants shared their experiences of triggers they identified as racial concerns. Studies categorized Black men as poor, hypermasculine, and threatening but neglected to explore how these discriminatory thoughts may cause them to downplay their frustration to appease whites (Jackson, 2018; Collins, 2004; Cooper, 2008; Wingfield, 2010). A participant testified about a common incident encounter, which he says is of racial concern. AAP2 shared his testimony by saying:

"I'm traveling first class…when they call for that group, I'm already in line, and 75% of the time a white male will come and step in front of me…and I find the same thing when checking in hotels, and that triggers this whole thing of racism in me…saying, what the hell?

Another participant connected God's word when expressing his experience that triggers racism. "Matthew 29 teaches me just being obedient to the word of God triggers us but also triggers my own faith. I mean my personal experience living as a Black man, experiencing racism."

AAP4 focused on three areas that triggered racism in him: the word of God, personal faith, and personal experiences of being a Black man. By interacting with motivating and social contexts, this qualitative study will provide individuals with a personal insight into why such discrimination is tolerated among Black men (Jackson, 2018). AAP4 continued with his response

to those triggers, sharing, "Those three things for sure triggers me to speak about racism…in the words of Marvin Gaye, it makes me wanna holler throw up both my hands."

 Understanding and navigating. Participants in this study shared their thoughts on what triggers their influence to guide others in understanding and learning how to navigate through acts of racism. AAP3 expressed his thoughts. "The mistreatment of people is a trigger and then helping people to navigate through those experiences." As Bryant-Davis (2005, p. 409) pointed out, there are several coping strategies, including "religious belief, denial, and optimism, as well as problem-focused activities like information seeking and resource gathering." A coping strategy one of the participants expressed when triggers hit is: "…see when it's happening; know when it's happening, recognize when it's happening; and then also recognize when it isn't. Racism is usually the motive behind the action, but sometimes it isn't." AAP3 shared, "…with having some police officers in my family…there's reason why some police officers move to going in the trunk…perhaps, it's how we behave or how we conduct ourselves that drives the next point." When asking this pastor, who was the only participant admitting to such, which did his family members, who were Black police officers, find more prevalent in these situations, racial or nonracial issues. It has been found that Black males are disproportionately incarcerated compared to whites. For ages 20-29, 23% of Black males are incarcerated, on probation, or parole (Archer, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). AAP3 responded with no hesitation,

   Unfortunately, the majority, it is the view of one's race before anything else…I see you as Black…I have a thought, or a discipline, or training, or a historical view of African Americans, so; therefore, since you are a man of color, then you are obviously and automatically this, or something wrong, or some negative.

Personal triggers of racial influence. Participants continued to delve into personal experiences that caused them to look within themselves as it relates to influences towards others. Using the method constructed in this interview has a high probability of revealing the emotional perceptions (such as anger, anxiety, long-suffering, and belief) experienced by African American male pastors. A participant shared his trigger of trauma re-experiencing from his childhood when police officers came to his house and hauled off his brother, which impacts him even today. AAP7 started by sharing, "I'm the youngest of 10. We grew up in the projects in Portsmouth, VA, and about five or six police came knocking on our door looking for my brother, who was 17 and the 4th oldest." A traumatized person may be triggered by particular triggers that trigger trauma memories (Wright, 2012). AAP7 said, "They told my mother just want to take him round the corner and ask some questions, and we'll bring him back…Well, he didn't come back and has been in prison for 17 years for a crime he did not commit…saying we're going to get you for capital murder, blah blah blah."

Attachment therapy has methods to restore the child's trust in the parent's ability to guard them against external and internal threats (Lieberman & Van Horn, 2009, p. 710). AAP7 continued,

> That's what has propelled me and put a fire in me to fight for those who
> can't fight for themselves and to speak for those who can't. We were poor and
> didn't have any money, so he was not well-represented. At that time, I was about
> ten years old. I remember that vividly.

Research Question Two

What strategies would African American pastors encourage congregates when addressing racism?

Semi-structured interview research question 9. How do you explain to your Black male family members what they should do when confronted by police?

Subtheme Three: Influence on Racism Strategies

This study was conducted since there is very little research from Black male pastors discussing racism in their homes, their churches, their communities, and particularly, as Black men themselves. It was decided to use the Brief COPE inventory tool as a pre-evaluation method for African American participants to identify coping strategies (Ozcan et al., 2021; Buchanan, 2021; Garcia, 2018; Xu, 2016; Dein et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2012; Pargament et al., 2011; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003; Henman, 2001; Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999; Rogers-Dulan, 1998; Carver, 1997; Carver et al. 1989). As a result of this assessment, participants were mentally prepared for the semi-structured interview questions used in the study, especially regarding racism strategies. These results manifested when these Black men shared a racial strategy with their sons when confronting police while driving Black.

Confronted by police. Historically, Black men have been targeted and killed as a result of slavery and civil rights, and in recent years, where lynch mobs have demonstrated acts dating back to the 1860s citizen's arrest law, which seemed to justify lynching (Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Therefore, trusting law enforcers or police officers was not something the Black community felt comfortable or safe doing. It is commonly known in the Black community that police officers stop Black drivers primarily because of their racial bias and not for any apparent traffic violation. Therefore, Black fathers, Black mothers, Black wives, and Black husbands fear for their life and the life of their families. The Black community knows to prepare their children before facing the world, whether going to segregated schools, a

supermarket in Buffalo, using the instinct to whistle at a pretty girl or simply Driving while

Black.

Sorin (2020) shared that an early form of racial profiling involved law enforcement

stopping any Black person they encountered, enslaved or free, and forcing them to produce

documentation proving their status. The negative depiction of Driving while BLACK is known

throughout the Black community as Black drivers being stopped by a police officer largely

because of racial bias rather than any apparent violation of traffic law. Therefore, preparing

Black teens, specifically, Black boys, on the proper process and protocol for Driving while

BLACK mandated strict rules to stay alive. Many participants were emotional when sharing the

strategy required of their sons just to come home alive. As expressed in this example, AAP1 can

complete the instructions given to his son without choking. He shared,

> If you're ever approached by law enforcement, especially if you're in your car. No
>
> sudden moves. Hands-on the steering wheel. Have all your credentials ready. Do not
>
> reach for anything. Be courteous, and this is not a time to pop off, even if you think
>
> you're being wronged… because I want you to come home… I want you to come home
>
> alive.

Having the conversation or talk. The Black male pastors in this study expressed similar

instructions for their children, particularly their sons while driving Black. The racism that

persists in the Black community is evident in the gunning down and lynching behavior of a

young Black boy (Tisby, 2019). It is understood that this is a conversation required in the Black

community.

AAP3 shared, "Obviously, and unfortunately, there is a set of rules and regulations that

others, of other races, don't have to have…training to encounter a police officer." AAP2 said,

"Follow the orders the best you can because they stand there with a gun, and you don't, and it's not going to go down well…so, take mental notes if it's not properly reported" AAP4 explained to his children, "

> Make sure your registration is up to date, don't speed, don't break the law, don't be disrespectful, and live. The advice I continue to give being a man of the cloth clergy is … pray first. When this happened with George Floyd, I had to reset my son; therefore, I talked to him personally, then with the young men in our church.

> *Live beyond the stop*. When listening to the story of one of the participants, I recalled a

video where I saw where a police officer fired several shots inside a car with the driver's baby girl and the baby's mother still in the car. The reporter said a routine traffic stop turned deadly when this Black man, Philando Castile, was stopped for a broken taillight in Minnesota because the officer thought his life was in danger. The reporter continued with how the woman behaved and responded while the gun was still pointed, saying, "She still has the presence of mind to be deferential to the policeman…clearly Black people never forget their training" (Noah, 2017). I could feel the emotions this Black male pastor tried to hide as he shared his story of being stopped with his family in the car while driving through Augusta, GA. AAP6 shared

> I was stopped for no reason and asked to get out of the car with my mom, wife, son, and daughters. They had to see their dad get asked out of the car and questioned, and then the police officer questioned them to see if my story checked with theirs.

> In this case, possibly because of the state or area, or even the characteristics of the white

police officer, the Black male pastor could pull out his phone while standing outside the car and make a call. He called his lawyer, who stayed on the phone even as the police officer questioned his family. The lawyer shared what the Black culture has been informed for many years, and it

continues to be valid when confronted by the police, regardless of the officer's ethnicity. AAP6 quoted his lawyer's advice saying,

> …breathe…this police officer may very well be violating you in some regard when he asked you to step out of your vehicle. If you didn't step out, he could feel like there is probable cause to draw his gun. He can say you're reaching. He can shoot up the whole vehicle. Not only will you lose your life with your wife, your mom, and your children… it will be his testimony living against a mute testimony of six people that are dead or injured and cannot speak. So, based on my experience… I say pray. Comply as much as possible, but the greatest thing is to live beyond the stop. To talk about it.

Right or wrong. Even when the police pull you over for a reason, such as speeding, crossing a red light, or something like a broken taillight, you still expect to drive away after that stop. Blacks are trained that it does not matter why the police pull us over to continue following the same rules of obeying authority. This new generation may not follow that same strict structure so easily, but the elder and wise family members continue to install those behaviors within them. Therefore, when confronting police, AAP4 shared, "If you were mistreated, we can go fight it in court, but if you're dead, we can't fight it, meaning it doesn't matter whether you were wrong or they were wrong, you're dead, so, do whatever you need to do to survive that moment."

The participants wanted me to understand the connection that one Black man has when directing another Black man. Instructions are not given to diminish but rather to build and inform the one who most likely will experience what they have already experienced. AAP4 continued,

> I get it if you were stopped wrongly or if you were treated unfairly, let's get a lawyer. Let's go to court and fight it while you're breathing and there's breath in your body. I tell

my boys. I know it is frustrating when you are stopped for driving Black. You want to

pop off. You want to be rude. You want to protest, but we, as Black men, can't. Maybe

other cultures can. They could put up an argument. They could put up a fight. Refuse to

roll down the window. You, we, can't do that as Black men. We have to go above and

beyond compliance just so we can live.

Some may question why a Black man would tolerate the oppression placed on them

without fighting, but it is more than just fighting but living, specifically for those they love.

Black families have experienced this type of love for centuries; however, trauma or loss of

family often impacted this love. In addition to psychological and physical abuse, they were

separated from their families and prohibited from using their names, languages, and religions,

behavior that resembled slavery (Bowlby, 1980; Fortes-Lima & Verdu, 2021). Every participant

expressed their petition to the Black males in their family that it is better to walk away and live.

Those who lived through the civil rights era share their stories of learning to behave as a Black

man in the United States of America. AAP2 shared,

> You talked about being brutalized and what they all went through, even to go to school.
>
> You go to the lunch counter and been spit on. Well, you're not engaging in any more than
>
> they went through, but to learn the nonviolence process that you win out if you just be
>
> nonviolent and hold your peace.

Teaching moment. Other cultures may not have access to schoolbooks, journals, or

articles that explain how Blacks perceive, receive, or articulate traumas such as racism. The

voices of Black men must be heard so that other cultures may learn what factual rather than

pretense is. One of the Black male pastors of this study discussed at a seminary school where he

explained to his white friends and colleagues the type of conversation Blacks have with their

children. AAP1 said, "My classmate, who was young and a Caucasian, made a statement saying,

"…defund the police, why are you all doing this; all people have to do is just obey the police,

and they'll still be alive?""

This became a teachable moment for African American colleagues.

AAP1 expressed,

When other cultures express those types of things, one has to breathe for a minute, but it

caused or put Blacks in place to share what it looks like to be on this side when killings

happen and people look like you. Our Caucasian brothers were really surprised, but they

needed to know this is part of our survival.

Scared Straight. Under programs such as Scared Straight, juvenile delinquents or

children at risk of criminal behavior are organized to visit prisons. Participants are taught about

prison life and interact with adult inmates firsthand in order to deter future offending. One

participant shared his experience at the age of 12-13 that deterred him from getting lost in the

system. AAP3 shared his experience in Detroit, where police officers caught them throwing

snowballs at a school building. When the police officer's dog was sent to track them down, they

had to sit in a cell at the police station until their parents came to pick them up. The parents were

told they would not have a record, but it could have gone another way. AAP3 confessed,

Certainly, I have not seen the inside of a jail cell, or that side, for the rest of my life. So,

did it work? It did work because it was a scared straight tactic. Unfortunately, those types

of programs are not apparent if they still exist. Unfortunately, as we know, Black young

men and older men don't always make it home after an encounter with an officer, good,

bad, or indifferent.

Strategies for young congregates. The conversation addressed research question 2 and how these pastors provide racism strategies to their young congregates. As a result of stress, young adults used problem-focused coping strategies to change the nature of the problem, while middle-aged adults used emotion-focused coping strategies to divert the attention of the person they were trying to distract. (Gray, 2006). African-American pastors, who historically serve as pillars of their culture and community, are well suited to examine their experiences with psychological distress, such as racism (Gilbert, 1987; Patterson, 2013). AAP7 first instructs his son and then provides guidance to his young congregates. He shared, "If the police get involved, you answer their questions; try not to get frustrated or quick temper but do as best as you can to be respectful, and then hopefully there would be a good outcome." In the case of parents with children who are driving, that child may have some concerns themselves, and it is best not to ignore their questions but rather provide them with the tools they will require.

AAP7 had such concern when his son wanted to know what to do if he believed the police officer was wrong by pulling him over, and he wanted to express his concern to that officer. AAP7 responded,

> I understand what you're saying, son, but this is a different time in which we live.
> Unfortunately, some of these police officers are trigger-happy, and then the main
> thing becomes where the police officer says, "I felt threatened." That's what
> happened to Michael Brown, when the police there in Ferguson, Missouri, said he
> felt threatened."

This young generation requires honesty and truth with the appropriate tools, especially in various situations of concern. AAP1 shared, "Millennials will move on and from you if they see that you are not really giving any value to their life." AAP2 shared his strategy around

communication and building relationships when speaking to his young congregates; to accept that person on how they treat you. He quoted Matthew 7:12 "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. AAP2 also stated,

> Because a person has a perception of you, it's not necessarily true or correct. I''s a perception. He also tries to expand the thinking around the process, even with racism, which he questions himself: What is driving that person to do that … What is in their own background … What is in their family surroundings.

> AAP2 expressed how the younger generation may not have experienced what he has lived. They need to be prepared for any actual encounters, even if the answers to those research questions are not immediately apparent. AAP3 has a mixed congregation, and his strategies for the young congregation regarding racism are based on articulation, even if the message may not get across when it is laced with anger. AAP3 shared, "…use strategies of talking about self-respect, how to handle yourself, putting a lot of weight and responsibility on us as a people, to up our game with articulation, explanation, and managing our emotions as best we can."

The participants in this study have all made statements surrounded by how the Holy Spirit leads them and what God would also expect from us as a people. AAP3 stated,

> God sees us as individuals and not as color. Trying to get us to understand that's how you deal with ignorance as it relates to, we always deal with it from the position of Christ, as He saw it and His experiences. He's always told us to love our neighbors and do good to those that despitefully use us, and that encompasses both people of color and people who are Caucasian or other ethnicities as well.

Although most of the congregants are African American, many Black churches today are multicultural; therefore, strategies cannot be limited to one culture but the entire cultural

spectrum for understanding each culture, specifically a Christian culture. African American pastors and church leaders can participate in this study and demonstrate their transforming selves, which will benefit research and other cultures (Barton, 2009). AAP4 shares,

"We all learn when we all are agreeable. I don't always agree, but I understand the perspectives, which is the same piece of advice I tell my young congregants. Embrace friendship with people who are different so that you can talk to them. You may never agree with them, but you can understand their perspective" (Interview with AAP4, May 2022).

If you observe this next generation of young people, they have a different perspective than those of an older generation regarding racism. As stated earlier, the young generation must see you as authentic and not as a phony by trying to be someone or something you are not. AAP6 stated,

We're seeing interracial dating and marriage and biracial children, so their perspective is more allied with white America, which is why I'm trying to be very present to answer questions and to make sure my sermons are authentic…to be real and relevant as having a newspaper in one hand and a Bible in the other."

Participants shared how 17, 18, and 19-year-olds of all cultures are confused by what they see with recently displayed killings of Blacks. Their emotional responses of 'What is going on? This is stupid. This is crazy,' demonstrate how they are not familiar with or recognize racial discrimination. AAP4 shared, "They don't even see it as we see it. They don't even understand it. They're confused. So, if there's a place of hope, that's the place...that's the vote." AAP2 shared how more is needed stating, "do more as a Black male and a pastor…for the young grandchildren, particularly males, in showing them how to deal with the same issues."

Renewing the mind. Changing our thinking to better match God's viewpoint is a valuable part of any attempt at changing behavior (Wilson & Hoffman, 2007). When approaching the young generation with traumatic issues that may affect their personal lives, being politically correct or civil is expected. AAP4 told his young congregates, "Be civil, for God's sake, be civil. You can disagree with someone and not be rude, not be demeaning." He went on to help the young people understand that they must know how to communicate, articulate, cultivate and sharpen their listening skills if they want to be heard. AAP4 recalled a Franklin Covey strategy stating, "We're listening with an attempt to understand and not with an attempt to respond."

Research Question Five

Who would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Semi-structured interview research question 15. Who supports you when faced with racial issues and discrimination, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Subtheme Four: Influences Received by Others

Pastors support African Americans facing mental and spiritual barriers, including racism (Avent et al., 2015). However, it is important to understand that pastors also need mental and spiritual support. According to most researchers, coping with trauma requires social support, family support, and coping strategies such as hope, acceptance, and practicing spirituality (Limpanichkul & Magilvy, 2004). Each participant said they receive support when facing traumatic situations, specifically when addressing racism. Most participants include their wives in their description as someone, if not the first, to whom they express their concerns regarding racial inequalities. AAP1 shared, "If my wife senses something is wrong, she'll pull it out from

me." AAP3 stated, "My wife has been a person who has worked with me in conversation, talking

ed

Many participants confess their use of therapists. AAP3 reported, "help navigate one

through a particular terrain; to help us in various ways with ourselves, self-improvement, self-

worth, and self-betterment." However, it is other Black brothers who seem to be the ones many

of these Black male pastors are releasing their emotional frustrations with when it comes to

racism. AAP3 shared,

Individuals who really will cut, who speak directly to you, go beyond. A loving, loyal

critic who will tell you…this does not seem right; you're wrong there. They're not afraid of the

friendship or the loss because, at the end of the day, they're telling you the truth. Jesus celebrated

you when you were right but chided you when you're wrong. So, that's who we should model."

AAP4 shared, "The power of the human voice and the rhetorical situation created by

various social interactions that occur inside of the barbershop…a place where African American

men bond" (Shabazz, 2016). AAP4 shared, I''m thankful to have mentors in the ministry of the

faith and my family, my mom, wife, and colleague pastors…a community around me that helps

me with those times." AAP6 shared, "I surround myself with social workers, tenured pastors, and

Bishops, who value me as a colleague…a community of fellow believers and co-laborers"

(Interview with AAP6, May 2022). AAP7 shared, "I have four or five senior pastors, who have

pastored over 40-50 years, and I have a circle of friends…a very wonderful support system;

because holding it in is the worst thing to do."

Theme Four: Biblical Perspective of the African American Pastors

Research Question Six

In what ways would African American pastors say that racism has affected their behavior?

Semi-structured interview research question 17. In one word, how would you describe your initial emotional response when realizing the COVID-19 pandemic was escalating?

Semi-structured interview research question 19. In one word, describe your initial emotional response to the insurrection in the U.S. Capitol.

There have been two crippling crises facing Black communities simultaneously since early 2020, which have not equally affected white communities. Subtheme One addresses research question 6 with the interview question referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Subtheme Two by interview question referring to the January 6th insurrection. As part of each subtheme, participants explained why they chose the words or phrases they used to describe their cognitive depiction.

Subtheme One: COVID-19 Pandemic

Pastors of African-American churches often address congregations experiencing or have experienced racial attacks as their spiritual, emotional, and physical concerns have heightened, specifically in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Moore et al., 2018; Thompkins et al., 2020). With the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the nation, pastors had to find ways to reach out and encourage the people they oversaw and themselves. A biblical perspective of the African American Pastors had to be adopted while internal concerns were addressed to cope with this traumatic endeavor. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (NKJV, 1982, Romans 8:28).

Participants provided an emotional word or phrase regarding their cognitive response with an explanation for that response. The words or phrases expressed were excited, scared, open to change, frustrated, annoyed, angry, nervous, and anxious. AAP1 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as excited and scared. He further explained, "We were not only contracting it, but people were dying, and so there was this anxiousness on our part that… it's gonna come to your house, church, or school." AAP2 reported his response to this traumatic situation as change. He further explains,

> I realized that COVID-19, with all of the problems associated around it, somehow God has aligned it to bring a shift in the nation, in the world, and how we view life. That's why I said change, open to change direction, vision, and how we operate as the body of Christ…change all the way around. I don't even like to have conversations unless we are face-to-face. I told my wife and others, I'm too old for this, so, yes, I was frustrated at the same time.

Among the contenders to this national trauma are not just COVID-19 but also anti-democratic leaders, including President Trump, who attempted to narrow empathy for the people of America, to constrict the circle of the 'we' to undermine a newly strengthened civil solidarity (Alexander, 2020). In their comments, participants expressed their displeasure at how this pandemic could have been contained earlier and dealt with more effectively. AAP3 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as annoyed or angry. He further explained,

> When we get the information regarding the knowledge of COVID-19 from the leadership of our nation, and that information was withheld as if we were just property or less than human. We now know millions of lives have been lost because of it. That's what it took from me immediately hearing that. I was just totally angry or annoyed.

AAP4 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as exhausting. He further explained,

> As a pastor, we had to continually change and comply with the rules and deal with uncertainties, the grief, and loss of those who lost loved ones. Are we acting with a lack of faith if we enforce masks, or are we being disobedient to government officials as the Bible instructs us to be? It was just a lot of decisions to make for a long period of time, but once we made a decision and over time got used to that decision, then there were more decisions being made because the numbers weren't getting any better. It just exhausted me.

Participants thought this pandemic came out of nowhere like the wind…to devour, as illustrated when God asks Satan where he was coming from, and He responded, "From going to and fro on the earth...." (NKJV, 1982, Job 1:7). AAP6 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as anxious. He further explained,

> My natural response is to try to solve problems, but a problem with no readily available solution puts me in a quandary. When COVID-19 was going on the rise and the Attorney General had no answers, it made me anxious" (Interview with AAP6, May 2022). AAP7 labels his emotional response to this traumatic situation as nervous. The current administration was not doing all they could in the beginning. I got it in the early stages, so I was nervous that it would get worse for me, for the country, and many people would die because we didn't take it seriously.

Subtheme Two: January 6th Insurrection

As the January 6th Insurrection took place, it shook not only the nation, the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, it shook the core of the African American people. There were

participants in this study who perceived the outcome would have been different if the majority of those participating in the insurrection were Black, regardless of its reasoning. For example, it is recorded in history books that Nat Turner was captured, tried, convicted, and executed for conspiracy to rebel and insurrection, and his corpse was beheaded (Moore et al., 2018). Various types of racism are discussed in a systematic review of government institutions and organizations that define or embrace racism that affects or impacts African Americans, their church, and their communities. (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.; Jones, 2000; Liebow, 2016; The University of Missouri, 2020; United Way, 2021; PISAB, 2021; Vanderbilt University, 2021). The participants could not find sense in the actions, reactions, or results to the insurrection in which it could be addressed appropriately, but by the Word of God. Romans 8:35 states, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword?" (NKJV, 1982, Romans 8:35).

Again, participants provided an emotional word or phrase regarding their cognitive response and an explanation for that response. The words or phrases expressed were terrified, the collapse of democracy, understood I wasn't as moved, shocked, disbelief, and heartbroken. AAP2 labels his response to this traumatic situation as a collapse. He explained,

> The collapse of democracy of losing it all. What's going to happen to us? The whole nation was just falling apart; the foundation collapsed and folded under this evil and awful power. There is a deep-rooted leadership structure that's driving all this where a few are controlling everything."

Historically, Black male pastors have seen this cult destruction in America without a rational response from government authorities. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "Don't even [sic] be afraid to die; no man is free if he fears death, but the minute you conquer the fear of death, at that

moment, you're free" (Christian Online Services, 2020). AAP1 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as terrifying. He further explained, "We are observing, in real-time, an attack on our Capitol by our citizens. If they're going for the United States Capitol, a symbol of our law, the legislative arm of our democracy, what keeps them from coming for anybody or any community? It was terrifying."

During the interview process, an observation was discussed, seeing a few Blacks in that crowd, and relayed the question that pounded throughout the African American community. AAP2 asked, "What are you doing down there." However, the strongest perceptions regard the former president and his actions, including his attempt to discredit former President Barak Obama's birth legitimacy (Redmond, 2010). AAP3 labeled his response as he understood the situation. He further explained,

> I understood I wasn't as moved by statements like, "Oh, this is happening?" No, this is
>
> what we've allowed to happen; so many things happened under this president's watch that
>
> have been ill-reputed to African American people, people of color… as well as humanity.
>
> We have watched him skate by things like the birther situation he played with President
>
> Obama. We ask some of our white friends, and we have them...How do you vote? Why
>
> aren't you ever there? Some of these Caucasian pastors, religious rights, and
>
> Evangelicals. I'm willing to listen, hear, and engage.

When people cannot believe what is right in front of them, it could be described as some phenomenon or negative hallucination – not seeing or hearing what is happening right in front of them" (Wright, 2012). AAP4 labels his emotional response to this traumatic situation as a shock. He further explained,

I couldn't believe it was happening. I could not believe that this folk was allowed to do that. It blew my mind because I thought to myself…if it were a bunch of people that looked like me, it would have been a massive arrest immediately and a lot more deaths than I saw in the name of protecting the government. I'm listening…I'm looking at this foolishness, thinking, how in the world is this happening? I was just shocked.

According to Patton (2014, p. 333),"What something means depends on both the cultural context in which it was created and the cultural context in which it is interpreted" According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 75), Stewart and Mickunas (1990) emphasized an important theoretical perspective in phenomenology: The Intentionality of Consciousness" AAP4 continued sharing,

Once again, it was confirmation that we're living in a lot of ways in two Americas. If it were a bunch of Black boys with guns and all that kind of stuff coming into the US Capital, there would have been more blood spilled. These people had guns, and it almost looked like they had permission. That's more powerful than the gun. They weren't worried about anything. They had permission to be patriots. So, I was just shocked. I don't understand. If you're so patriotic, you're insurrecting against the various symbols of this country. Then the media folks call that patriotism when the actions that they're taking is antithetical. They tell me, well, that's what the founding fathers were to establish the country. So, now that the country has been established, you're not a patriot? You're insurrectionists. That word is actually in the Constitution with insurrection instructions. So, I was shocked by that."

Qualitative researchers interpret phenomena based on participant's meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The emotion expressed by participants is repeated, emphasizing the meaning of this phenomenon. AAP6 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as disbelief. He further explained,

You had a sitting president inciting rioting, and then the gullible people listening and storming the Capitol….It was like I couldn't believe I was seeing what I was seeing in real-time. You would have thought people were afraid to do what they did to a group of Black Lives Matter people when he walked in front of a church holding a Bible upside down. They shot into the crowd with rubber bullets; that same exchange was not given to the Insurrectionist. I just couldn't believe it. It was really disbelief on my part when seeing what I was seeing of that insurrection.

Throughout this section of the study, the participants expressed some loss, grief, or detachment from areas such as the leader of their country, the country from which they live, the ability to lose everything our Black ancestors fought so hard for against the depression of discrimination, specifically through racial acts that have yet to cease since slavery. AAP7 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as heartbroken. He further explained,

I would have never thought we would see something like that in our time, but we did. We realized how fragile our democracy is. We realized that. So, yes, I was heartbroken to see that happen. I hope that those who are responsible, even up to the former president of the United States, are held responsible for what happened on that day.

When a relationship ends or a new one emerges, a mourning process must take place; therefore, when a change occurs, grief must accompany it (Wright, 2012). AAP7 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as heartbroken. He further explained,

> I would have never thought we would see something like that in our time, but we did. We realized how fragile our democracy is. We realized that. So, yes, I was heartbroken to see that happen. I hope that those who are responsible, even up to the former president of the United States, are held responsible for what happened that day.

Theme Five: Biblical Character

Research Question Six

In what ways would African American pastors say that racism has affected their behavior?

Violence against African Americans over the past two years (2020-2021) has raised the question of racism toward Blacks; therefore, the participants in this study shared their perspectives on this subject (ABC News, 2021; Bruner, 2021; Holcombe, 2021; DeSouza et al., 2020; Galofaro, 2020; Roach, 2020; Silverman, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007). It is worth noting that racist attitudes and behaviors are often misinterpreted as being supported by institutionalized power structures in white communities (Tyson, 2014). Among the many groups that might be discriminated against in the United States, the Barna Group and Reimagine Group (2019) mentioned racial or ethnic minorities as primary examples. In addition, Avent and Cashwell (2015) recommend that researchers focus on their religion or faith when investigating the mental health behaviors of African Americans. The Christian community expects their pastors to be optimistic, positive, strong, willing, and available, not depressed, discouraged,

cynical, angry, or hurt, but they are also perceived as above being stressed with humanistic issues, such as mental and emotional stress (Gilbert, 1987; Patterson, 2013).

Racism causes mental and emotional stress, but it is always best to talk with someone to release the oppression. AAP7 shared, "Racism is traumatizing, it's bad…to deal with the aftereffects of that, but sometimes people think that the best way is to just try to cope with it all by yourself…That is not the way to do it." This study highlights the character of these Black male pastors as they share their perception of racism.

Subtheme One: 2020/2021 Killings of Black Men

Semi-structured interview research question 7: In what way would you describe how the 2020/2021 killings of Black men, like George Floyd, affected your perception of the future for Black men?

People often forget when addressing or approaching a man of the cloth, a preacher, and especially a pastor, that he is, first of all, a man. In this study, Black men have expressed their views, thoughts, and experiences as those who guide others spiritually and as Black men who need spiritual guidance themselves. Romans 12:19 (NKJV) states, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord (NKJV, 1982, Romans 12:19). Participants expressed how the 2020/2021 killings of Black men affected their perception of the future for Black men. AAP1 shared, "It puts a fire under people like me to be more proactive on reaching out to people in our community. We cannot say we don't have an opportunity, so, for that, I'm optimistic." AAP2 recalled a time when traveling through the Delta area of Mississippi to attend a convention and decided to look at some sites; however, he was stopped by a retired schoolteacher, who immediately changed his direction. He stated,

I explained, I'm a Pastor here for a convention, and she said to me, young man, you need to get out of here before the sun goes down. That was about four years ago. Therefore, if I position myself on that delta side and look at it through those lenses, I can place myself into the situation of the George Floyds of the world.

Having police officers who care about the individuals in the Black community can make a difference, regardless of their race. The love of some police officers who came to the schools to make sure the children were assured they were safe and could trust them. The difference in racial tension with African American DC police is that "The city has been spared some of the worst excesses of police brutality" but is now policed by white officers (Alang et al., 2017; Iweala, 2016). With AAP2 being a police chaplain for 42 years, it gave him the advantage of seeing the Black man's behavior from both sides of the racial spectrum. He shared, "We have to strategize to be more deliberate in how we move in life and plan our future, which looks very dim. Now, I'm gonna say something that may not go well…I think it's an organized, satanic plan of the majority to destroy the Black family."

Warnock (2020) argued that the Black community contributes to ending America's racism through a Black church and resisting second-class citizenship within Christian communions. Mark 4:13-20 (NKJV, 1975) stated, "And He [Jesus] said to them…the Sower sows the word…Satan comes immediately and takes away the word'…'when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble." AAP7 encouraged the Black man to be careful and vigilant in their comings and goings, especially if the neighborhood is predominantly white affluent neighborhoods, especially in the suburbs. He stated, "Someone could call the cops and then it could escalate into something very tragic."

The spiritual significance of Black struggles should be reflected in a religious doctrine that unreservedly identifies with their interests (Cone, 2010). AAP3 shared,

> When you see what is happening, some overt and some covert type of activity as it relates to the African American male presence; we are an endangered species in a large context. The African American male is looked upon, judged, taught to be feared in some way or seen as a detriment from a negative perspective.

Since 1960, progress has been made, but participants had to adjust their thinking about life with the obvious traumatic assault of George Floyd. Participants shared their expected wavering faith while viewing his tragic death along with many other Black men videotaped and published for America to see. AAP4 shared, "It had the potential...let me say it carefully; of making me very pessimistic, to make me lose hope that we had made any progress at all; although, I know that's not true." Many participants expressed concern about why people would defend the actions of the police officers involved in the murder of George Floyd. AAP4 stated, "I was certain that it would be unified; there would be no allies coming to their rescue to try to defend what we all watched with our eyes…I was wrong."

Most people in America saw what those white officers had done to this Black man. It makes it very difficult for any Black male pastor to strengthen a Black community when there was no doubt the act was of racial motive. AAP4 shared, "It was disgusting, and it was wrong. As a Black man in America, as a pastor, or even if I wasn't a pastor, it's hard to be hopeful about our future; however, I am hopeful because my faith is in Christ."

The realization of this racial act had set in the participant' minds that the Black community has much more to do, beginning with the Black church. AAP6 shared,

The violence, the evil, the forever prevalent threat of violence because of the color of my

skin rather than the content of my character and having a Black son that's grown into

manhood. It made me doubly alert. I've got some years behind me, and I know how to

navigate, but as he is embarking on his future, what does it look like for him for his

friends? It's questionable!

Any sports fan, male or female, particularly men of any culture, specifically a Black man,

is comfortable with a woman publicly belittling them, especially from another race. For example,

when LeBron James wanted to offer up a view or a thought about the violence, a Fox News

reporter said to him, "Shut up and dribble" (ABC13 Houston, 2018).

Her comment was racial for a Black woman, a mother of a Black woman, and the

grandmother of two Black men, as with any Black parent, wife, or family member within the

Black community. AAP6 further stated, "That is devaluing the Black man, regardless of his stats,

it's devaluing his place."

As illustrated throughout this study, participants have expressed their concern for the

Black community to do a better job for those who follow them and to recognize that the Black

community has opened the doors for others to take away their power and strip their credibility as

a people. In addition, the participants were adamant throughout the study that the Black

community needed to articulate their responses appropriately. LeBron responded that "I will

definitely not shut up and dribble…I mean too much to society, I mean too much to the youth,

and to so many kids that feel they don't have a way out, and they need someone to help lead

them out of the situation they're in (ABC13 Houston, 2018).

Due to its flexibility, accessibility, intelligibility, and ability to reveal hidden aspects of

human behavior, Qu and Dumay (2011) emphasized semi-structured interview questions as the

primary method in qualitative psychotherapy research. In Husser's view of philosophy, presumption means suspension of all judgments of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl & Kersten, 1980). A successful interview involves skillful questioning and active interpretation by the interviewer, who listens and hears what is being said (Kvale, 1996).

AAP6 continued by saying,

From a Biblical perspective, as being the head, the imagery, and I dare say the castigating of the Black man and demoralizing him and discrediting him to his people and to everyone that would look to him for strength. In society, masculinity is being stripped from the Black man. So, to me, from my perspective, the future looks like, in a word…a modern-day lynching.

Subtheme Two: Killings of Black Men Affect Black Men In the Family

Semi-structured interview research question 8: How have the killings of Black men like George Floyd and Daunte Wright affected you as a man of color, or how have they affected the males in your family?

As stated in the situation to self of this proposal, after watching the news regarding the Ahmaud Arbery case, the 18 Black males in my immediate family identified the killers as a lynch mob and linked the tragedy to an 1860s citizen's arrest law that justified lynching (Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Participants of this study provided their perceptions, experience, and stories of how the killings of Black men like George Floyd and Daunte Wright affected them or the males in their families. The participant's character is revealed throughout this study, particularly as they responded to this concern of how the killings of Black men affect the Black men in their families. They discussed the killings in their family and those they knew personally, family members and congregants who have been personally affected by these

killings. The Black community has been touched by any Black male or female who was racially murdered or killed. AAP1 shared,

> …not many people in the African American communities were surprised because we know this has been going on forever. I mean, wasn't it in Jim Crow's time when our men, especially our Black men, and also our women were brutalized? It has happened throughout our lifetime and through today, but now, the fact that we're able to see it … what this world of social media has put on steroids, you can no longer say it didn't happen because you're looking at it.

> According to Erickson (2013), the Black is another species of the two-footed beast since

Adam is only the ancestor of the white race. According to Erickson (2013), Jones' pseudo-theological arguments support racial discrimination and slavery since Blacks are not human. Along with Jim Crow laws, Christian ministers and theologians taught that whites were God's chosen people, Blacks were cursed to serve, and racial segregation was a way of life supported by God; thus, many Christian ministers and theologians advocated racial segregation (Ferris State University, 2022). With this type of mentality, given the opportunity to discuss, other cultures declare that Black people put themselves in a position to be killed. AAP1 stated,

> People are saying when you have conversations…they or he shouldn't have resisted, or she should have obeyed the police. But at the end of this, there's somebody that lost their life. The seasoned participants, born in the civil rights community, understand we are not a marginalized people where everyone is the same…in every situation and among every culture, every race, you're going to have some good. You're gonna have some bad … and the participants recognize that.

However, some cultures have and will continue to believe that just because the Black community is angry at the killing of another Black person unnecessarily does not automatically make them a criminal or insurrectionists. AAP3 stated,

It has affected the Black men in my family in the advocacy, and I will say that it hasn't always been in the most positive light. It had certainly enraged them because now some of them have sons. It has not been raised to a degree to cause them to do anything nefarious, but they are tired of this. Who isn't tired of another African American person being slain, especially when you're one yourself?

Participants with sons fear for their lives every single day, whether living within their home or living on their own; the fact that they are on the road triggers a fear that no other culture would experience to the degree when Driving while Black. AAP4 has three Black sons, and when the two eldest boys drove to Oregon to pick up their baby brother, who had just graduated, to help him pack, his concern for his sons elevated to the highest level. He proclaimed,

Just worrying that they were going to get stopped or if they were going to make it home…not for doing anything wrong, not for committing any crime, but just driving while Black. Thoughts of some misunderstanding, some unintended implicit bias. So, it affects me as a Black man every single day in my life because I can't take off my blackness. I have to live with those fears and those anxieties every single day of my life…and I'm a pastor. Those killings, when I look at George Floyd and the young man that was jogging, Ahmaud Arbery, it can be terrifying and defeating when coming to the reality of living in America as a Black man.

Protecting, defending, or responding to an action that will protect loved ones may seem understandable; however, those consequences are not for everyone. These Black pastors were

open to sharing their concern for their Black families as they watched the January 6th insurrection. If Black men believe that white men who behave and are labeled as terrorists are liable to attack them, their sons, other members of their families, and the Black communities, how do they manage that situation? Knowing the culture's characteristics that could be attacked should be considered rather than assumed. Most people would assume that culture is weak because it does not react, rather than that it believes in nonviolence. AAP6 said,

> It made us all angry. It made us want to retaliate. It made us want to take arms. Stand
>
> our ground. It made us want to meet violence with violence, but because of our
>
> faith…for my faith…Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord. I will repay.' So, a
>
> stillness in me wells up when my flesh responds. But, concerning my friends and
>
> my family members, many are taking up arms. They're angry, and there's a sense
>
> of reciprocity they feel entitled to, as white men continue to terrorize, and we
>
> believe it's terrorism…the Black community. In our minds, the first line of
>
> defense is the Black man for the Black community.

The Black community looks at other instances to prove that white privilege is why some cultures destroy a symbol of America and walk away or do not fully pay the consequences. For example, it is almost impossible to believe a young white man, who walked into a Black church on June 2015 and walked out of that church to be charged with nine counts of murder and a weapon possession charge, and then police picked him up a sandwich from Burger King because he was hungry (ABC Eyewitness News, 2015; Romero & Cusumano, 2021). The participants expressed how some in the Black community could not believe the action, whereas others recognized white privilege as a common occurrence. AAP6 expressed,

When you walk a white man out after having slaughtered church people in South

Carolina…the pastor and members…and you take that white man alive. Every

conversation with Blacks is asking how is this white boy still breathing. How's he still

drawing breath? If it would have been us, we would have lost our lives right then in

there…no question.

Stripping a Black man from everything he has become, especially to demoralize him as a man and diminish him in front of others, is an effort to identify him as less than others. AAP6 shared,

If you take away every option from the Black man, the goal is to make him feel dejected,

to lose hope, and not even to try. So, what we begin to see is a lot of Black men who

are now emotionally unavailable and have trauma concerning the confrontation of

any kind because we just don't know what the consequences is going to be.

Some say that police provided this killer a tasty meal because he was young, quiet, not troublesome, and cooperative, but when guilty, what is it to say, it is when you are not guilty, you question the arrest. How often does the Black community have to prove themselves more concerned rather than argumentative simply because the demeanors are slightly different? Too often, the behavior has been revealed that the calmness behind the police officer's presence hides the motive already established before the confrontation. AAP6 shared,

Let's say if we have a domestic dispute that could be personal or for a congregant. Either

way, we have to remain calm and remain respectful because the police could say…,'You

need to calm down' and 'It seems like you have an attitude' when you might be trying to

explain to them….'I don't have an attitude'..., and before you know it, it has escalated

into something that shouldn't happen.

Subtheme Three: Racism Affecting Behavior as a Black Man

Semi-structured interview *research question* 16: In what ways would you say that racism has affected your behavior as a Black man?

It has been identified that Black men and women who face unpleasant conditions, such as racism, are perceived to become loud, confrontational, and menacing (Jackson, 2018). Jackson and Thomas et al. (2008) attributed this internalized racism to the stereotypical portrayal of Black men as criminals. Utsey (1997) asserts African American men are historically most susceptible to racial discrimination's deleterious effects. As a result, Black spiritual leaders who respond with acts of violence often are viewed as instigators (Stene et al., 2015). In this subtheme, participants shared their thoughts on how racism has affected their behavior as Black men. The descriptions expressed are stressful, alter moves, skeptical or suspicious, and left scars. AAP1 shared,

> I think it's caused me to be more stressed. I'm more heightened when I
> go out. Always thinking, even with people in our community. I was talking with
> my son, who doesn't live with me. He'll ask me, 'Dad when you shop did you go
> to this area?' If I suggest he shouldn't go to that area, he might say, so we're all
> fake. I would let him know that we are not faking. We're overthinking."

When one thinks too long and too hard, often it is called overthinking, and it is often practiced when overwhelmed by fear. AAP4 said, "I don't know if it is because of just this overt racism during the last couple of presidential administrations, combined with the COVID-19 going on, that kind of shut us down for a couple of years."

This fear of going out to stores, gas stations, or restaurants has manifested in the Black community, especially when receiving text messages of death threats towards the Black

community. AAP6 shared, "It's made me move a little bit different. In terms of my moves, of how I come and go, where do I linger, where do I choose to kind of let my hair down…I try to be very strategic."

For centuries Blacks have been stereotyped by America and called niggers, coons, darkies, criminals, rapists, sexual addicts, druggies, and more. However, due to white supremacy's privileged acts of terrorism, insurrection, trigger-happy cops, and other negative acts against humanity, stereotyping might backfire on a culture believing to be the majority. AAP7 shared, "Racism has caused me to be skeptical of white people and their intent. I have some good white friends, but at the same time, my wall is up."

Participants have suffered racial scars either personally or alongside someone who has endured some traumatic issue, even during their time in the military. AAP2 shared how he desired to go into town with his white friends; however, the name-calling and constant belittling prevented that type of socializing, and those scars still remain. He stated,

> In the military training, they were teaching us, during basic training…What's the spirit
>
> of combat? We were saying to kill, to kill! Suddenly, it registered in my mind
>
> that you can die for this country, yet you can't go to the restaurant or theaters
>
> where you are…so I stayed on post. Now that left some permanent fences up
>
> that's still up today.

The hesitancy in questioning white friends' motives in recent years gave me time to recall situations that demonstrated racism with fellow clergymen. AAP2 went on to share,

> I got out of a lot of the ministerial alliances that involved the White brethren because it
>
> always ended up eventually with some off-color joke about Blacks or some conversation

that would go in a way that was very disturbing. So, I removed myself from that type of a situation with the clergy. I won't do it. I'm not for that anymore.

The nonviolent civil rights movement faded into obscurity after Martin Luther King Jr's assassination (Gadzekpo, 1997). Since the beginning of the civil rights movement, pastors have played many roles, including advisors, political activists, and advocates for civil rights (Strong, 2017). The nonviolent training that Blacks have embedded within their behavior does not mean that Blacks will not respond to negative behavior. AAP3 shared,

> I'm going to articulate. Not necessarily curse you out, but because I enjoy using words… that will cut you, while other words curse you. I'd rather cut you in that way and try to rationalize….Now that finger you put up…is that an indication you wanted to have a relationship. Well, can't we at least get each other's names first?' That makes people feel a little bad and embarrassed by their actions.

As with overthinking, being suspicious is just as sensitive and can cause paranoia, which is what any traumatic issue can deliver to any human being. AAP4 shared,

> Racism causes me to be suspicious, maybe a little apprehensive about seeking out authentic relationships actively...When I'm in the store, I'm always conscious of what's watching me and how I'm being watched. Sometimes ''m angry. Sometimes I want to get even, and if it wasn't for the grace of God…I might do those things. So, it has negative and positive effects on my behavior. Racism does affect my behavior as a Black man. Certainly, had I not had the Lord in my life, my behaviors might be a whole lot different as it responds to racism…that's for sure.

Subtheme Four: Killing of Black Men Like George Floyd and Andre Hill.

Semi-structured interview research question 18: In a word, describe your initial emotional response to the African American culture while watching a Black man being killed in front of America (e.g., George Floyd, Andre Hill).

In this subtheme, participants provided an emotional word regarding their cognitive response with an explanation of constantly watching Black men being killed in front of America. The words expressed were angry, raged, and traumatized. AAP1 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as angry and described it as brutal.

If something happens to somebody who looks like you or something happens in your community, there is a tendency to respond. Whether it's peaceful, whether it's a march, whether it's a conversation, or it's by force or violence. To me, anger is the trigger word for me because we get to see…We had to see lives taken senselessly.

AAP1's emotional response was also anger while witnessing the disregard for human life, an African American life. He stated, "Obviously because it has been that disregard of the race of people that have been most polarized than any other; maybe not even polarized, as much as whether it even happens, as it happens to people of color."

AAP4 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as unequivocally angry and going through a grief journey. He explained,

I felt helpless watching it, and there was nothing I could do to stop it. I felt angry because I have three boys, and this could happen to them tomorrow. I felt angry because I'm thinking how long we have to be living in a country where this can happen.

Participants all expressed hopelessness; however, in the next breath, they expressed the only type of practice keeping them strong. AAP4 shared, "The only place I find my hope is in

Christ. If it wasn't for that, I don't know what other tangible evidence there is to look to say this looks promising or this looks hopeful." AAP2 labeled his emotional response to this traumatic situation as rage and described it as brutal. As one who grew up in the civil rights era, he was very dissatisfied with the regression that seems to be occurring. He continued, "We should be more enlightened as a people to understanding different cultures, in particular, the Black race." AAP7 labeled his emotional response as being so angry that he felt a sense of rage, to the point that he felt being revengeful. He shared, "I'm a man, a Black man. At first, I just felt when that happened to George Floyd. I felt that the African American community was threatened. At that point, we had never seen anything so blatant like that. Never saw it…never saw that before."

AAP6 labeled his emotional response as being traumatized and how it saddened him to the point of being heartbroken. He also described a similar grief process of watching it repeatedly, going from disbelief to anger to accepting it. Participants shared how every time they heard his man saying, "He cannot breathe" and began to call for his mother.'

AAP6 reported that it was a traumatic experience to watch an execution live for the world to see. "I think they wanted to take it down, but then a part of society wanted to keep it up to show how dehumanized they are for Black people, especially the Black man where there's no value to his life."

Participants have shared their faith throughout, expressing their anger and rage; however, they continue to hold on to their faith. Every Black male pastor has expressed their faith and trust in God, especially to give them hope as racism continues. AAP4 stated, "I know that God can do anything. If it wasn't for my faith, I would feel hopeless. I would feel like the future is bleak. Because I am a man of God and my faith, I know it isn't hopeless, but it's hard to find it."

Summary

Chapter Four began with a description of the study's participants. Six African American male pastors have served as pastors for 20 or more years. They completed the prequalifying 28-item Brief COPE Assessment to measure their coping strategies. All six participants scored over 50% of the assessment's total score in problem-solving, approach, positive, and active coping strategy categories. The six participants' demographics also met the criteria for participating in the study of being married, having children, and having served as a pastor for at least 20 years. One served as a pastor for over 50 years, one served for over 30 years, and the remaining four served over 20 years as a pastor. They all shared a recent experience as African American pastors on a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders, which is the phenomenon under consideration.

These participants shared their experiences with the phenomenon through 19 semi-structured interview questions to allow Black pastors a platform to share their perceptions, experiences, and stories on racism. Three of those semi-structured interview questions were for the participants to reveal cognitive depictions related to their perception of traumatic issues. This allowance resulted in the emergence of five main themes with subthemes. Analysis of the data collected revealed the following five major themes and recurring themes about the Black male pastor's perception of racism (see Table 10).

Table 10

Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1: Growth of the Black Church	Subtheme 1: Comparison to the 1960s;
Theme 2: Role of Black Pastors	
Theme 3: Influences	Subthemes 1. Influences as a Spiritual Leader 2. Influence within the Black Community, 3. Influence on Racism Strategies 4. Influences Received by Others
Theme 4: Biblical Perspectives	Subthemes 1. COVID-19 Pandemic 2. January 6th Insurrection
Theme 5: Biblical Character	Subthemes 1. 2020/2021 Killings of Black Men 2. Killings of Black Men Affect Black Men In the Family 3. Racism Affecting Behavior as a Black Man 4. Killing of Black Men Like George Floyd and Andre Hill

The chapter concluded with a narrative describing the participants' experiences concerning the six research questions. The answers to the research questions were organized according to the major themes, and related subthemes revealed through the participant'' responses to the semi-structured interview questions.

The first major theme responded to research question 1 through semi-structured interview research question 5 and research question 3 through semi-structured interview research question 6. The second major theme responds to research question 4 through semi-structured interview research question 12. The third major theme extends to four subthemes that respond to specific research questions through semi-structured interview questions. Subthemes one and two cover research question 4 as answered through semi-structured interview research question 11. Subtheme Three covers research question 2 as responded to through semi-structured interview research question 9. Subtheme four covers research question 5 through semi-structured interview research question 15. The fourth major theme and its two subthemes respond to research

question six: subtheme one through semi-structured interview research question 17 and subtheme two through semi-structured interview research question 19. Finally, the fifth major theme and its four subthemes also respond to research question 6 Subtheme One through semi-structured interview research question 7, Subtheme Two through semi-structured interview research question 8, Subtheme Three through semi-structured interview research question 16, and Subtheme Four through semi-structured interview research question 18.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this psychological and transcendental phenomenological study gives African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. The problem was that there were limited resources of empirically researched articles that described the perception of racism from the voices of Black men serving as church leaders in the Black community. Therefore, this study intended to gather inductive reasonings related to the participant's experiences missing or lacking in the research literature. The following research questions framed this study:

Research Question 1

How would African American pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregations?

Research Question 2

What strategies would African American pastors encourage congregates when addressing racism?

Research Question 3

How would African American pastors describe the context of the sermon on racism differently from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons in the 1960s?

Research Question 4

What would African American pastors say their role is in the African American community as spiritual leaders concerning racism?

Research Question 5

Whom would African American pastors say provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Research Question 6

In what ways would African American pastors say racism has affected their behavior as African American men?

The chapter begins with a summary of the findings, as indicated by the data analysis in Chapter Four. Following the summary, a discussion of the findings and implications is provided based on the theoretical framework and relevant literature. Next, the study's implications are examined from a theoretical, empirical, and practical perspective. After the analysis, a brief description of the study's delimitations and limitations is provided. Finally, at the end of the paper, recommendations are made for future research.

Summary of Findings

Data analysis revealed five major themes related to the experiences of African American males expressing their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. First, the theme of the growth of the Black church responds to research question 1, which inquiries about how pastors perceive the challenges of racism. Theme One extends into a subtheme, a comparison to the 1960s response to research question 3, which inquires on how differently pastors today preach on racism in contrast to pastor Martin Luther King, Jr's sermons in the 1960s. Theme Two, The Role of the Black Pastor, responds to research question 4, which focuses on the pastor's role in the Black community as a spiritual leader addressing racism. Theme Three, Influences, further developed into four subthemes that explain the influences given and received related to traumatic issues, such as racism. The four subthemes answer specific research

questions: 1) influence as a spiritual leader and 2) influence within the Black community responds to research question 4 regarding the role of the pastor in the Black community, 3) influence on racism strategies responds to research question 2, which expresses the strategies pastors use to encourage others, and 4) influences received by others responds to research question 5 which identifies whom pastors look to provide comfort when disturbed about racial issues. Theme Four, Biblical perspective of the African American Pastors and its two subthemes 1) COVID-19 pandemic and 2) January [6]h Insurrection, respond to research question 6 regarding how the pastor's behavior is affected through these traumatic times. Finally, Theme Five, Biblical character of the African American Pastors and its four subthemes 1) 2020/2021 killings of Black men, 2) killings of Black men affect Black men in the family, 3) racism affecting behavior as a Black man, and 4) killing of Black men like George Floyd and Andre Hill, also respond to research question 6, which expresses how racism has affected the pastor'' behavior.

Data analysis revealed various responses to the six research questions that help the reader to understand the African American male'' perspective of racism as Black men and church leaders. Research question 1 intended to allow participants to share their overall perspectives of the Black church as it relates to racism, particularly from the days of slavery. This question examined data on recurring subthemes on freedom and growth continue. The participating pastors perceived freedom as the most significant difference between the Black church during slavery and the Black church today. The participants expressed freedom to worship, assemble and gather, worship and praise God openly, and freedom for Blacks to express themselves. On the other hand, a pastor, who lived during the Civil Rights era, said racism had not progressed as much as the African American community desired. At the same time, church killings, bombings, and burnings continued.

The second research question was designed to allow Black male pastors to share their strategies with Black families, churches, and communities for confronting racism. The data analysis revealed a subtheme of influence on racism strategies that include recurring subthemes: a) confronted by police, b) having the conversation or talk, c) living beyond the stop, right or wrong, a teaching moment, scared straight; strategies for young congregate, and renewing the mind. The Black men in this article shared strategies for teaching their children, mainly their sons, how to deal with police that other cultures are not obligated to learn but should be aware of the consequences. Participants teach their sons and young congregate how to renew their minds to live after the police stop them for a right or wrong traffic violation.

As part of research question 3, participants were asked to compare their sermons on racism with those of Martin Luther King, Jr.. This question examined data in the subtheme comparing to the 1960s and the recurring subthemes on 1) remembering the civil rights era, 2) discussing if racism has changed, 3) and moving the masses. Participating pastors understood that the church was to inform the Black church and community and that it was clear that Blacks had to address the issue of civil rights. Participants shared that discussions then and now within the Black community were to overcome oppression, to be inclusive, not superior or subjected to anything. Participants expressed how the 1960s was a time to move the masses regarding racism, even when some hesitated to invite the well-known Black male pastor, Dr. Martin Luther King, to their Black churches.

The fourth research question was intended to allow participants to describe their role when serving as spiritual leaders in the Black church and to address racism in the Black community. The data analysis revealed that research question 4 has connections with two major themes: 1) major theme two with three recurring subthemes, and 2) major theme there's

subthemes, one with three recurring subthemes, and subtheme two with seven recurring subthemes. Theme 2 is the role of Black pastors. There are three recurring subthemes: a) aware of those needing care, b) fatherly figure, and c) leading by example. Theme 3 influences under subtheme one, influence as a spiritual leader, has three recurring subthemes: a) responding with nonviolence, b) providing a safe place, and c) involving experts. Under subtheme two, influence within the Black community, there are seven recurring subthemes: a) keeping it real, b) the unchurched, c) Christian principles, d) wholeness, e) triggers of racial influence, f) understanding and navigating, and g) personal triggers of racial influence.

The fifth research question was designed to identify those who comfort pastors when disturbed about racial issues. The data analysis revealed that research question 5 connects with Theme 3's subtheme four, influences received by others. The participating Black pastors include their wives in their description as someone, as the first in the line, to whom they express their concerns regarding racial inequalities. The data analysis of this study confirms that Black men discuss their plight with other Black men who are also experiencing the same adversities.

The sixth research question intended to allow participants to share how traumatic issues, including racism, have affected their emotional behavior. The data analysis revealed that research question 6 connects with two major themes, Theme 4 four with two subthemes. Theme 4, Biblical perspective of the African American Pastors, has two subthemes: 1) the COVID-19 pandemic and 2) the January 6th Insurrection. Theme 5, Biblical Character of the African American Pastors has four subthemes: 1) 2020/2021 Killings of Black Men, 2) Killings of Black Men Affect Black Men in the Family, 3) Racism Affecting Behavior as a Black Man, 4) Killing of Black Men Like George Floyd and Andre Hill.

Emotional behavior can be explained as a naturally occurring mental state rather than consciously cultivated. As part of the study, participants were asked to choose an emotion from a list or another if the word was not displayed in response to a question they were not prepared to answer. Participants were provided a list of six categorized emotions (excited, scared, angry, sad, tender, happy, and related emotions) to choose from regarding their initial emotional responses to acts of violence or oppression.

Discussion

The theoretical framework in this study encompasses Christian theology, Attachment theory, Biblical theology, and Critical theory to express the perception of racism among African American male pastors. As participants share their experiences, the Christian connection cannot be avoided.

Theoretical

In Erickson's Christian Theology (2013), he discussed biblical inerrancy regarding biblical dependence and reliability. The pre-qualification Brief COPE Assessment and the semi-structured interview questions provoked participants to recognize and express their cognitive responses, which extended to previous research. When the participants' emotions escalated while sharing their perspectives on 1) the killings of Black men, 2) strategies for their sons while driving Black, and 3) privileges extended in the January [6]th insurrection, they demonstrated and acknowledged how their Christian faith calmed them.

Using Bowlby's attachment theory (1969, 1973, 1980), Reese (2018) asserted that all humans, including pastors, have emotional attachments that contribute to trust and attunement. In this study, Black men confirmed that they discussed their plight with other Black men who were going through the same struggles. In this study, participants identified the attachments they

embraced with their spouses, veteran brothers in Christ, and other Black men, who have experienced racism. In addition, participants expressed how their relationship, their attachment, with God was the coping mechanism that was required and applied. "Faith by itself or "does not have works is dead" (NKJV, 1982, James 2:17).

As a result of Gable's Biblical Theology, African Americans developed an understanding of Christianity for themselves through trials and tribulations in life (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007). Participants spouted biblical verses throughout the semi-structured interview questions as they applied them to their experience and their perspectives. Critical theories can explain how language carries ideological content, influencing or criticizing us without our awareness (Tyson, 2014).

This study utilized a language related to readers of all cultures and social statuses. Wallis (2007) defined racism as a system of oppression to justify slavery and its enormous economic benefits. Patterson (2013) contended that racism takes on various forms and affects the overall quality of life for many African Americans. It was argued by Creswell and Poth (2018) that the qualitative research literature lacks a strong focus on issues of gender, culture, and marginalization. The participant's perception of racism expanded on the qualitative research literature focusing on the Black community's gender and culture as they face traumatic issues, such as racism.

Empirical

As church leaders and Black men, participants expressed perceptions of racism and traumatic events such as the killings of Black men in 2020/2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the insurrection of January 6, which affected them. All participants demonstrate their concerns through actions and words rather than being silent. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "We will

have to repent…not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people" (Cone, 2004). This study confirms or corroborates previous research that the most effective ways to cope with trauma are social support, family support, and coping strategies such as hope, acceptance, and practicing spirituality (Limpanichkul & Magilvy, 2004). Hearing the strategy of developing and maintaining hope from Black men while enduring racism adds value and sheds new light on this field of study. This study found that Black men have an open barbershop dialogue of working together to develop long-term perspectives, short-term plans, and a vision of change to ignite hope and faith during traumas (Shabazz, 2016; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Recognizing all factors that impact the racial experiences and Christian hope in Black pastors is essential to understanding the convergence of these phenomena. With these theoretical concerns, this research examined African American pastors' perceptions of racism through their own stories. The theoretical framework of Christian theology and attachment theology are used to understand Black pastors'' relationship with God and their influences on others regarding coping with racism.

Qualitative Literature Theme Analysis

The related literature observations and theme demonstrations provide a systematic review of the types of racism that affect the African American church and community. This section shares how the five major theme analysis fit into the research literature of this qualitative study of Black male pastor'' perception of racism. Those themes are 1) The Growth of the Black Church; 2) The Role of Black Pastors; 3) Influences; 4) The Biblical Perspective of the African American Pastors, and 5) Biblical Character of the African American Pastors.

Theme One: Growth of the Black Church

The research literature describes how the hidden or invisible church was embraced for enslaved people to worship God freely (Gates, 2021). Participants expanded on that acknowledgment when sharing how enslaved people would speak in code or by placing certain laundry items to send a message that would not echo. This study's literature explained that open-ended questions give participants the most significant latitude and freedom to respond (Wright, 2012). This study facilitated semi-structured interview questions to prompt more than just one-word responses that extended to the research questions that fit within its theme.

Theme Two: Role of Black Pastors

The research literature considered how African American churches play a crucial role in organizing and advocating for their members (Scott & Wolfe, 2015). Participants confirmed how Black pastors must continue to be the voice for the Black church and the Black community, especially during racial and violent attacks. According to McQueen (2020), Black pastors are asked to speak out against issues that may cause inappropriate responses. Participants shared how their mental and spiritual stability must be in a place before it can be managed to help and assist others going through the same calamities. The literature explained that African Americans traditionally receive spiritual and mental support from their churches and spiritual leaders rather than from professionals (Avent & Cashwell, 2015).

Theme Three: Influences

This study shares the influences of Black male pastor'' perception of racism as spiritual leaders, influences on their sons when confronting police, and who comforts them during adversity. The Black male pastor's perception of racism has been addressed since MLK. However, it is still unclear how a peaceful movement would survive (Gadzekpo, 1997;

McQueen, 2020). The Black male pastors in this study shared their experiences and participation

on the front line regarding the struggle against racial inequality (Barber, 2020). However, their

influence on racism continues to be suppressed through political humiliation, as was evident

during the shooting of tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd during a peaceful Black Lives

Matter protest (Fahs & Swank, 2022; LaMothe, 2021).

Participants have expressed concern for the Black community needing a place to express

rather than suppress their concerns regarding the 2020/2021 violence towards Blacks. As places

of refuge and safety for Black people, black churches have a unique character that makes them

both powerful and vulnerable (Bell-Tolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Gates, 2021). Many

organizations claim that Black churches have become a place where prejudice is confronted

(Henderson & Louis, 2017). Participants confess that being a Black man with a Black family,

overseeing a church that is mainly Black, in a Black community – there is a need for a place to

express rather than suppress their concerns regarding Black violence. Blacks need the church to

be a safe place to have crucial and tough conversations; a place where the suppression of silence

or the aggression of violence is understood and nurtured, but not accepted within the Christian

faith.

The participants in this study encourage expert counselors, psychopathologists, and

veteran pastors to assist them in addressing racism in their church and community (June &

African American, 2011). In addition to religious belief, denial, and optimism, Bryant-Davis

(2005) suggests problem-focused activities, like gathering information and generating resources.

Participants share that this type of influence must go beyond the four walls of the church to reach

out and connect with all generations.

The Pew Research Center (2021) states that Black churches have lost influence among Generation Z compared to the Civil Rights era. The participants share how Blacks have held on to their Christianity faith during racial adversities for centuries; however, that hope has somehow diminished until recent years. During and after slavery, African Americans gained an understanding of Christianity through this biblical-theological acknowledgment (Hulteen & Wallis, 1992; Wallis, 2007). Changing beliefs about self, others, and life is inevitably a slow and painful process (Bowlby et al., 2019). Pastors influence strategies for the younger generation in the Black community, who can no longer deny the existence of racism. As a result of avoiding traumatic situations, one may become imprisoned and have trouble forming relationships with others (Wright, 2012).

Historically, Black men have been targeted and killed due to slavery and civil rights. In recent years, lynch mobs have demonstrated acts dating back to the 1860s citizen's arrest law, which seemed to justify lynching (Cohen & Luttig, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). This literature came alive when participants were triggered by the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in February 2020. The racism that persists in the Black community is evident when two white men gunned down with lynching behavior, a young Black boy (Tisby, 2019). In addition, participant'' concerns about their social's survival while driving Black sparked their emotional discord. Gretchen Sorin (2020) reports that an early form of racial profiling involved law enforcement stopping any Black person they encountered, enslaved or free, and forcing them to produce documentation. With this type of continued racial stigma, the participants, who are Black fathers to Black boys, must influence them to stay alive when confronted by police. As they grow up, many Black youths must find ways to cope in a violent environment (Bryant-Davis, 2005). Most of the violence is not due to Black-on-Black offenses but instead to white-on-Black

discriminatory arrests by law enforcers, who imprison them in great numbers. Thus, the participants, who are Black pastors and Black fathers, identified strategies for influencing their Black sons and the Black boys in their congregation to survive.

Theme Four: Biblical Perspective of the African American Pastors

Participants expressed that they must become the voice of the Black community more than expressed in the past to help all cultures understand that silence is not the answer to any problem. In the human psyche, oblivion triggers an instinctual panic and rage as it threatens to overwhelm (Shabazz, 2016; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). Unlike others, which segregate Blacks according to their skin color or wealth, they are classified according to their character, not their color.

Theme Five: Biblical Character of the African American Pastors

A reporter recalls a scene where a Black woman shows some type of respect to a police officer with a gun in his hand (Noah, 2017). Although the woman acts out this behavior, it is reiterated by a man, who confirms it as a strategy taught throughout the Black community. In the research literature of this study on Black men and racism, a particular story stood out. LeBron James offered his perception of the violence in the Black community, but a Fox News reporter told him, "Shut up and dribble" (ABC13 Houston, 2018). When researching this particular demeaning of a Black man, a Daily Show reporter, Trevor Noah (2017), elaborated on this racial offense and gave credit to a Black woman who demonstrates a behavior Blacks have been taught for centuries. While this Black woman sat in the car next to her child's father, who the police had shot several times, and was still pointing the gun telling her not to move, she continued to behave and respond accordingly. He said," The woman still had the presence of mind to show deference to the policeman...clearly, Black people never forget their training" (Noah, 2017). Cone (2010)

shares the spiritual significance of Black struggles being reflected in a religious doctrine that unreservedly identifies with their interests. In addition, Avent & Cashwell (2015) recommended that researchers focus on their religion or faith when investigating the mental health behaviors of African Americans. Participants reveal the practicality that it is hard to be hopeful about the future of the Black man; however, they are only hopeful because of their faith in Christ.

Implications

Based on the findings, there are theoretical, empirical, and practical implications for African American males expressing their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. The implications of Black male pastor'' perceptions of racism documented in the literature are essential to ensure that all readers benefit.

Theoretical

An enduring, intimate connection to another human being is the pivotal point of a person's life through adulthood (Bowlby et al., 2019). With Erickson's (2013) recognition of the dependability and reliability of the scriptures, including Bowlby's (1969) concept of pastor'' attachments promoting trust, the appropriate relationships are viable when enduring unforeseen traumas. In an effort for Black men to bring atonement and recommitment to their communities and families, they participated in the Million Man March in Washington, DC, on October 16, 1995. Therefore, updates must be required when considering doctrines of atonement, justification, and divine foreknowledge in the Christian faith (Erickson, 2013).

Based on Erickson and Bowlby's theories, it becomes evident that readers of literature should understand Black male pastors' perspectives on racism. Participants were initially hesitant with their response to discuss racism during the semi-structured interview process after taking the prequalified Brief COPE Assessment (Appendix B). The desire to protect, defend, or respond

to an action that will protect loved ones may seem understandable; however, not everyone can face those consequences. Therefore, an intimate connection is needed to express those concerns, whether with a spouse, brother, or even an Interviewer considered a spiritual sister, who brings comfort during the rapport portion of the interview.

Empirical

A vast lack of qualitative research focuses on African Americans' perceptions of trauma, such as racism, and its cause and effect on the Black community. Church resources are often overlooked or underutilized for racial and ethnic minorities (Bryan, 2005; Clemons & Johnson, 2020). A phenomenological qualitative approach was used to describe the perceptions of African American pastors' experiences with racism through semi-structured interviews.

As a result of this study, participants expressed appreciation for openly discussing their most intimate and personal experiences with racism. They confessed that the Black church must be candid enough to own that what they are doing now is not working. The participants agreed that the study should be straightforward and that our nation has a chance to heal and be whole if the truth is told.

Practical

These theories may be revealed when research questions ask Black pastors to identify someone, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure, who epitomizes the most positive connection during their experience of racial obscurities (McQueen, 2020). The study on racism historically is commonly expressed by some theorists as America's original sin with a slavery mindset behavior that continued since its discovery of America, and often in the minds of the oppressed, seems impossible to escape (Cone, 2004; Ponds, 2013; Stanford University, 2020; Hulteen & Wallis, 1992). The limitation of resources should encourage researchers to consider

the validation of the historical perspective of the Black pastor and the Black church to understand the oppressed situation of racism today.

In practice, Blacks are complicit in perpetuating the narrative that whites are all racists and against them if America remains silent about racism. Due to the profoundly ingrained ties between American higher education and white supremacy (Jones, 2000), confronting white supremacy history is difficult for many institutions. It was noted that the participants appreciated the semi-structured interview and that the questions were aligned with significant issues. In a setting with four Christian pastors (Orchard Church, 2020), two white and two Black, they expressed how, in the past, discussions on racism were done, but years later, despite the conversations and prayers, not much change has occurred. Therefore, the intentionality of addressing racism in the church is crucial, and the priority is crucial because the gospel requires it (Orchard Church, 2020).

In addition, this study shared the perspective of Christian pastors, whose emotions and perceptions had not been exposed to the masses since the 1960s. Participants expressed their anger and rage at the killings of Black men and other traumatic actions with no tangible evidence of the promise of hope, only in Christ. Furthermore, the participant's cognitive responses to racism as a Black pastor appear to outweigh his cognitive responses to racism as a Black man.

Delimitations and Limitations

The importance of sharing the participant's psychological and metaphysical perceptions for this study is revealed in the delimitations section. Privacy tools of the study are described in the limitations section.

Delimitations

The purpose of this psychological and transcendental phenomenological study was to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. For that reason, several cognitive responses are reiterated to focus on the study: anger, anxiety, long-suffering, shock, disbelief, heartbreak, rage, unforgiving, and traumatized. The phenomenological design was chosen because the study intended to allow participants to describe their experiences. Phenomenology is the appropriate design to allow those who have experienced a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl & Kersten, 1980), in this case, perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders.

The participation in the study was confined to those who scored over 50% of the assessment's total score in problem-solving, approach, positive, and active coping strategy categories. As a result, six of the seven interested participants participated in the study, and one later declined. In addition, only Black male pastors with a tenure of 20 plus years, who were married, and who had raised children were qualified.

Living in the skin of a Black man is not a position that any culture would desire when we continue to observe this type of slave mentality. Unfortunately, participants have also shared that the aim to destroy the Black family has been the motive since slavery and has increased tremendously. Enslaved people kept the family together when they realized that God is for all humans, the Holy Spirit lives in all humans, and Jesus Christ suffered like a slave under the hands of those who called themselves men of God, who were Pharisees. The Black family, however, has been separated by mankind, making it hard to mend broken hearts, heal wounds and restore the village that once fought with a mighty blow. This study revealed a fundamental amount of African American male pastors' perceptions of racism as Black men and church

leaders. Therefore, we examine whether racism is fueled by the color of one's skin, Black or white; the profiling of a Black man in a hoodie; the privilege of white supremacy; or the negative effects of human behavior.

Limitations

This study was limited because it was conducted online rather than in person to ensure the participants' comfort. Therefore, the environment where the participants had to discuss racial indignities may not have been as private as they would have liked. Researchers must understand that there are risks for Blacks to express their racial concerns to whites; therefore, if that feedback could be offered or shared by church leaders or pastors of that culture, others may consider the source trustworthy and the advice accurate (Stewart, 2020). Nonetheless, the rapport section of the semi-structured interview helped the participants by the end of research question 5. To understand today's oppressive situation of racism, researchers should consider the historical perspective of Black pastors and Black churches despite a lack of resources.

These pastors' lived experiences of racism were described in a phenomenological study. This study focused more on the descriptive psychological approach in order to prevent biases since I am an African American, and the participants conducting this study are African Americans. My immediate family is composed of 18 Black males, many of whom have experienced racial discrimination, it was extremely difficult to separate all biases. It was almost impossible not to recall the pain expressed by my valedictorian nephew when his head was slammed on the hood of the car when pulled over by the police for no reason. However, I had to suppress any preconceived thoughts or perceptions to allow participants to share their personal stories that ultimately described similar traumatic encounters. Therefore, limiting personal biases and allowing participants to express their thoughts or share their stories can be helpful to find

similar descriptions or connections. The study can validate various connections between the reader, writer, and participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

While racism can cause mental and emotional stress, pastors would do well to attach themselves to trusted relationships that would encourage them to seek professional help, if necessary. The Christian community expects their pastors to be optimistic, positive, strong, willing, and available, not depressed, discouraged, cynical, angry, or hurt, but they are also perceived as above being stressed with humanistic issues, such as mental and emotional stress (Gilbert, 1987; Patterson, 2013). In this study, the appropriate assessment and questions were provided to ensure participants were surrounded by a village of people who would support their emotional needs. Whether it is the barbershop straight-talk amongst their fellow brethren, the loving arms of their wife, constructed guidance from their senior pastor, or a trustful professional counselor, along with their faith and trust in God. Avent and Cashwell (2015) recommended that researchers focus on their religion or faith when investigating the mental health behaviors of African Americans.

Summary

The purpose of this psychological and transcendental phenomenological study was to give African American pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. Although some researchers have attempted to provide the opinion of Blacks regarding racism, they have not given Black male pastors a voice concerning their experiences of racism as Black men and church leaders. Black churches and pastors have not publicly shared their voice since 1960, because the consequences are still severe, as demonstrated by attacks by

their president or fellow Americans. Therefore, this study gave these Black male pastors a platform to share their experiences and an opportunity to have a voice.

With Erickson's (2013) recognition of the dependability and reliability of the scriptures, including Bowlby's (1969) concept of pastors' attachments promoting trust, the appropriate relationships are viable when enduring unforeseen traumas. The participant's psychological and transcendental perceptions of this study were the delimitations, and the privacy tool of the study was the limitations.

The participants expressed their perceptions of racism as church leaders and Black men and church leaders. Several traumatic events impacted all participants, including the killing of Black men in 2020/2021, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the insurrection on January 6. However, instead of remaining silent, all participants demonstrated their concerns through actions and words. The participants agreed that the study should be straightforward and that our nation can heal and be whole if the truth is told.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CITI Program Certification
CITI Certification

Completion Date	27-Feb-2022
Expiration Date	26-Feb-2025
Record ID	32196558

This is to certify that:

Priscilla Miles

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Animal Care and Use
(Curriculum Group)
IACUC: Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Liberty University

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we0170994-c7a3-45b7-ac72-8b1ea6cab4b7-32196558

Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter

do-not-reply@cayuse.com

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 4, 2022

Priscilla Miles

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-824 African American Pastors' Perceptions of Managing Racism as Black Men and Leaders

Dear Priscilla Miles,

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 46:104(d):

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,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C: Participant Recruitment Email

From: **Priscilla Lenora Miles** <​▮▮▮▮▮▮▮​>
Date: Tue, May 24, 2022 at 3:31 PM
Subject: Priscilla Lenora Miles - Liberty University Research Study
To: <​▮▮▮▮▮​@gmail.com>

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

May 24, 2022

Pastor ▮▮▮▮▮▮
Senior Pastor
▮▮▮▮▮ Baptist Church
▮▮▮▮, VA 22314

Dear Sir:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education (EdD) in Community Care & Counseling: Pastoral Counseling. The purpose of my research is to understand how African American male pastors describe the challenges they face when addressing the issue of racism with their congregation, and what strategies they would use or say when addressing racism with the congregation. It is also to understand how they would describe the differences of their preaching on racial discrimination today in comparison to the 1960s, and what would they say their role is in the Black community as a spiritual leader concerning racism. Additionally, it is to understand who they would say provides support if and when they are personally facing racial issues, and in what ways would African American male pastors say that racism has affected their emotions or behavior. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be an African American or Black, male of at least 40 years of age, currently a senior pastor, have been serving in this church leadership role for over 20 years, currently married with experience raising children, and have experienced subjectively or ministered to someone through the traumatic experiences of racial oppression and COVID-19. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with me, complete a cognitive activity (selection of emotions to identify your initial racial response), and briefly describe each of your responses to the cognitive activity. It should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete the entire interview process. After the interview transcripts have been organized, member checking will occur where participants evaluate the transcripts for accuracy and clarity. It should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete the procedure listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the attached screening survey/Brief COPE Assessment and return it to me by email at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it one week prior to the scheduled interview.

Participants who complete the Brief COPE Assessment will be entered in a raffle to receive a $100 Amazon gift card.

Sincerely,
Priscilla Lenora Miles
Liberty University Graduate Student
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix C: Participant Recruitment on Social Media

A Different Perspective

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of this study is to give African American male pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. This study aims to gather inductive reasoning related to the participant's experiences that are missing or lacking in research literature.

To participate, you must be an African American or Black male senior pastor of at least 40 years of age with 20 years' experience as a senior pastor, currently married, have raised children, and have experienced subjectively or ministered to someone through the traumatic experiences of racial oppression and COVID-19. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, complete a cognitive activity, and review the interview transcripts for accuracy. Participation should take about three hours to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please email me at ███████████████████ for more information.

A consent document will be emailed to you along with the screening assessment one week before the interviews are scheduled. Participants who complete the Brief COPE Assessment will be entered in a raffle to receive a $100 Amazon gift card.

Appendix D: Pre-Screening / Brief Cope Assessment

BRIEF COPE ASSESSMENT

Sources: (Ozcan et al., 2021; Buchanan, 2018; Garcia, 2018; Xu, 2016; Dein et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2012; Pargament et al., 2011; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003; Henman, 2001; Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999; Rogers-Dulan, 1998; Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989).

These items deal with ways you've been coping with the stress in the past two years (2020-2021); specifically with demonstrations of racism towards the African American culture during a pandemic. There are many ways that different people deal with problems, but these items ask what you've been doing to cope with this particular assessment issue stated below. Not if it is working or not, but whether or not you're doing it. Circle the response that best fits you, separately from the other responses (R#s). Make your answers true FOR YOU!

Q#	Title of Study: "AFRICAN PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGING RACISM AS BLACK MEN AND LEADERS"	You have observed racial violence and discrimination conduct in 2020/2021 such as Black men (George Floyd), women (Breonna Taylor), and children (Daunte Wright) killed by police officers for minor concerns, such as jaywalking (Kurt Reinhold); and many others.			
	RESPONSES TO ASSESSMENTS	**I have not been doing this at all**	**A little bit**	**A medium amount**	**I have been doing this a lot**
1	I have been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.	1	2	3	4
2	I have been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.	1	2	3	4
3	I have been saying to myself "this isn't real.".	1	2	3	4
4	I have been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.	1	2	3	4
5	I have been getting emotional support from others.	1	2	3	4
6	I have been giving up trying to deal with it.	1	2	3	4
7	I have been taking action to try to make the situation better.	1	2	3	4
8	I have been refusing to believe that it has happened.	1	2	3	4
9	I have been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.	1	2	3	4
10	I have been getting help and advice from other people.	1	2	3	4
11	I have been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.	1	2	3	4
12	I have been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.	1	2	3	4

Q#	Title of Study: "AFRICAN PASTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGING RACISM AS BLACK MEN AND LEADERS"	You have observed racial violence and discrimination conduct in 2020/2021 such as Black men (George Floyd), women (Breonna Taylor), and children (Daunte Wright) killed by police officers for minor concerns, such as jaywalking (Kurt Reinhold); and many others.			
	RESPONSES TO ASSESSMENTS	I have not been doing this at all	A little bit	A medium amount	I have been doing this a lot
13	I have been criticizing myself.	1	2	3	4
14	I have been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.	1	2	3	4
15	I have been getting comfort and understanding from someone.	1	2	3	4
16	I have been giving up the attempt to cope.	1	2	3	4
17	I have been looking for something good in what is happening.	1	2	3	4
18	I have been making jokes about it.	1	2	3	4
19	I have been doing something to think about it less (e.g., TV, reading, sleeping, shopping)	1	2	3	4
20	I have been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.	1	2	3	4
21	I have been expressing my negative feelings.	1	2	3	4
22	I have been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.	1	2	3	4
23	I have been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.	1	2	3	4
24	I have been learning to live with it.	1	2	3	4
25	I have been thinking hard about what steps to take.	1	2	3	4
26	I have been blaming myself for things that happened.	1	2	3	4
27	I have been praying or meditating.	1	2	3	4
28	I have been making fun of the situation.	1	2	3	4

Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent Form

African American Pastors' Perceptions of Managing Racism as Black Men and Leaders
Principal Investigator: Priscilla Lenora Miles
Liberty University, School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study:
You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an African American/Black male, currently a senior pastor, have been serving in church leadership role for over 20 years, are currently married, have experience raising children, and have experienced racial oppression or ministered to someone through the traumatic experiences of racial discrimination and the current pandemic. 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.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to give African American male pastors a platform to express their perceptions of racism as Black men and church leaders. This study aims to gather inductive reasoning related to the participant's experiences that are missing or lacking in the research literature.

Procedures:
If you score over 50 percent in the positive coping strategy category of the Screening survey and agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a one-on-one interview with me, which includes participating in a cognitive activity (selection of emotions to identify your initial response) and providing a brief statement to describe your responses to each of the cognitive activity questions. Participation should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete the entire interview process.
2. Within 48 hours after the interview, each participant will receive a transcribed version of their interview, by email, requesting the member checking process of reviewing and providing any required modifications (i.e., changes, additions, deletions) to the document, if needed. This member checking should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete.

Benefits of being in this Study:
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include to increase knowledge regarding the perception of Black male pastor regarding racism, and to improve the learning outcome for researchers seeking information regarding the concern.

Risks of 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.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.
- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

- 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.

Compensation:
Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Everyone who completes the Brief COPE Assessment will be entered in a drawing for a $100 Amazon gift card.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not 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.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number 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.

Contacts and Questions:
The researcher conducting this study is Priscilla Lenora Miles. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at ████████ or ████████████████. You may also contact the researcher's Liberty advisor for this study, Dr. Fred Milacci, at ████████████.

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Statement of 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 audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____ 5-26-2022
Signature & Date

Appendix F: Participant Member Checking

Participant Member Checking

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Date: 6/18/22 3:20 PM (GMT-05:00)

To: "priscilla.lenora.miles" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: Miles Zoom Transcript: African American Pastor's Perception

Good Afternoon,

APPROVED!!!

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 10, 2022, at 4:49 PM, priscilla.lenora.miles <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Pastor,

Please review for your approval the attached transcript. If there are any changes, or additions that you deem are essential, please feel free to modify the document, but highlight those changes for clarity.

Please return the transcript no later than **Saturday, June 18.**

Your contribution to this study will truly provide valuable academic documentation for Researchers. Thank you!

God Bless,
Priscilla Lenora Miles

Appendix H: Scales for Computing Coping Strategies

Sources: (Buchanan, 2021; Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989; Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999; Dein et al., 2012; Eisenberg et al., 2012; García et al., 2018; Henman, 2001; Ozcan et al., 2021; Pargament et al., 2011; Rogers-Dulan, 1998; Tarakeshwar et al., 2003 Xu, 2016).

Scales and Subscales:
1. Self-distraction, items 1 and 19
2. Active coping, items 2 and 7
3. Denial, items 3 and 8
4. Substance use, items 4 and 11
5. Emotional support, items 5 and 15
6. Use of instrumental or informational support, items 10 and 23
7. Behavioral disengagement, items 6 and 16
8. Venting, items 9 and 21
9. Positive reframing, items 12 and 17
10. Planning items 14 and 25
11. Humor, items 18 and 28
12. Acceptance, items 20 and 24
13. Religion, items 22 and 27
14. Self-blame, items 13 and 26

Definitions:
The source researchers have shared a version of Carver's (1997) Brief-COPE 14 subscale definitions:
- Acceptance is accepting the reality that has happened/learning to live with it (emotional-focused / active emotional / approach coping)
- Active coping is concentrating the efforts on doing something about the situation / taking action to try to make it better (problem-focused / approach coping)
- Behavioral disengagement is giving up trying to deal with it / the attempt to cope (coping-response / avoidant emotional/avoidant coping)
- Denial is saying to myself, "this is not real" /refusing to believe that it has happened (emotional-focused / avoidant emotional/avoidant coping)
- Emotional support is obtaining emotional support/comfort and understanding (emotional-focused / active emotional / approach coping)
- Humor is making jokes about it / making fun of the situation (emotional-focused / active emotional)
- Instrumental support is getting help and advice from other people / trying to get advice or help from others about what to do (problem-focused / approach coping)
- Planning is trying to come up with a strategy about what to do/thinking hard about what steps to take (problem-focused / approach coping)
- Positive reframing is trying to see the situation from a different light, make it seem more positive / look for something good in it (emotional-focused / active emotional / approach coping)
- Religion is finding comfort in religious or spiritual beliefs / praying or meditating (emotional-focused / problem-focused /positive/active coping)

Appendix I: Emotional Words

Emotional Words

To help identify the emotions, but not limited to, this list of six categorized emotions (excited, scared, angry, sad, tender, and happy) with seven related reactions to choose from regarding the participant's initial emotion with racial oppression or experiences, and COVID-19.

Instructions:

Review the chart below to assist when answering interview questions of identifying emotions.

Excited	Scared	Angry	Sad	Tender	Happy
Antsy	Anxious	Annoyed	Blue	Intimate	Complete
Aroused	Frightened	Furious	Dejected	Kind	Contented
Cheerful	Jittery	Irritated	Depressed	Loving	Fulfilled
Ecstatic	Nervous	Mad	Down	Soft	Glad
Energetic	Panic-Stricken	Raging	Grieved	Sympathetic	Optimistic
Lively	Tense	Resentful	Heartbroken	Touched	Pleased
Nervous	Terrified	Upset	Mopey	Warm-Hearted	Satisfied

Appendix J: Sample Interview Transcript

AAPCH4#RACP – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Question 5

Interviewer: As a Black man and preacher, how would you say the Black church is different from the hidden church during slavery? Are you aware of the hidden church?

Interviewee: I think there are many differences. Obviously, we still have our independence and freedom, and the Black Church is one of the organizations in this country particularly, that is not under the thumb of the majority race. Black preachers and pastors are, I think, for the most part, held at a high esteem, probably not as much as they used to be, but I think by and large they still are. The Hidden Church was probably under a certain amount of oppression. I don't necessarily think that the Black Church is under that oppression anymore. We could be voices of change and social activism. I guess the obvious fact is we no longer have to hide our faith and how we practice our faith.

Question 6

Interviewer: How would you describe the major differences in preaching about racism today in comparison to the 1960s?

Interviewee: When I think of the 60s, in my opinion, with Doctor King being the face of the movement: articulate, smart, passionate, and called, I think people had a greater appreciation for the atrocities of racism. They would. They saw the dogs. They saw the water hoses. They saw his death and his assassination. So, I think there was a certain amount of shock which garnished a lot of allies in the 1960s. Unfortunately, and surprisingly, I think preaching about racing is risen today. It's different, at least in one area. That is, people think we live in a post racist society because legislator of improvements and legislative accomplishments. The Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the election of the first black president in Barack Obama. So, people are saying, no further action, these sorts of things, trying to level the playing field. I think because of some of those accomplishments is why people feel like we're living in a post racial society. There's an apprehension. There is a caution to preach on racism because some, believe it or not, wants to believe that we no longer struggle with racism in a post racist society. So that would be the main difference. I think in the 60s it was apparent, it was clear, they saw it. Today, there's an argument, in saying, I rather not, if there even needs to be a discussion on racism. In other words, you live in a post racial society, which is, I believe, further from the truth… furthest from the truth. So that would be the difference. I think the other difference might be because we live in a very politically correct era too. So, we have to measure our words and choose our words. That is, for pastors, so that people aren't offended. I think, that would be a major difference from preaching in the 60s. Those black preachers spoke boldly about the atrocity, they spoke boldly using language of taking the bold proclamation of the Gospel. Many pastors back in that era saw that as a sign that they needed to speak boldly. Today, it has to be measured. We can't just say

things that we want to say. Then we would have to kind of, sometime, soften them up, or filter them in some ways.

Interviewer: May I ask why?

Interviewee: Well, I think because people don't want to hear a hard truth, and you have this unofficial censorship. In some ways it could be good, because if you can get people to hear you, and you want people to hear about the inequities accurately, and that part is inequities. If they're not hearing it because you're being offensive or you're saying things in a way where they are going to shut you off, you're not effective. It is frustrating, can be frustrating sometimes. I do think there's a little hesitation. The way we talk about it, like even the word racist. I mean, there are people, who are arguing… careful about using that word. In the 60s people didn't shy away from it. Well, what is racist? Who can be racist? Who cannot be racist? What's the academic definition of racist and racism? So, I just think there's this overly cautious attitude in some ways that wasn't that present in the 1960s.

Question 7

Interviewer: In what way would you describe how the 2020/2021 killings of Black men, like George Floyd affected your perception of the future for Black men?

Interviewee: For me the George Floyd thing was awful. It had the potential… Let me say it carefully. It had the potential of making me very pessimistic. It had a potential to make me lose hope that we had made any progress at all, although, I know that's not true. We have made tremendous progress, but with that assault, what the George Floyd thing taught me is that we certainly got a lot of progress to make. So, it affected me in that way looking at the future man [Black]. We still got this issue.

Interviewer: You mentioned hope, hopelessness for the future of black men?

Interviewee: Here's what I'm saying. When I saw the video, I was certain that it would be unified. That nobody would defend this. That this defense officer and this department [police] would have no allies coming to their rescue to try to defend what we all watched with our eyes. I was wrong. There were people still trying to defend what they saw. Now, the majority of people, who saw these White police officers, they would agree with me that it was disturbing. It was disgusting and it was wrong, but the fact that there was any defense of what we saw with our eyes has the potential to make you feel hopeless. If you can watch that video of George Floyd being murdered in the street and come away with anything other than this guy was murdered, as a Black man in America, as a pastor, or even if I wasn't a pastor, it's hard to be hopeful. It's about our future. I am hopeful because my faith is in Christ. I know that God can do anything. If it wasn't for my faith, I would feel hopeless. I would feel like the future is bleak. Because I am a man of God, and my personal faith, I know it isn't hopeless but, it's hard to find it.

Question 8

Interviewer: How have the killings of Black men like George Floyd and Daunte Wright affected you as a man of color or how have they affected the males in your family?

Interviewee: I think there's a constant fear that the Black man is still in danger in his own country. It affects me every single day. Right now, I just purchased a new car with a temporary tag. I'm worried I'm going to be stopped. If I'm going to survive that altercation or that interaction with a law enforcement officer. I have three Black sons, and I got to worry about them constantly. I'll never forget my two oldest sons went to Utah. My youngest son was going to school in Oregon. He just graduated. It's a 12-hour drive from here to Oregon and my two older boys drove up to help him pack his apartment. Well, that was two hours of pure hell in my mind and my wife's mine. Just worrying that they were going to get stopped, or that they were going to make it home… not for doing anything wrong, not for committing any crime, but just driving while Black. Thoughts of some misunderstanding, some unintended, explicit bias or implicit bias, whichever one it is, or both. So, it affects me as a Black man every single day in my life, because I can't take off my blackness. A police officer can take off his blue, but I can't take off my black. I have to live with those fears, those anxieties every single day of my life… and I'm a pastor. Those killings when I look at George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, the young man that was jogging, can be terrifying. It can be defeating when coming to the reality of living in America as a Black man. I'm not one to excuse anyone who breaks the law. I am not a police basher. I think young men of color need to learn how to interact with police officers, obey verbal commands, whether they're guilty or not. I'm with all of that. My son just graduated with a degree in criminal justice, so I'm not anti-policing it, but I am anti-police brutality.

Question 9

Interviewer: How do you explain to your Black male family members what they should do when confronted by police?

Interviewee: I tell my boys, put your hands on the wheel, make sure your registration is up to date, don't speed, don't break the law, don't be disrespectful… and live! Do whatever you need to do to live through that moment. So, if you were mistreated, we can go fight it in court. If you're dead, we can't fight it. It doesn't matter whether you were wrong or whether they were wrong, you're dead. So, do whatever you need to do to survive that moment. Be complete, be compliant, obey verbal commands, right or wrong, whether they stop you for no reason or not. There's a responsibility of obeying authority and respecting authority. I get it… if you were stop wrongly, or if you were treated unfairly, let's get a lawyer. Let's go to court and let's fight it while you're breathing and there's breath in your body. I tell my boys. I know, it is frustrating when you are stopped for driving Black. You want to pop off. You want to be rude. You want to protest, but we, as Black men we can't. Maybe other cultures can. They could put up an argument. They could put up a fight. Refuse to roll down the window. You, we, can't do that as Black men… we can't do that. We have to go above and beyond compliance just so we can live.

Interviewer: Yes, live through that moment.

Interviewee: So, that's what I tell my boys. Obey verbal commands, be respectful if you've been mistreated, or if you've been wrong. Let's get an attorney. We'll fight that, after you live through that interaction and interface with law enforcement.

Question 10

Interviewer: What strategies are you currently using to address racism with your young congregates?

Interviewee: Dialogue. I pastor a multicultural church. I have just as many White parishioners as I do Black. We are internationally multi-cultural. One of the values of multiculturalism is conversation. I have Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals in my church. I have Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics. One of the beauties of multiculturalism is that you get to talk to people that have a different perspective than you do. In doing so you we are all educated. We all learn when we all agreeable. I don't always agree, but I understand the perspectives. So, one of the advices I tell my young congregants is to make sure your friendship circle includes people that don't look like you, don't think like you… don't get in a bubble or chamber. Embrace friendship with people who are different, so that you can talk to them. You may never agree with them, but you can understand their perspective. I always say be civil for God's sake, be civil. You can disagree with someone and not be rude not be demeaning. We've got to learn to engage in civil dialogue. That's one of the ways we can help with the conversations of racism that is real. If you're not heard, they can't be in the change. You got to be able to learn how to communicate in a way you can be heard, so people don't shut you down. A huge part of talking is also listening. Cultivating and sharpening our listening skills. We're listening with an attempt to understand and not with an attempt to respond.

Question 11

Interviewer: What steps have you taken to demonstrate to the African American community your concern with racism?

Interviewee: I have a large concern for I am Black, my wife is Black, my boys are Black, and my congregation is mostly Black. I involve myself in the community dialogue. I serve as chairperson for the Mayor's Office on Diversity Affairs. So, I let my congregants see me actively engaging in helping to make sure that we have equity and equality in these conversations. My life of service is visually, I don't just talk about it. I try to do it. I let them see me doing it. I make sure that our church is a safe place to have crucial conversations. Tough conversations. Those are some of the things that I'm doing, and I'm practicing it in my personal life. I have friends from all sorts of cultures, who I golf with. I invite to barbecues at my house. My circle of friends and my children's friends are diverse.

Question 12

Interviewer: What would you say your role is in the church and Black community?

Interviewee: As a passenger. To lead by example. To lead through and by my life. To show, not only preach about equality and social activism and principles of Christ, or this liberation theology that was popular in the 60s through James Cone and some other authors, but to live it out in my life. I think my role is to be out front, leading these conversations and these actions as a Black pastor.

Question 13

Interviewer: How do you influence the Black community concerning racism?

Interviewee: By being involved in conversations or politics. Matthew 25 reference making sure that the church is involved in those social, economic, mental health, all around the wholeness and wellness of individuals. Doing it in a way where they can see it in the community. That's the only way to do it.

Question 14

Interviewer: What triggers you to address racial concerns within your family or community?

Interviewee: First, the word of God, the Bible. As a pastor we have to preach the whole gospel. If Jesus is anything, he's a Jesus for equity and equality. Howard Thurman wrote a great book called "Jesus and the Disinherited" that I read in my younger years of ministry. Matthew 29 teaches me just being obedient to the word of God triggers with us, but also triggers my own faith. I mean my own personal experience living as a Black man, experiencing racism. My personal story triggers me. Then when I see what's happening in the world that we live in; that righteous indignation rises up and triggers in me, so at least those three things. Those three things for sure triggers me to speak about racism. In the words of Marvin Gaye, it makes me wanna holler throw up both my hands. That's the best articulation I can give. I can't keep it to myself.

Question 15

Interviewer: Who provides personal support to you when faced with racial issues discrimination, not excluding an image of a spiritual figure?

Interviewee: I'm thankful to have mentors in the Ministry of the Faith, so those mentors come. My family, my mom, my wife, and my colleagues are the pastors who are trying to hold up the standard. I'm thankful that I do have a community around me that helps me with those times. It is absolutely a village, and I'm thankfully.

Question 16

Interviewer: In what ways would you say that racism has affected your behavior as a Black man?

Interviewee: My behavior is my actions. Racism causes me to be suspicious. Sometimes it causes me to be careful. Maybe a little apprehensive to actively seek out authentic relationships. So, there's always this online paranoia. I'm always careful. For instance, when I'm stopped by a cop at night, if they can see my hands. I'm always having to have my ID. It changes my behavior in a lot of ways. When I'm in the store, I'm always conscious as to who's watching me and how I'm being watched. I could go on and on about how racism changes my behavior.

Interviewer: Which is what we, which is what I need to know.

Interviewee: Yes, sometimes it doesn't always change my behavior in the positive way. I'm just get in a negative way. Sometimes I'm angry.

Interviewer: Speak on that, please.

Interviewee: Sometimes I want to get even, and if it wasn't for the grace of God… I might do those things. So, it has negative and positive effects on my behavior, but I could tell you this, racism does affect my behavior as a Black man. I tried as a pastor and a Christian to make sure that those changes are godly and not ungodly.

Interviewer: So, if you weren't a pastor or preacher would it be a different story.

Interviewee: I think so, if I wasn't a Christian… I would say that. Yes, I think there's a level if I wasn't a Christian, and a level for being a Christian, and there's another level from a pastor, because you know to whom much is given, much is required. Certainly, had I not had the Lord in my life, yes, my behaviors might be a whole lot different as it responds to racism… that's for sure.

Interviewer: I love the realness of that.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. Everybody is not Malcolm X and everybody is not Martin Luther King. There were some Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael, back in the 60s.

Question 17

Interviewer: In one word, how would you describe your initial emotional response when realizing the COVID-19 pandemic was escalating?

Interviewee: Exhausting.

Interviewer: Please explain. Elaborate.

Interviewee: As a pastor, we had to continually change and comply with the rules and deal with uncertainties, the grief, and loss of those who lost loved ones. Whether we were going to require masks, even when the government is not requiring it, you know, are we acting with lack of faith? If we enforce masks, are we being disobedient to government officials as the Bible instructs us to be. It was just a lot of decisions to make for a long period of time. Once we made a decision, over time we got used to that decision. There were more decisions being made, because, when you look at the news and the numbers [COVID] it wasn't getting any better. It just exhausted me.

Question 18

Interviewer: In one word, describe your initial emotional response to the African American culture while watching a Black man being killed in front of America (e.g., George Floyd, Andre Hill)?

Interviewee: My initial emotion, I would say, angry. I think unequivocally angry. Before going through the calmness, the anger I needed to address, and then I could do the part two.

Interviewer: Why were you angry?

Interviewee: That this could be happening still in 2020. I was angry that someone in authority felt like they could do that and get away with it, while being videoed and recorded. I was angry because a lot of people were slow to condemn it. I was angry because I felt helpless watching it and there was nothing… I felt like there was nothing I can do to stop it. I felt angry because I have three boys, and this could happen to them tomorrow. I felt angry because I'm thinking how long do we have to be living in a country where this can happen? I mean, do you want me to continue… I could name 20 months of why I was angry. That's where I started.

Interviewer: Where did you end? What was the next thing you were going through?

Interviewee: I think I went through the stages of grief. I was angry. There were times I felt guilty.

Interviewer: Why would you feel guilty?

Interviewee: That maybe I haven't done enough for my people. Maybe he was high. Maybe he was not obeying the officers. Which was crazy, but that's how it really is, right? Like there was no reason for me to feel personally responsible for it, but I did. That's why I describe it as a grief journey. At some point, there was this feeling of acceptance, not that I accept that this is going to happen, but I had to accept that this fight will probably never be over. This is not something we do and then we achieve some goal, and then we don't have to do it anymore. This is something that we have to sustain in order to protect, right? I probably didn't or wasn't very articulate in that.

Interviewer: No, you are very articulate.

Interviewee: I started angry. I don't know if I ever got too optimistic. I like to be hopeful. I'm a hopeful person. I mean I hope in Jesus. That's the only hope I have. The only way I could. The only place I find my hope is in Christ. If it wasn't for that, I don't know what other tangible evidence there is to look to say this looks promising or this looks hopeful. Other than we serve a just God and in the end; God's going to separate the sheep from the goats, that justice will prevail ultimately. So, I think if there's any space of hope, maybe, I'll find it in the young people. I think this generation is the only hope we have. They tend to do more... Honestly, this George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery stuff... all this stuff that's going on... Brianna Taylor! They [younger generation] look at all this foolishness that's going on. These 17, 18, 19-year-old young people, African Americans and White people; they're like what is going on? This is stupid. This is crazy. They don't even see it like we see it. They don't even understand it. They're confused. So, if there's a place of hope, that's the place... that's the vote. The young people are confused by this stuff. They say to me that they're trying. They seem to be more in favor of coming together. They don't think anything goes. They don't think anything about having a Black friend, having a White friend, or having an Asian friend, a gay friend, or having a straight friend. They don't even think about that stuff. So, if there's any hope, that hope could come from the young people. The young people can help us through this because their perspective seems to be a lot different.

Question 19

Interviewer: In one word, describe your initial emotional response to the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol?

Interviewee: I want to say shocked.

Interviewer: Shocked by what in particular?

Interviewee: I couldn't believe it was happening. I could not believe that these folk were allowed to do that. It blew my mind because I thought to myself... if it was a bunch of people that look like me [Blacks], it would have been a massive arrest, immediately, and a lot more deaths than I saw, in the name of protecting the government or protecting the RRs [Republicans]. I'm listening... I'm looking at this foolishness thinking, how in the world is this happening. I was

just shocked that and once again it was confirmation that we're living in a lot of ways. In two Americas.

Interviewer: Two Americas, explain that?

Interviewee: Like I said, if it was a bunch of Black boys with guns and all that kind of stuff coming into the US Capital, there would have been more blood spilled. These people had guns, and it almost looked as if they had permission. That's more powerful than the gun. They weren't worried about anything. They had permission to be patriots. So, I was just shocked. I don't understand, if you're so patriotic, you're insurrecting against the various symbols of this country. Then the media folks call that patriotism, when the actions that they're taking is antithetical. They tell me, well, that's what the founding fathers were to establish the country. So, now that the country has been established, you're not a patriot? You're insurrectionists? According to what the Constitution says… [no one should engage in insurrection] that word is actually in the Constitution with insurrection instructions. So, I was shocked by that.

Closing Remarks:

Interviewer: Pastor I want to thank you so very much for spending this time with me. You have no idea how much I appreciate you sharing your story. Before you go, is there anything that we may have missed that you would like to share on this study in reference to racism? And as a Black man, as well as a spiritual leader, how what would you like to share?

Interviewee: I would just close by saying thank you for the opportunity. I know it's probably hard to get people, particularly pastors. I feel, I hope, I pray that you're successful in your work, with your doctorate. It's a great task. I would just end by saying, we got to remain hopeful. We got to put our faith and trust in Christ. Success is not some destination that we get to like the people might have felt when they passed the Civil Rights Act or the Voting Rights Act, and now we're done. I would want to make sure… I would hope that your study would make sure that we understand this is an ongoing fight. It's just not something that our, my parents, back in the 60s fought for, and now we got it… had a Black president or got these bills passed, because we see now that's not the case. I guess what I'm saying is remain vigilant. Remain steadfast in our fight for equality, for equity, for justice, and the only way we can do this is through a solid faith in God. That would be my closing thoughts.