LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

AN EXPLORATION OF CAREER MENTORSHIP AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE

YOUTH MINISTERS WITHIN THE NONDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Christina Kantrell Crayton

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2023

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ABSTRACT

African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, lack long-standing career mentorship. The thought which suggests the most significant reason this deficiency exists, is due to the non-denominational church being independent of a larger denominational structure. While individual mentorship is obtained based on personal preference, it only takes one person to imbed generational seeds of wisdom, faith, hope, and love into the hearts and minds of an individual or a generation (Quick, 2020). To determine if lifespan career mentorship is needed in African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, extensive research was conducted to understand what the church, Christian leadership, and career mentorship means for participants within the researched community. For instance, the goal of mentorship is to provide guidance to individuals, with the overall purpose of aiding in their personal development, spiritual growth, and uncultured skill set (University of Washington, 2022). Additionally, mentorship may continue long after an individual advances in their professional careers, as a great deal of learning occurs outside of the classroom (Smith, 2014). Author Mark Ward Sr. (2019) believes, "nearly two-thirds of Americans are involved in regular places of worship, making congregations by far the nation's most common form of association, group, or club" (Ward, 2019, p. 120). Yet, when inadequate training and improper curriculum are exploited, a targeted population becomes withdrawn, further hindering essential elements of spiritual growth; baptism, temptation avoidance, mentorship, daily devotion, and regular church attendance (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to explore if there is a need for lifespan career mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. This study was sought, due to the concern which suggests, an absence in lifelong training and mentorship leads to increased doubt in Christian believers, a decreased

presence in gaining non-believers, and stunted spiritual growth within congregants of the non-denominational church (Easum et al., 2006). At this stage in the proposed research application, non-denominationalism will be generally defined as churches which hold no affiliation to a larger denomination.

Keywords: Mentorship, leadership, training, development, youth ministers, and non-denominationalism.

Dedication

This page is dedicated to every person who has experienced 'church hurt'. To everyone who fell in love with God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ, in the same space where church hurt occurred, my prayer is for their complete recovery, their return to the church, their steadfast return to God, and the knowledge that we serve God and not the man or woman behind the robe in the pulpit. This page is also dedicated to the foundation of mentorship. For, "we need sages to advise us, leaders to direct us or hold us accountable, peers to remind us that we aren't alone, healers to dress our wounds, and companions who carry us when we can't carry on" (Barna, 2022).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my heavenly father, for without him, none of this would be possible.

I would like to thank my mother, whose devout belief in God, Christianity, and rearing in

the church, allowed me to develop into the woman that I am today. I would like to thank

the mentors in my life who took time out of their schedules, if only for one second, to lead

me and hold me accountable for my successes and failures. Finally, I would like to thank

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School of Divinity for their unwavering support, leadership, and extensive time, in

ensuring I was not only successful, but grounded in my faith and God throughout this

journey.

"Our heavenly Father understands our disappointment, suffering, pain, fear, and doubt.
He is always there to encourage our hearts and help us understand that He's sufficient for
all of our needs. When I accepted this as an absolute truth in my life, I found that my
worrying stopped"

Dr. Charles Frazier Stanley
In Touch Ministries

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List of Abbreviations

African American (A.A.)

African American Male Youth Ministers (A.A.M.Y.M.)

African Methodist Episcopal (AME)

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME)

Community of Practice (COP)

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ELRC)

Liberty University (LU)

Mezirow Transformative Learning Theory (MTLT)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

On the Job Training (OJT)

Openness Conscientiousness Extroversion Agreeableness Neuroticism (OCEAN)

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Author Stephen V. Rouse (2018) defines the non-denominational church as any church that is not connected to a larger denomination. Denominations are defined as churches that have some form of authority over other local churches, or churches under specific hierarchal structures (Rouse, 2018). Examples of denominations include Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. As someone who chose non-denominationalism, the choice was made based on the freedom that was not associated with an inherited doctrine of religious views. Ascertaining what a church is can take on many definitions. Within the word of God, Jesus states he will come back to the earth for his bride, which is the church (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Revelation 19:7). The church referenced here is one body of Christ which is not specific to any one denomination. Yet within this biblical scripture, specific instructions state that the bride (the church), has made herself ready to receive her husband (Jesus Christ). The preparation—the process of making something ready to use or the service of getting ready for some occasion, test, or duty—for the church to receive Jesus Christ is a lifelong process (Lin, 2018). Identifying the steps necessary for preparation is all-inclusive of instruction, as the Bible is an instruction manual, and ministers are its guides.

Background to the Problem

Nearly 6 in 10 youth who grow up in the church leave as adults to join other religious organizations which identify as non-religious or non-denominational (Brumley, 2016). This trend is indicative of confusing times, especially for ministers who work with youth and children and are within an age-group that has at least 25 years or more ahead of them before they can

officially retire from ministry (Brumley, 2016). This gap presented concern in the area of unsatisfied mentorship standards. As such, the absence of continuing mentorship platforms for youth ministers is significantly affected by this trend. In order to fully comprehend the connection between mentorship and non-denominationalism, the history of non-denominationalism must be presented. Dr. H. Bruce Stokes (2011) states that non-denominational Christianity is said to be a recent phenomenon in Christian History through the rise of Para-Church movements (Stokes, 2011). Parachurches identified themselves as non-denominational and did so to view the congregation of the Christian church as essential to the development of Christianity (Stokes, 2011). Ultimately, Parachurches organized people in accordance with their age and ministry designation (youth, senior, junior, etc.), further determining which para-church organization an individual would essentially become a part of (Stokes, 2011). This sub-categorization produced three significant issues within non-denominationalism: a loss of identity which took away a sense of belonging, an absence of meaningful communities or groups of worshipers with similar faiths, values, backgrounds, and cultures, and an eclectic approach to doctrine lacking a solid biblical foundation (Stokes, 2011).

As this trend emerged, authors Daniel Suh and Raymond Russell further confirmed that within the past decades more attention has been given to religious adherence across American society. In their summation, "religiously unaffiliated individuals, formerly rare, have emerged to compromise a substantial portion of the population. These non-affiliates have no religious preference and are not tied to any particular religion, although they consider themselves religious" (Suh & Russell, 2015, p. 26). In an effort to shed light on religious preferences, the U.S. Religious Census identified over 44,000 independent congregations without a denominational preference, surpassing 35,496 since 2010 and outnumbering Southern Baptist churches, identified by the Southern Baptist Convention, as 7,000 churches (Religion Watch,

2023, p. 1). Similarly, "distinct from non-affiliation, non-denominationalism refers to individuals who report no denominational preference, but who nevertheless report that they are affiliated with a religion" (Suh & Russell, 2015, p. 26). To better understand the need to conduct research based on the background to the problem, generational designations were checked. Author Elictia Hart breaks down Generation Y (Millennial) and Generation Z (new generation) statistics. Elictia Hart (2023) initially reported individuals born between 1981 and 1996 were considered Generation Y. Individuals born between 1996 and 2010 were considered Generation Z, and individuals born between 1965 and 1980 were considered Generation X (Hart, 2023). Statistically, Generation Z and Millennials, "made up almost half of the United States' populous in 2020. Millennials comprised the largest percentage of the two groups at 21.3%, while Generation Z represented 20.35%, placing millennials at the top of the U.S. resident population" (Hart, p. 29, 2023). All three generations were identified within the research gap.

While a great deal of research has been conducted on the emergence of non-denominational Christianity, there is limited research on non-denominational mentorship or lifespan mentorship challenges faced by African American male youth ministers in non-denominationalism (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). Current research has found the importance of training beyond ordination which is likely to lead towards lifelong healthy spiritual development, for, "when the word mentor is used it means that mentors have a significant role in the scholars' learning providing instructive and personal support" (Lofmark et al., 2008, p. 109). Authors Conrad Hackett and David McClendon (2017) agreed with this statement as they point out that the role of mentors in Christianity is singularly linked to a religion that is widely practiced throughout the world and further divided into different cultural groups. The cultural group which this research study highlighted was specific to the African American male youth minister. Within this group, "African Christianity has been described as a religion that renews itself by

continuously breaking with their cultural past in order to engender Christian humanity. The new life in Christ by itself is something that automatically threatens the consistency of African cultural past" (Kaunda, 2020, p. 482). Yet, the discussion about Black male mentors and role models within this group is not new (Johnson et al., 2020).

As early as the 1930s research studies were conducted focusing on the African American woman as the central figure within urban families and households (Johnson et al., 2020). This recognition started a belief that stated if the adult African American male was not an active member, mentor, or role model within Black families, Black males then had the "inability to gain knowledge and experience via an employed and psychologically healthy male, resulting in the emergence of a non-existent social and fleshly developmental behaviors" (Johnson et al., 2020, p. 218). Researchers decided this level of absenteeism further hindered African American males in their decisions to lead in leadership positions full-time (Johnson et al., 2020). As such, a decrease in Black male role models in mentorship roles subjectively leads to high turnover in ministerial burnout within A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church (Johnson et al., 2020).

For reference, some specific reasons why pastors considered quitting ministry full-time can be found in Figure 1 presented by the Barna Group (2022). According to their research as of March 2022, the percentage of pastors who considered quitting ministry full-time based on lack of optimism about the future of the church was 29% (Barna, 2022). Likewise,

over half of pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry (56%) said, 'the immense stress of the job' has factored into their thoughts on leaving. Beyond these general stressors, two in five pastors (43%) said, 'I feel lonely and isolated,' while 38% named 'current political divisions' as reasons they've considered stepping away (Barna, 2022, p. 1).

In contradiction to so many pastors that seem to have considered quitting full-time ministry, Figure 2 highlights ministerial burnout experienced by those who seriously considered

quitting full-time. A poll was conducted between 2021 and 2022 showing that astonishingly 58%

to 71% have not considered quitting. In light of the statistics presented highlighting ministerial

burnout and quitting, this qualitative ethnographic research study sought to determine if there is

a need to create or continue career mentorship programs for African American male youth

ministers in the non-denominational church past ordination. The persons who benefited from the

proposed research were current youth ministers in leadership positions, practicing youth

ministers within the nondenominational church, and those who wish to implement training and

mentorship programs for youth ministers within the non-denominational church.

Figure 1

U.S. Protestant pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry in the past year, March 10–16, 2022.

MINISTRY CHALLENGES, BY PASTORS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED QUITTING

Barna

Are any of the following reasons why you have considered quitting full-time ministry?
Select all that apply.
Base: % among those who have considered quitting full-time ministry

Reason	%
The immense stress of the job	56%
I feel lonely and isolated	43%
Current political divisions	38%
I am unhappy with the effect this role has had on my family	29%
I am not optimistic about the future of my church	29%
My vision for the church conflicts with the church's direction	29%
My church is steadily declining	24%
I am not satisfied with my job	22%
I don't feel respected by the congregants	21%
I don't feel equipped to cope with ministry demands	19%
I don't have what I need to be successful in my job	12%
I don't feel supported by my staff	12%
I feel called to another profession outside of church ministry	10%
I have experienced a personal crisis of faith	6%
Ministry is not what I thought it would be	6%
I don't feel respected by those outside the church	6%
None of the above	2%
Something else	21%

*n*n=221 U.S. Protestant pastors who have considered quitting full-time ministry in the past year, March 10–16, 2022. | Source: Barna Group

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Figure 2

Pastoral burnout, 2021-2022

PASTORAL BURNOUT, 2021–2022 — Barna

Have you given real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year?

● Jan 21 ● Mar 22

	Yes	No
Jan 21	29%	71%
Mar 22	42%	58%

n=413 U.S. Protestant pastors, January 22–27, 2021.
n=510 U.S. Protestant pastors, March 10–16, 2022. | Source: Barna Group

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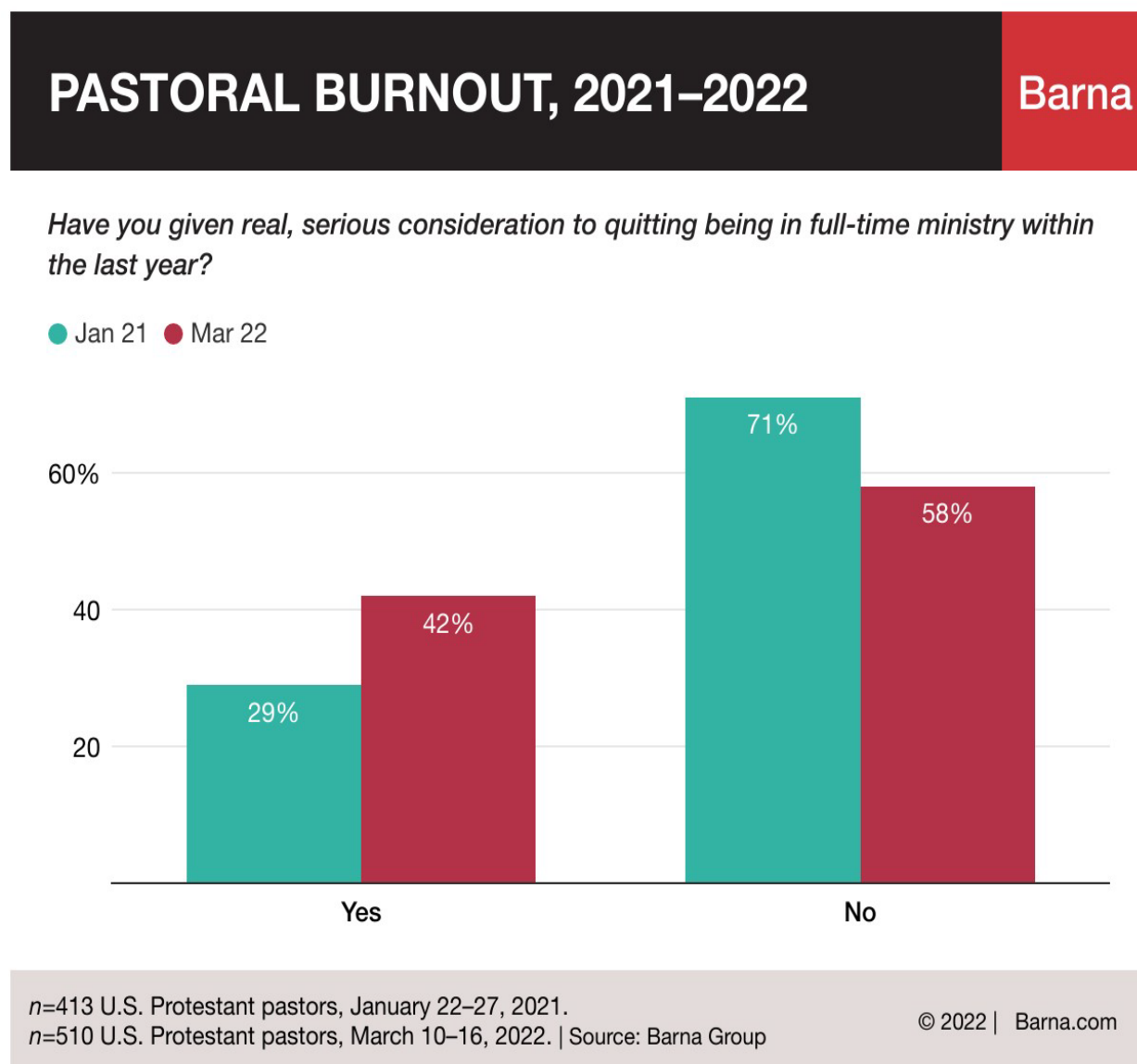
Statement of the Problem

The research problem was, as non-denominational churches grow, there is a concern that younger, less seasoned African American male youth ministers will become senior pastors without having appropriate mentorship. Mentoring "refers to a process of serving as a mentor, or someone who facilitates and assists another person's development" (Kamarudin et al., 2020, p.

290). The word of God states, "for when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, 1 Corinthians 13:11). Within the non-denominational church, as well as many other denominations, youth ministers and even younger senior pastors are leading flocks who doubt the authenticity of their callings simply because of their age, underdevelopment in the areas of maturity and leadership, and the lack of formal On the Job Training (OJT) (Stetzer, 2019). These areas should be further explored based on the barriers they potentially present to the spiritual growth of congregants in the non-denominational church. If the head of the church fails to mature in Christ, the body will deteriorate and perish (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Colossians 1:18). Mentorship is a key element within the structure of youth ministers because the Bible states, "the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, 2 Timothy 2:2).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to explore if the absence or presence of formal mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church in Atlanta Georgia beyond ordination were needed. Based on statistics, participants were generally defined as those who attended church at least 3 times a month and were actively serving within the ministerial department(s) of the non-denominational church. The theory guiding this study was the Transformative Learning Theory. The Transformative Learning Theory, or Mezirow Transformative Learning Theory (MTLT), "invites learners to reflect on their deeply engrained beliefs or frames of reference and to become open to changing these in response to evidence gained around a new, changing, or uncertain

environment" (Campbell & Brysiewicz, 2018, p. 3). The theory was chosen because its focus

was heavily centered on young adult instruction and learning.

Research Questions

RQ1. What areas of formal education do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ2. What areas of informal, continuing, or on-the-job education and training do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ3. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if there is a need for mentorship beyond ordination in their career?

RQ4. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if their success or failures are attributed to leadership effectiveness or leadership ineffectiveness based on mentorship in their career?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Research Assumptions

1. There were no known established programs within the non-denominational church group that set requirements or pre-requisites for pastorship in this religious group in Atlanta Georgia.

2. The non-denominational church was said to offer too much freedom and limited structure, which is leading to a loss of biblical application and of African American male youth ministers in Atlanta Georgia.

3. There were few known mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church because ministers are appointed without a pre-determined blueprint to follow in Atlanta Georgia.

Delimitations of the Research Design

Author Scott Thumma in 2010 ascertained, "very little is known about non-

denominational congregations in the United States. Yet, as of 2010, four percent of Americans

worshiped in non-denominational churches" (p. 1). Equally, "if the nation's independent and

non-denominational churches were combined into a single group, they would represent the third

largest cluster of congregations in the country" (Thumma, 2015, p. 3). The Hartford Institute for

Religion Research (2020) explains that the combination of non-denominational and independent

churches constitutes the second largest Protestant denomination after the Southern Baptists

(2020). Based on the data presented, it seems there is an absolute necessity for mentorship; (a) it

is such a large group, (b) it is growing fast, (c) there are so few requirements for starting a

church, and even less for pastorship, and (d) little to no body or board to which these churches

are accountable. However, this data only represented membership within the non-denominational

church and was not specific to youth ministers or African American male youth ministers

actively serving in the non-denominational church. The delimitations of this research study were

as follows:

1. The selection process was limited to African American within Non-denominational churches in the city of Atlanta Georgia. This element was conducted via multiple-choice options.

2. The selection process was limited to African American male youth ministers actively serving in ministry in the non-denominational church. This element was conducted via a multiple-choice option.

3. All mentorship-related questions included African American male youth ministers in the Non-denominational church under the age of 46. This element was conducted via a multiple-choice option.

4. Mentorship specifications were focused between the years of 2010 and 2020. This element was conducted via a multiple-choice option.

For the purpose of transparency, Figure 3 has been inserted. The purpose of this table was to showcase the differences in denominational families, both evangelical Protestant and Mainline Protestant, in relation to Historically Black Protestants.

Figure 3

Religious Landscape Study

Protestant Denominational Families Include Denominations Associated with Different Traditions			
Largely evangelical denominational families	Evangelical Protestant Tradition	Mainline Protestant Tradition	Historically Black Protestant Tradition
Baptist	60	14	26=100
Nondenominational	78	16	6
Pentecostal	77	0	23
Restorationist	87	13	0
Holiness	88	0	12
Adventist	100	0	0
Anabaptist	84	16	0
Largely mainline denominational Families			
Methodist	4	85	11
Lutheran	41	59	0
Presbyterian	36	64	0
Episcopalian/Anglican	2	98	0
Congregationalist	15	85	0
Protestant non-specific	39	50	11

2014 Religious Landscape Study conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding – PEW Research Center -

Definition of Terms

1. *Community of Practice*: Groups of people who share a concern or passion for a topic, a craft, and/or a profession. These individuals deepen their knowledge and expertise through regular interaction with each other.
   (de Paiva Duarte, F. (2013). Communities of Practice. In: Idowu, S.O., Capaldi, N., Zu, L., Gupta, A.D. (eds) Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_644).

2. *Positive Youth Development*: Youth are broken or are in the process of being broken. The capacity to change is linked to the development of new cognitive abilities, interests, behavioral skills, and social relationships. (DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (2013). Handbook of youth mentoring (Second ed.). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412996907).

3. *Non-Denominational*: Open or acceptable to people of any religious group, especially any branch of the Christian Church (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/nondenominational?q=non-denominational).

4. *African Methodist Episcopal Church*: A church born to protest against slavery – against dehumanization of African people, brought to the American continent as labor. (https://www.ame-church.com/).

5. African American: An American or African and especially of Black African descent (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/African%20American).).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was based on the importance of the African American Male Youth Minister in the non-denominational church. This study was needed due to the limitless boundaries of ministers, training, and selection the non-denominational church presents specifically for young adults. For example, in 1926 chapel attendance was significantly decreasing at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. In fact, the attendance rates were so low that like minds came together to revitalize the chapel with an overall effort to bring young students back to religion (Geva, 2018). In essence, the "institution felt it had to find other ways to make campus spiritual life more appealing. It sought to create an environment in which students

would choose to spend their time" (Geva, 2018, p. 34). The foundation of this study was this experiment that occurred 97 years ago, which was 38 years before President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964 legally ending segregation (Endersby & Horner, 2016). The outcome of the experiment suggested having a platform in which the youth within the non-denominational church can express themselves, both the good things and bad things, has been at the heart of institution (Geva, 2018). Yet where does this leave the foundation of mentorship for the African American Male mouth Minister? Subjects in the areas of terminology, application, and interests in the Word of God at times comes down to what a Christian is perceived to be (Geva, 2018). If a young non-denominational church's minister 'looks' like Christ in the eyes of a mentee, can this figure transform and significantly renew a faith that has been lost to a generation (Chow, 2017)? Consider childhood for a moment. Some regular church attendees grew up in an era when senior pastors appeared to be within a specific age group. Today many senior pastors are as young as 20 years old, leading flocks of hundreds (Bergen, 2012).

Summary of the Design

The study was constructed and designed to provide information on the implementation of mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church. The approach was conducted through qualitative interviews and questionnaires for African American male youth ministers currently serving in ministry in the non-denominational church.

1. A questionnaire for non-denominational ministers highlighted those current ministers who had formal postgraduate or OJT while in the non-denominational church. The questionnaire included open-ended questions for the purpose of discussion and identifying official training certifications and documentation. The questionnaire was

initiated with the sole purpose of gathering information on the value of mentorship, the lack of mentorship, and their experience with training programs within the non-denominational church. Items included in the questionnaire included highest level of education and age during which mentorship was received. The purpose of this action sought to narrow down selected participants and determine if any of these factors are hindering training and mentorship in this area.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This qualitative ethnographic research study explored the absence or presence of formal mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church in Atlanta Georgia. Participants were defined as those who attend church at least 3 times a month and are actively serving within department(s) of the non-denominational church. The theory guiding this study was the Transformative Learning Theory (TLT). Transformative learning is known to be cognitive and relational, whereas adult learning "is now described in relation to embodied learning, the emotions, spirituality, relational learning, arts-based learning, and storytelling" (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 5).

Theological Framework for the Study

A limited amount of research was found on standardized mentorship programs within the non-denominational church. This gap exists due to the non-denominational churches' decision to be separate from larger denominational religious groups (Brauer, 2017). While a great deal of research can be found on Christian mentorship, very little is specific to African American male youth ministers in conjunction with their service in ministry in the non-denominational church. In an effort to further understand why this gap existed, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (MTLT) or (TLT) was linked to this gap throughout the research process. The transformative learning theory is a "process by which adults adopt more flexible, inclusive, and discerning perspectives for interpreting and responding to their life experiences" (Adkins, 2015, p. 12). In essence this theory suggested that a trainee's understanding of their experiences creates meaning, which in turn leads to change in performance, attitude, and principles (Adkins, 2015). Since life experiences were utilized in place of mentorship, perhaps African American male youth ministers serving in ministry within the non-denominational church do not see formal

mentorship programs as a necessity. When theorist Mezirow initially conducted research in TLT, he wanted to gain a better understanding of why women went back to school as adults (Adkins, 2015). Mezirow essentially found that adult learning involved critical reflection and critical review, which could lead to a renewed understanding of how things function in their current stages of life (Adkins, 2015). The TLT was used because it focused on the idea that a person's worldview changes the more, they learn, and makes room to grasp new concepts and ideas (Adkins, 2015). In further exploration of this proposed research area, four subsections were assigned to this theological framework: (a) *Christian leadership and education* - approached through the identification of structured mentorship between instructors and learners; (b) *Christian Value* - approached through peer relationships; (c) *Christian Stewardship*- approached through succession planning; and (d) *Human conviction* - approached through successful mentorship. Added material included further examinations related to the importance, implications, and relevance of Christian mentorship for male youth ministers.

Christian Leadership & Education

To successfully identify areas of Christian leadership that affect mentorship statistics for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, the current state of the Christian educational system must be addressed. Author Andrew Barton (2019) advises that Christian institutions must intentionally develop future leaders who are familiar with up-and-coming trends, future opportunities for Christian leaders, and learned best practices (Barton, 2019). In Andrew Barton's research, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) reported evidence of 80% of college presidents' intentions of leaving their tenured positions over a ten-year period, with 35% who intended on leaving their positions within a five-year time frame (Barton, 2019). These statistics were generated through a survey conducted in 2011 where 1,600 college presidents among the American Council on Education's (ACE) American College were

charted (Barton 2019). This statistic was relevant to the researched problem, as the researcher

sought to determine if formal education was needed for career mentorship within the researched

population. With a significant decrease in top tier leaders within the Christian educational

system, continuous mentorship beyond scholastic merit and ordination could cease to exist

(Barton, 2019). Additionally, the Barton survey presented a critical statistic towards the current

state of mentorship for Christian ministers beyond ordination, and link towards a decrease or

absence of mentorship programs for this research population; African American male youth

ministers serving in the non-denominational church (Barton, 2019).

Author Andrew Barton (2019) confirms that senior level administrators in higher

Christian learning facilities are rapidly retiring from their professions, or moving into alternative

workforces, as their desire to remain in higher learning platforms has diminished (Barton, 2019);

"To navigate these volatile waters, Christian higher education must develop an increasingly

diverse, high-capacity, and sophisticated cadre of individuals in order to ensure a solid future"

(Barton, 2019, p. 38). Placing this gap in a biblical perspective, consider the story of Moses prior

to leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Before Moses was called by God to a position of

leadership, Moses was mentored by his father-in-law Jethro. As a son-in-law and key leader,

Moses chose capable men from all over Israel and appointed them as leaders based on the

tutelage he received (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Exodus 18). This biblical example

was a key detail in succession planning and continuous mentorship and leadership. Author Make

Masango (2011) comments on this procedure in comparison to the birthing process. In his

explanations,

> mentorship begins on the day of birth and continues throughout one's entire life. The first
> mentors are parents, who already cares for the fetus during pregnancy and continues to do
> so after birth, as the mentorship of a good 'parent' involves teaching (p. 2).

Additionally,

mentors give themselves over entirely to engendering in their chosen pupils' essential qualities of character or skills that are crucial to the continuance of a practice or way of life. In our Christian churches we must recapture this original meaning of mentorship if for no others, then for our children (Kruschwitz, 2008, p. 12).

This trend shows mentorship in education supported by biblical scripture as invaluable. The book of Proverbs states, "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Proverbs 22:6). More relative to the research topic of mentorship, I Peter reads as follows:

so I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, 1 Peter 5:1-5).

The research questions sought to further explore if there was a need for standardized mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church specific to the city of Atlanta, Georgia. This research study was conducted in the city of Atlanta, Georgia based on the fact that the historical background of Georgia includes the Civil Rights Movement. The establishment of the state of Georgia dates back to the 1730s. James Oglethorpe was a former Army officer who spent his lifetime championing for the poor and individuals who, overtime, held a great summation of debt (Oglethorpe, 2021). In essence, philanthropy was inherently Oglethorpe's duty and honor, and as such he sought out and successfully assisted oppressed Londoners in migrating to the United States of America. After James gained adequate funding from the French Parliament, he, along with 20 trustees, established the Colony of Georgia in 1731 (U.S. History Primary Source Timeline, 2021). In a period where slavery was ever-present, "these trustees prohibited Negro slavery, for they

believed that this ban would encourage the settlement of 'English and Christian' people" (U.S. History Primary Source Timeline, p.1, 2021). Oglethorpe's impression and awareness of the link between the African American, oppression, and Christianity was paramount. But it was theologian and scholar Martin Luther who first saw this trend. As a world-renowned researcher and theologian Martin Luther was a significant catalyst for Christian leadership and educational reform (U.S. History Primary Source Timeline, 2021). When Martin became a theologian, he frequently challenged the clergy and the church's stance on remission of sin (U.S. History Primary Source Timeline, 2021). Author Alan Shaw (2006) argues, "only when leaders are willing to be vulnerable with self and with God, can they avoid the pitfalls of the abuses of autocracy and the paralysis of democracy, and truly serve with authority" (p. 131). Biblically, readers can find similarities between the humility of leadership and authority with the story of Jesus at the Mount of Olives.

As Jesus was approaching the Mount of Olives, crowds started to form around him, praising him for the miracles which they had seen and heard of him performing. Nevertheless, there were people in the crowd who asked Jesus to make the crowd be quiet. Jesus answered and said unto them, "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Luke 19:40). Jesus, "who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant…and humbled himself…even to death on the cross" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Philippians 2:6-8). The very essence of humility is often found in the unique relationship between the mentor and mentee (Noble, 2018). Author Alan Noble asserts that Christian universities do not offer unique mentorship avenues between students and their professors. However, the small size of Christian university classrooms, spiritual ties within the communities they service, and their integration of faith-based teachings make their

mentorship unique. And, although the mentorship period is typically four years, the knowledge that students gain from professors allows for a lifetime of mentorship (Noble, 2018).

Author Perry Shaw sustains, "the emerging generations are seeking authority and leadership, built not on power and control, but on a proven and trusted record of self-sacrifice, service, and empowerment" (p. 128). Current literature attests Christianity encompasses diverse backgrounds and cultures, which forces modern Christian leaders to learn how to adapt and apply different levels of understanding to the platforms they serve (Shaw, 2006). Shaw describes these platforms as contextualization and decontextualization. The level of contextualization involves "understanding and appreciating the different potential contributions of our own and other cultures can make to organizational synergy. The level of decontextualization involves rising above the patters of our own and other cultures through critical analysis considering the Scriptures" (Shaw, 2006, p. 122). Both elements aide in gaining a firm grasp of mentorship through transparency in Christian value.

Christian Value

Christian value is crucial towards the development of career mentorship in African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church because Christian worth is often linked to the value of individual peer relationships, which often causes deficiencies in instructive growth (Mallison, 2011). Consequently, "religious-based mentors may actually be more important for educational outcomes than mentors who come from other social contexts because of the unique organizational and cultural characteristics of religious organizations" (Erickson & Phillip, 2012, p. 570). In the biblical book of Matthew readers are introduced to the story of talents, otherwise known as an analogy between a mentor and his pupils' investments. As it is depicted, the mentor (investor) left his residence in the care of three of his mentees (investment). For the first mentee he gave a total of five talents, for the second mentee he gave a

total of two talents, and for the third mentee he gave one talent. Each of these mentees were given their talents based on their current skill sets. When the mentor returned to his mentees, he found that mentees one and two doubled their investment. However, the third mentee buried their talent out of fear. The mentor's response to the third mentee was, "at the very least you could have invested the one talent that I gave you and gained interest on my investment" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Matthew 25:14-30). The moral of the parable of talents is that we are to use and grow our gifts from God for his glory.

As referenced, and in conjunction with the previously mentioned parable of talents, author, and theologian Fred Sanders (2021) introduces a nineteenth-century Methodist and theologian by the name of William Burt Pope. In his article, Sanders professes William Burt Popes' style of preaching was serious and evangelical in nature. However, William Pope did not have children of his own, and managed to remain faithful to his calling to teach and lead (Sanders, 2021). Nevertheless, as "the tide of historical criticism of the Bible was rising rapidly during these decades, and again the younger generation was certain that responsible theology had to take the assured results of the latest critics into account" (Sanders, p.1, 2021). This further asks the question if fear is present, can relationships or the lack of appropriate mentorship relationships stunt instructive and spiritual growth?

Authors Paul Williamson and Ralph Hood (2015) answered this question by introducing spiritual mentors in three categories: intense, occasional, and passive. Each category represents an obligation in mentorship towards African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. The intense mentor spends a significant amount of time developing mentees' gifts and skills to a specific level of proficiency towards Christian Maturity (Williamson & Hood, 2015). This mentor is focused on the lifelong development of their subordinate mentors (Williamson & Hood, 2015). The occasional mentor is one who offers

counsel to a mentee when making a specific decision (Williamson & Hood, 2015). The

occasional mentor has expert knowledge in guiding their mentee and often acts as a sponsor so

that the mentee can achieve specific potential (Williamson & Hood, 2015). The passive mentor

can often be referred to as a historical figure or example which a mentee wishes to model their

behavior after (Williamson & Hood, 2015). The passive mentor's "legacy is preserved in a way

that continues on inspire spiritual values, beliefs, and practices" (Williamson & Hood, 2015, p.

140). When considering how these three categories of mentorship singularly affect African

American male youth ministers within this community, author Kyle Bulthuis sheds insight.

Author Kyle Bulthuis (2019) explores peer relationships between mentors and mentees in

the African American church community through the introduction of two historical figures, Mr.

Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. While attending service at St. George Methodist Church,

Allen and Jones were physically dragged away while they were in prayer simply because they

were African American (Bulthuis, 2019). Considering this as a great injustice, Jones and Allen

essentially formed the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). The AME Church was the

first African American church congregation of its time; the story of Allen's and Jones's

departure from St. George Methodist Church remains a staple in the African American

community, as it marks the initial stages of empowerment and independence in the African

American church (Bulthuis, 2019, p. 255). As southern black churches grew, Mechal Sobel

linked the West African culture to the faiths and values of southern African Americans (Bulthuis,

2019). For instance, "Baptist ministers often gained authority from their charismatic and

extemporaneous deliveries and operated on a vastly different pole in comparison with their

Episcopalian and Congregational brethren in kind, and from their Methodist brethren in degree"

(Bulthuis, 2019, p. 273). Citing that the black church has been referred to as the congruency of

African American History, "African Methodist and black Baptists built their ecclesiastical

structures with clear racial identification and few explicit connections with white bodies, rank and-file blacks were more willing to join them" (Bulthuis, 2019, p. 277).

The credentials for a successful mentor in the Christian community are as follows: competency, on-the-job training, being Christ-centered, being passionate, being relational, being affirming, being open and transparent, being trustworthy, being available, being able to facilitate learning, being competent, and being prayerful (Mallison, 2011). Author John Mallison (2011) claims, "No mentor possesses any of these qualities to the degree that there is no more room for growth. A basic characteristic of good mentors assumed here is that they are persons who are continually becoming" (p. 64).

Along with the subject of Christian mentorship, diversity is paramount. Diversity is an ongoing task, not simply a onetime movement (Slater, 2018). Likewise, diversity is almost often recognized by an individual's race (Slater, 2018). Author Jennifer Slater (2018) introduces diastatic diversity, which "refers to various strata of diversity, in the sense that the different expressions of diversity among people assume different degrees and greatness of differences, as equality in Christ aids in unity and inclusion" (p. 3). Author Vijetha Mukkelli (2014) accepts the definition of diastatic diversity, claiming "the Gospels suggest that one of Jesus' top leadership priorities was developing other leaders—who themselves were capable of forming new generations of leaders" (Mukkelli, 2014, p. 135). In biblical completion of Christian value and its role towards career mentorship for African American male youth ministers, the book of Psalms states, "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Psalms 145:4). The declaration within this generation is formed through Christian stewardship.

Christian Stewardship

Authors Alphonso Groenewald and Onoriode Boloje (2014) indicated, "Christian stewardship has to be viewed from different perspectives and with varying lenses. Christian stewardship involves the totality of the believer's life, his time, his money, his talents, his energy, his family, his business, and his home" (p. 1). In relation, "total Christian stewardship involves consecration of the life of the individual and resources to the service of God and humanity" (Groenewald & Boloje, 2014, p. 1). One way in which Christians express their appreciation to God is through continued trustworthy stewardship (Groenewald & Boloje, 2014). God took man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work and take care of it (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Genesis 2:15). The responsibility falls to human beings to cultivate, guard, and make wise use of his creation. For leaders, God's message to his shepherds is clear: "'woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!' declares the Lord" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Jeremiah 23:1).

For African American male youth ministers serving in ministry within the non-denominational church, proper Christian stewardship is necessary for succession planning for the purpose of untarnished yields. During a time of spiritual decay and political turmoil, Jeremiah was sent to the last tribe, Judah, as a prophet. His succession occurred during the fall of Assyria and rise of Babylon. King Josiah was appointed as King and had reinstituted God's law (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Jeremiah 1-8). However, when he passed away, the tribe of Judah started to worship many idols, mainly Baal. Jeremiah came to warn Judah of what would happen to them if they continued to place their faith in anything other than God. Judah did not heed Jeremiah's warning, and Judah was eventually enslaved under King Nebuchadnezzar (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Jeremiah 1-8). At the time of his selection, Jeremiah thought of himself as too uneducated to be a prophet and too young to be a leader. Yet Jeremiah went forth

and did exactly as God instructed him to do. Identifying this disapprobation is critical to the focus of the research gap, as this scripture agrees that no matter the age of a mentor, God's selection qualifies him or her for leadership (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Jeremiah 1-8).

Author Emilie Amt (2017) reminds readers, "African Americans held no positions of leadership or authority in the churches; their names and concerns were absent from vestry minutes and financial records of the time" (p. 41). Additionally, "when African Americans appeared in the parish registers, taking part in baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial, they were distinguished from whites, often in demeaning ways" (Amt, 2017, p. 42). The biblical book of Deuteronomy states, "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Deuteronomy 15:15). Similarly, "leaders see themselves as, first and foremost, servants and followers under the authority and leadership of God, and from that position lead others" (Shaw, 2006, p. 121). It was theologian and evangelist John Stott who stated it is critical to, "invest in the next generation of evangelical scholars" (Solomon, 2017, p. 141). Ed Solomon argues John Stott only saw discouragement as one of the greatest occupational dangers among Christian leaders. This definition comes from two fronts: the devil blinds the minds of the unbelievers to the gospel (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, 2 Corinthians 4:4); secondly our body" (Solomon, 2017, p.141). As a child, he or she is under the supervision of their guardian or trustee until they become of age. It is not until that child has taken over as the head of the family that they then are allowed to exercise authority. It is at that point, and that point alone, that they become free of supervision (Harris, 2001).

> So too with believers, whether Jew or Gentile. During their spiritual infancy or minority (that is, until the time appointed by the father for their receipt of adoption), believers were in perpetual slavery to the elemental powers of the universe, including the law. But

with the arrival of the time for believers to receive instatement as sons, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law (Harris, 2018, p. 145).

For African American male youth ministers,

formal leadership in the secular or religious world is always a moral test. To be placed in a position of influence over others often means the enjoyment of higher monetary remuneration, societal prestige, the admiration of one's peers, and the internal satisfaction of having achieved vocational success (Howell, 2015, p. 189).

Based on succession in the non-denominational church, there are currently no set requirements in place for one to become a mentor. The story of Elijah and Elisha eloquently describes the need for formal mentorship in the Bible, distinguishing between the role of a protégé and the mentor. Elisha was willing to let go of his career, his family, and the life he had built thus far to follow Elijah, who was offering his mentorship (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Kings 17-18). Elisha killed his bulls and gave the profits to his neighborhood. This is representative of selling shares in a business and throwing a party with the profits. The ultimate test of Christian stewardship is found in Christian honesty and his or her willingness to accept the calling of stewardship (Groenewald & Boloje, 2014).

The practice or implementation of liminal leadership should be imposed.

Liminal leadership enables leaders to remain in a continuous state of openness for renewal and development. A liminal leader is therefore meant to lead people out of liminal spaces of uncertainty, or else make people comfortable and secure within liminality (Slater, 2018, p. 5).

As Barton states,

it is vital that current leaders with power and influence carefully reflect on their understanding of succession planning as an approach to developing future leaders, including whether the desire for a personal legacy comes at the unacceptable price of an ineffective or ill prepared succession (Barton, 2019, p. 38).

Effective succession planning starts with mentorship and ends with human conviction.

Succession Planning

Dr. Gary Bredfeldt (2013) added to this research gap by stating, "the greatest of leaders among us are not powerful senior executives, commanding military strategists, celebrated athletic coaches, or respected political figures. No, the greatest leaders among us are the great teachers among us" (p. 13). God knew that for his Gospel to live beyond the birth and death of his son Jesus Christ, he had to entrust the church with an unlikely group of leaders. Mentorship, succession, and human conviction were banded. For African American male youth ministers serving in the non-denominational church, "succession planning is 'a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement'" (Barton, 2019, p. 39). Regarding proper succession planning the book of John states, "conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit where a person is able to see himself as God sees him: guilty, defiled, and totally unable to save himself" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, John 16:8). When a Christian perspective of leadership is applied, "mission takes priority over position, relationships take priority over achievements, and longer-term goals take priority of a short-term gain" (Barton, 2019, p. 41). The apostle Peter presents the connection between mentorship and human conviction. Peter, initially named Simon, was a great leader and disciple of Jesus. And in fact, it was Jesus who changed his name to Peter, which means rock. Yet Peter operated out of fear (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Luke 5). It is thought that Peter was one of the first of the twelve disciples to be called by Jesus. And, although Peter was a bold man, he frequently put his foot in his mouth (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Peter 2). When Jesus was on trial and about to die, it was Peter who told Jesus that he would never forsake him, and yet he denied him three times. Let us not forget that Peter was a fisherman who operated on the best and worst of seas. Yet when Jesus called him out of his boat to walk on water with him, he

succumbed to fear yet again (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Peter 2). "Where there is no

guidance, a people fall, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety" (*English Standard*

Version Bible, 2001, Proverbs 11:14). Christians are instructed to, "obey our leaders and submit

to them, for they are keeping watch over our souls, as those who will have to give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you"

(*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Hebrews 13:17).

Authors Janet Jones, et al, (2018) stated, "studies show organizational leaders often

characterized as humble tend to collaborate, share information, jointly make decisions, and

possess a shared vision. Additionally, humble leaders are associated with stronger firm

performance, increased organizational commitment, and increased leader follower relationships"

(Jones et al., 2018, p. 96). Nevertheless, one of the greatest gifts that God gives believers is the

Holy Spirit, and along with conviction it is the most valuable characteristic that believers and

non-believers can possess (Jones et al., 2018). The book of Proverbs asks, "How much better it is

to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver?" (*English*

Standard Version Bible, 2001, Proverbs 16:16). Author Jennifer Slater answers this question and

states,

> effective Christian leadership, expressed in servant leadership, can be summarized in
> terms of inclusiveness when God's purpose in Christ is to reconcile all things to himself:
> yearning for the vision where people 'from every tribe and language and people and
> nation' will be gathered around the throne (Slater, 2018, p. 8).

One of the most singular issues with human conviction is the prominence that comes

along with titles and positions (Slater, 2018). Likewise, "the rewards of prominence are why

leadership positions are eagerly pursued and jealously guarded. However, elevation brings with it

heightened opportunities for the vices of greed, arrogance, and vanity to creep in and overtake

one's soul" (Howell, 2015, p. 189). Similarly, "repentance ought to be the most defining

characteristic of Christian discipleship" (Leppin, 2017, p. 59). In mentorship, Christian believers

are reminded whether mentee or mentor, senior or junior, superior, or subordinate, "all the

children of God may he gathered into one body, even as we confess that there is one holy

Catholic Church and there must be one body with one Head" (Lane, 2010, p. 296). And,

> As surely as God lives, he will rule over us with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm
> and with outpoured wrath. He will bring us from the nations and gather us from the
> countries where we have been scattered, and he will bring us into the desert of the nations
> and there, face to face, and he will execute judgment upon us (*English Standard Version
> Bible,* 2001, Ezekiel 20:30-35).

The Theoretical framework for this study presented areas of evolutionary and ethical leadership

foundations and practices, along with Theories of Behaviorism which aided in understanding this

research population.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-

denominational church are stagnant. If we are to have faith that the future of the kingdom of God

will not fail, drastic measures must occur to prevent a destructive generation of Christian

followers and leaders who are void of formal, spiritual, scholarly, and informal training. This

section of the literature review contains related theoretical research which aided in developing

arguments surrounding the exploration of career mentorship standards for African American

male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. The theoretical framework also aided in

supporting the use of the transformative learning theory (TLT) through suggested models of

leadership. The first model was Evolutionary Leadership.

Evolutionary Leadership

In the theory of evolutionary leadership, the Black church and its pastors are considered a

staple of the African American community (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). This conclusion was

based on its independence in providing their communities with "self-help, social and emotional

support, spiritual leadership, financial support, opportunities for educational advancement, and empowerment through participation in social change activities for the African American community since the days of slavery" (Clemons & Johnson, 2020, p. 468). Current research confirmed there are growing concerns between a lack of professional school counseling and educators who have frequent interactions with African American pastors (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). While nearly 9 out of 10 people consider the black church a positive symbol in their lives, there is a gap between perceived ignorance of spiritual issues and evolutionary changes in leadership (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). Author Lorri Freifeld (2013) defines evolutionary leadership as a style of leadership that has "less to do with what you do, and more to do with what you believe in and value" (p. 4). Evolutionary leaders are, by definition, "self-aware, and constantly strive to keep their egos in check. They are connected to a higher vision and know that becoming the best leader they can be is a process they will never complete" (Freifeld, 2013, p. 4). Also, evolutionary leadership and science aid in the knowledge and understanding of social realities and injustices that exist in gender, race, poverty, and sexual orientation (Jones, 2019). The TLT is applicable based on the theory of evolutionary science, which claims people find that they are unable to live as their authentic selves when this observation is hidden (Jones, 2019). However, humans have adapted and evolved to work in groups which depend on problem solving skills verses physical restraint, aiding in unveiling individual authenticity (Jones, 2019). For instance, it was Karl Barth who famously stated, "theology ought to be done with a bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other" (Sondra, 2002, p. 9). The quote by Karl Barth suggests content is a daily debate between biblical and current worldviews. In retrospect, "African Americans place a high value on a quality education as the church is the cornerstone of the African American Community" (Clemons & Johnson, 2020, p. 269). In an effort to understand

why there is a gap between biblical instruction and formal mentorship training, the Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model was also explored.

Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model

For centuries ministers performed their roles in accordance with the Parsons Model of Ministerial Leadership (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). Within this model up-and-coming ministers would first attend college and then immediately go into seminary without having mentorship between their residency or in the transition to the churches where they would be pastors (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). This step was either omitted or performed by junior ministers who knew they would be the sole staff member within their appointed congregation. This practice and model were utilized based on congregation sizes which consisted of less than a hundred members (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). The Parsons model grew out of the historical makeup of the term *parsonage*, which was when a church house provided for the primary pastor of the flock (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). In keeping with tradition, John Tomlinson (2007) confirms,

> the mentors who wrote the clergy manuals conspired to promote the parson model, With the necessary adjustments for the modern context. The parson model depends upon a relationship with the whole community, not just those who attend the local church (pp. 220-221).

However, as non-denominational churches grew, ministers found this model was sustainable but not immediately effective (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). As early as 2013 the non-denominational church had upwards of 12,000 annual ministerial confirmations, but an overall attendance decline of 27,000 persons worldwide (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). This trend caused higher institutions to heavily review their current literature, partnerships, and recruitment strategies for youth ministers within the non-denominational church (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) argue, "as the number of self-identified

Christians shrinks and evangelicals have remained relatively steady, American Christianity looks more evangelical year after year" (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020, p. 161). For this reason, lessons have been implemented because these studies, "generally conceptualize mentors more broadly as nonparent adults who take a special interest in the lives of youth by providing advice, emotional support, or by serving as role models" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 571). For African American youth male ministers, one potential empirical study that aided in closing this gap is the Four Drives Theory.

Four Drives Theory

Authors Paul Lawrence and Nitin Nohria (2001) attempted to mend the absent mentorship gap between senior and junior ministers, with an implication stating, in a ministerial content, this theory implies that every person from senior minister to junior minister brings a set amount of knowledge to the table daily. Unlike the Parsons Model which relied heavily on one pastor with limited mentorship training leading churches as the sole staff member, the Four Drives Theory is the complete opposite. Within the Four Drives Model, four areas of inclusive ministry standards are documented: a drive to acquire, a drive to bond, a drive to comprehend, and a drive to defend (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). The drive to acquire focuses on what we need for survival, conception, and our generation's survival. This drive far exceeds basic life needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) and focuses on qualitive principles which aid in lifelong development (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). This drive is also associated with gaining things of interest to one's identify and meeting the needs of those whom one mentors (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). The drive to bond is similar to mentorship because it generally forms over a significant amount of time and instills a mutual relationship of care and trust. Within this drive, people strive to make vital connections with members of their culture and working community for the purpose of networking as a team rather than as an individual ((Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). The drive to

comprehend is meant to absorb, create, and make sense out of the world in which one is currently

attached (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). In essence, the drive to comprehend suggests greater

performance outcomes arise when challenges are presented to be stretched spiritually and

mentally (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). The drive to defend originates out of the need to defend

the next generation from threats and to protect families, groups, or religious groups and ideals to

which one belongs (Lawrence & Nohria, 2001). To defend the next generation of Christians

against dishonest prophets, mentorship has its place. Biblically speaking, the drive to defend can

be found in book of John as God states "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the

Father except through Jesus Christ (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, John 14:6). The

purpose of Christian leadership development is introduction or reintroduction to Christianity

through Jesus Christ (Baumgartner, 2017). For instance,

> Jesus was very open to teaching moments which occurred in intersection with other
> people and by circumstances. Thus, the experiential learning cycle takes experiences,
> combines it with reflection, adds abstract knowledge and then leads back to experiment
> with models into one cycle (Baumgartner, 2017, p. 17).

These connections are relevant to ongoing mentorship for African American male youth

ministers in becoming one in Christ congruently in the non-denominational Black church.

Congregant Mentorship in the Black Church

With significance to the non-denominational church, author Ed Stetzer (2017) confirms

the number one reason for being in a denominational church is the networking opportunities it

presents for mentoring relationships. Yet with all the different resources and networks available

to ministers, a great deal of ministers choose to go at mentorship alone (Stetzer, 2017). For

instance, leaders singularly have the responsibility of the shepherd to parishioners under their

care, and it is God who ultimately designs and blesses these mentoring relationships (Stetzer,

2017). Simply stated, "One cannot be responsible for people for whom God has not made them

responsible. You should not expect someone to be responsible for you if you aren't willing to live in accountability with them" (Stetzer, 2017, p. 2). The Black Church supports this level of responsibility through ideals from philosopher Charles Darwin.

Charles Darwin, born February 12 in 1809 in Shrewsbury Shropshire England, was an ecologist whose scientific theory of evolution by natural selection became a staple for modern day evolutionary studies (Martinez-Reina, 2022). Darwin had Unitarian roots (liberal religion based on reason and fact) and sought for a stronger understanding of equality and antislavery, as the African American slave was then seen as property, equivalent to an animal, and less than a human being (Martinez-Reina, 2022). When Charles Darwin published the Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection, the publication sent people into an uproar based on a preconceived attack against the church (Baum, 2017). This reason behind this upheaval was based on the notion that Darwin's teachings went against biblical accounts of God's creation and equality for all living things (Baum, 2017). Similarly, "existing literature has not adequately examined the mechanisms through which religious behavior might affect instructive outcomes within the Black church" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 569). To fully comprehend Darwin's theoretical findings as they relate to mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, the researcher considered the Theory of Behaviorism.

Theory of Behaviorism

Mentorship will have successful implications for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church when positive stimuli are present (Clark, 2018). Author Kevin Clark (2018) suggests, "behaviorism emphasizes that learning occurs when an individual responds favorably to some type of external stimuli" (p. 172). Within his argument, two types of conditioning agents add to or take away from individual growth: classical and operant conditioning (Clark, 2018). In plain language, classical conditioning occurs over the course of

time and is linked to one common theme: symbolism and reward (Clark, 2018). Classical

conditioning presents four stages of successful impact within the stimuli: acquisition (learning

how to respond to changing environments), extinction (the absence of response to changing

environments), generalization (responses may occur without continued mentorship), and

discrimination (career mentorship can occur in one church, but not each minister in every non-

denominational church) (Clark, 2018). Operant conditioning, "is a process of reinforcing a

voluntary behavior by rewarding it" (Clark, 2018, p. 173). In biblical terms, operant conditioning

explained is, "seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and then everything else will follow" (*English*

Standard Version Bible, 2001, Matthew 6:33). Within operant condition, two factors are present:

reinforcement and punishment. Reinforcement refers to "anything that has the effect of

strengthening a particular behavior for it to occur again", whereas punishment refers to "anything

that has an effect of lessening or discouraging a particular behavior so that it does not occur

again" (Clark, 2018, p. 174). Relative to the Black Church, the Black Church is a social

institution which survived the stimuli of oppression and slavery and remains free from white

control (Douglas & Hopson, 2001, p. 98).

The Black Church created a stimulus of social, political, and economic refuge for blacks

during significant periods of racism, which unfortunately still exist (Douglas & Hopson, 2001).

Researchers confirm ethical leadership foundations and practices of the black church evolved

during initial captivity, the Middle Passage, and enslavement (Douglas & Hopson, 2001).

Similarly, it was the Black Church that influenced the social religions and life of the Black

community (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). For example, behaviorism within the Black Church was

created around the statuses which an individual held within their community versus how the

world saw them. One example of this analogy is, "The janitor in a white office building could

have been the respected head of the deacon board at the church. The black domestic worker may

have been the Sunday school superintendent. The black church essentially created its own independent hierarchies and networks of power, which become avenues for people to garner ecclesiastical privilege" (Douglas & Hopson, 2001, p. 98). Within the creation of independent hierarchies and networks of power, two aspects of behaviorism aided in career mentorship and change for the Black Church: methodological behaviorisms and radical behaviorisms.

Methodological Behaviorisms

Methodological behaviorisms were affected during the application of the TLT within this research population based on observation instead of hands-on application (Baum, 2017). In reference to African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, genetic inheritance formulation must be considered in career mentorship causes and effects. Genetic inheritance is the process in which characteristic are simply passed from one generation to the next in the form of DNA (Baum, 2017). Author William Baum (2017) implies, "Modern evolutionary theories aroused in the first half of the twentieth century when the idea of natural selection was combined with the theory of genetic inheritance" (Baum, 2017, p. 6). Methodological behaviorism "retains the contrast between inner subjective events and external objective events while proposing only to study external objective events. The objective events, being public and measurable, are indicators of subjective events" (Baum, 2017, p. 284).

These two factors are critical to this research population because the genetic makeup of the Black Church has always been generationally passed down, and it includes characteristics of "South Anglican ministers who were slaves gathered in hush harbors, woods, gullies, ravines, thickets, and swamps for heartfelt worship which stressed deliverance from the toil and troubles of the present world, and salvation in the heavenly life to come" (American Experience, 2019, p. 22). Additional research presented by Kelly Brown Douglas and Ronald E. Hopson (2001) confirm the Black Church

is a multitudinous community of churches, which are diversified by origin, denomination, doctrine, worshiping culture, spiritual expression, class, size, and other less-obvious factors. Yet, as disparate as black churches may seem, they share a special history, culture, and role in black life, all of which attest to their collective identity as the black church (Douglas & Hopson, 2001, p. 96).

In the biblical book of Peter, a confirmation of belonging is stated: for "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Peter 2:9). Unlike methodological spiritual behaviorisms, Radical behaviorism "derives from the word 'root' or getting to the root of issues about a science of behavior" (Baum, 2017, p. 288).

Radical Behaviorism

Author Burrhus Frederic Skinner, or B.F. Skinner, was an American psychologist, behaviorist, writer, inventor, and social philosopher who coined the term *Radical Behaviorism*. In his pursuit, he discovered that an individual's behavior and environmental factors significantly influence their current and future psychological state. In essence, how an individual feels, thinks, or reacts is a result of their experiences and environment (Regis College, 2021). Authors Lakeshia Cousin and Latiena Williams (2021) side with Skinner by claiming,

> Strong cultural bonds have been woven throughout Black communities making Black pastors of great significance as role models, influencers, and leaders. Historically, the role of the Black pastor has been viewed as a preacher, teacher, civil rights leader, and navigator of challenges (p. 1070).

This recognition has formed the term *determinism* within the African American community. Determinism is

> the idea that a science of behavior is possible implies that behavior, like any scientific subject matter, is orderly, can be explained, with the right knowledge can be predicted, and with the right means can be controlled. This is the notion that behavior is determined solely by heredity and environment (Baum, 2017, p. 10).

Where there are external factors that influence individual behavior, the individual ego is also prevailing. According to Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), philosophical egoism is "the desire to dominate in order to get more power" (Dion, 2012, p. 9). Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) sides with this notion and estimates

> a given action actually promotes the interests of an individual when it adds something to the total level of pleasure for him (her), or when it reduces the total level of pain for him (her) over other people) and the desire to avoid death (self-preservation) are the main human motives for action (Dion, 2012, p. 10).

To change this dynamic and promote long term church planning and growth for adolescents, African American male youth who have a desire to serve in ministry, are encouraged to participate in organized religion. This participatory inclusion allows them to "gain access to older attendants who may offer care, attention, counsel, or otherwise positive encouragement (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 569). Thus, "the relationships youth form with these religious adults offers opportunities for role modeling and interpersonal ties that can have important implications for educational attainment" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 570). The relationship between mentorship and educational attainment was bridged through utilitarianism.

Theory of Utilitarianism

> Author Brian Rosebury (2021) defines *utilitarianism* as
>
> a consequentialist theory that assigns value impartially to the well-being of each person. It recognizes that having to pursue imperfect, and imperfectly predictable outcomes is the normal condition of our moral decision making and it aims to guide us towards to best outcomes achievable within our limited knowledge and limited powers (p. 717).

Craig Purshouse (2018) further defines utilitarianism as, "the idea that 'actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness', elicits widespread disdain" (Purshouse, 2018, p.24). In relation to African American male youth ministers in non-denominationalism, author Andrew Bor (2020) adds, "monitoring potential leaders and thereby promoting and sustaining the leadership of benevolent and able

persons yielded fitness benefits for followers ancestrally" (p. 1). In effect, "utilitarian leaders would believe that something is morally right if it produces a greater (net) pleasure for the greatest number of people affected by this action. Utilitarian leaders believe that utility means promoting pleasure and avoiding pain" (Dion, 2012, p. 17). Fortunately, the Black Church "provides fundamental religious teaching and advocates certain religious doctrines reflective of black churches. Most significantly, it established a definite system of values that are deemed crucial for black life" (Douglas & Hopson, 2001, p. 100).

Within this system, professions are refined. The ideas of the professions dates to the early 17th century when occupations consisted of three professions: physicians, priests, and lawyers (Sama, 2007). These professionals addressed the economic stability and moral needs of the communities in which they operated, which currently identify 40,000 undocumented professions (Sama, 2007) Dr. Linda M. Sama, Director of the Center for International Business Development and associate Professor of management at Pace University's Lubin School of Business, asserts, "A profession is characterized by the mastery of a specific knowledge base and the development of skill and acumen in performance related to that knowledge" (p. 40). Mentorship as a profession was cultivated through ethical leadership.

Ethical Leadership

Researcher Steven V. Rouse (2018) conducted a literature review which contained studies that measured and explored perceptions of the personality of Jesus. Within this study the following factors were explored: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (Rouse, 2018). This study is significant to TLT in this research population because it seeks to evaluate the perceptions of Jesus among Christian groups and attitudes, both affiliated and unaffiliated, and how Jesus was viewed amongst people in the United States versus other countries (Rouse, 2018). The study found, "Christians perceived Jesus

as being emotionally warm and concerned about the well-being of others, while also being emotionally stable and well-adjusted" (Rouse, 2018, p.464). In this study, "One hundred and fifteen American Christians completed an adjective checklist, identifying which of the 300 adjectives best described Jesus' personality" (Rouse, 2018, p. 464). This study was singularly significant to this research area based on the participants; 63 male and female agnostics, 72 male and female atheists, and 72 male and female Catholics (Rouse, 2018). The percentage of non-denominational Christians totaled 58 participants, and only 14 identified as male. However, the age range of participants was between 21 and 73 years of age. In relation to the conducted study, representation here was significant, because it highlighted non-denominational participation as the lowest ranked statistic (Rouse, 2018). In addition, this representation was critical to male representation, as well as the age of male participants in the non-denominational church.

Author James Calaway (2015) conducted a similar qualitative phenomenological study titled, The Perceived Effects of Church Governance on Church Leadership and Growth. The primary focus of the study was aimed towards perceptions of principal ministers and the overall factors that contribute to church growth. In his findings, James noted that issues that currently exist with church growth do not lie with the people, but with the church (Calaway, 2015). Within the past three decades, churches which have experienced the most significant growth spurts are Pentecostal, Non-denominational, and churches with no denomination (Calaway, 2015). Yet, the shift to start new churches has been ongoing since the start of the 21st century (Calaway, 2015). When ethical leadership is performed properly in the professional arena, one must ideally be willing to endure scandals (Sama, 2007). Like mentorship, "questions concerning the lack of growth or influence in the church include program focus, governance and structure, relevancy to the community that the church exists, or the role of the leader (lead minister) has in influencing

the direction of the church" (Calaway, 2015, p. 16). Another factor that ushers in stunted church growth is the condition of morality in the United States.

Precedent literature confirms, "since the 1960s the United States has been in moral and ethical decline. There may be a connection between the decline of church attendance and religiosity and the erosion of the integrity and ethics of the people of the United States" (Calaway, 2015, p. 18). Philip Selznick, a former Professor of Sociology and Law at the University of California, Berkeley, contributes the argument and states, "when people engage in theoretical reasoning, they become part of what he calls the 'moral commonwealth' which forms the basis of ethical and moral behavior in any age" (Jones, 2019, p.1). Furthermore, there are two reasons why ministers leave the church: conflict amongst parishioners and internal and external conflicts with denominational leaders (Calaway, 2015). Of the 350,000 churches in America, four out of five churches have either plateaued or declined (Davis, 2013). Hence, "only [by] the planting of biblically faithful churches that use culturally appropriate means to proclaim the gospel of Christ can these alarming trends be reversed" (Davis, 2013, p. 20). The reversal starts and ends with transformational and transactional leaders who are needed to reverse negative trends and produce positive lifelong results.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Transformational leadership is, "a style of leadership that transforms followers to rise above their self-interest by altering their morale, ideals, interests, and values, motivating them to perform better than initially expected" (Berkvoich & Eyal, 2021, p. 131). Opposite of transformational leadership, transactional leadership is said to have predicted how ethics are viewed under utilitarianism (Berkvoich & Eyal, 2019). Author John Walcott (2021) illustrates transactional leadership's effect on the African American educational institution by discussing social classes. John Walcott states,

Social class plays a role in perpetuating educational inequality in our society. Simply
stated, students living in poverty do not perform as well as wealthier students. Currently,
students from families in the lowest income quartile have an 11% completion rate of
four-year colleges and universities compared to the 58% completion rate of students from
families in the top income quartile (p. 340).

In transparency through transformational leadership, authors Lijun Ma, Xin Wang, and
Che Zhang (2019) confirm, "religion is a key informal institutional arrangement for controlling
human cognition, belief, and values" (p. 835). In working with pastors within the confines of
ministry and the church, "members of any board must be able to do their job, which is to provide
guidance and support if the senior leaders have their confidence. And, to remove the senior
leaders when he (or she) has lost it. If they can't do that, then the company doesn't need a new
chairman - it needs new directors" (Lewis, 2002, p. 7). Religion in the United States is a $1.2
trillion dollar industry (Ma et al., 2019). The industry offers the same services people pay money
for in the marketplace; they are legal entities, they generate profit, they create jobs for local
economies, they use tax loopholes to maximize profits, they are strategic about generating
revenue, and they compete (Ma et al., 2019).

In conclusion of this discussion on the theoretical background of this study, empirical
research continuously confirms the nature that,

religious participation offers access to a religious-based social network within which
adolescents can draw resources and information. Religious-based mentors may be more
important for educational outcomes than mentors who come from other social contexts
because of the unique organizational and cultural characteristics of religious
organizations (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 572).

The previously mentioned research facts have focused on how the transformative learning theory
affects African American male youth minsters in the non-denominational church.

Related Literature

Related literature presented below focuses on Black Christianity, foundations of
mentorship in relation to early life mentoring, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), mentoring

in a Community of Practice (CoP), leadership development, mentors versus protégés, models of Christian Leadership, the Servant leader, and mentoring young adults.

Black Christianity

Author Shaonetta Allen (2019) identified the Black Church in American Society as an institutional-level frame and as the ideological level frame. On the institutional level, the Black Church represented Black freedom and independence in America as early as 1898 (Allen, 2019). It was within the Black Church that African Americans found a social institution fully controlled by Black people, which in turn allowed Black people to trust in the institution of the church and ensured their success (Allen, 2019). In the ideological level, the values, ideas, and beliefs of Black people are further cultivated (Allen, 2019). Our motivation for serving the church is not only to benefit the church as a collective but to please God. When God is glorified, everyone benefits, both individuals and the group as a whole (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Hebrews 13:16).

The Black Church is connected to the roots of the African American community because the Black churches represented the first symbols of freedom and independence in America, as stated previously (Allen, 2019). In the Black Church, "over 90% of the church buildings are owned by their congregations, while nearly 70% have paid off their church's mortgage. No other segment of the African American community represents such ownership and independence" (Allen, 2019, p. 3). In addition to ownership, the Black Church represented an invisible institution in which secretive meetings were once held for enslaved Africans (Allen, 2019). In fact, "religion, particularly Christianity, has long served as a mechanism through with Black people made sense of their lives. More specifically, Christianity provided a means to affirm their humanity while existing within a radical hierarchy that otherwise deemed them less than fully human" (Allen, 2019, p. 2). The literature introduced here supports the understanding of career

mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, because it identifies how the church intrinsically aids Black people independent of white people (Allen, 2019). The Black Church provided the foundation for a safe haven for African Americans who found themselves working in professions where they were the minority, as the churches often offered a sense of therapeutic release (Allen, 2019). A haven such as this can also be cultivated by establishing a mentor-and-mentee trust relationship through early life mentorship.

Early Life Mentoring

The researcher examined relevant literature on the subject matter of mentorship among African American male youth mentors in the non-denominational church by first exploring the topic of early life mentorship. In the Handbook of Youth Mentoring, authors David L. DuBois and Michael Karcher (2013) explore early life mentorship by seeking answers to the following questions: (a) Do boys and girls have different needs in mentoring relationships? (b) Do same-sex and cross-sex mentoring relationships vary in their impact on youth? (c) Do gender differences in mentoring hold across various identity characteristics? (DuBois & Karcher, 2013, p. 159). Authors Sydney Freeman Jr. and Francis Kochan (2019) answer these questions through the practicalities of cross-mentoring. Cross mentoring occurs when individuals within the same organization, execute mentorship functions across different departments (Freeman & Kochan, 2019). In essence, someone from the information technology department mentors someone within the administrative staff. Based on Freeman and Kochan's findings, cross-mentoring has value, and each agree that mentorship has been focused on older, more seasoned individuals leading younger followers (Freeman & Kochan, 2019). However, based on the history of the United States of America, when the issue of race is added African Americans and other minorities are less likely to trust whites in mentoring situations (Freeman & Kochan, 2019).

The authors' research suggests, "it is essential for the mentor and mentee to have similar values and beliefs, as the African American higher education system of mentees may focuses more on racial and cultural issues" (Freeman & Kochan, 2019, p. 4). Further research sustains the notion that "oppression stems from an asymmetry in the distribution of resources between groups. It operates by systematically denying access to opportunities and resources to certain groups within a society. One source of oppression is discrimination" (DuBois & Karcher, 2013, p. 147). From the mentor's perspective, authors David L. DuBois and Michael Karcher (2013) introduced a meta- analysis of 10 studies which included African American and Caucasian participants. In their synopsis, their analysis failed to find evidence suggesting that race and ethnicity had long-term effects on retention, psychological functioning, and the number of mentorship conferences attended by youth mentees (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). In a separate analysis, 7 studies were introduced that also included African American and Caucasian clinicians. The findings of that investigation suggested that mentees were less likely to stop seeing their mentors when they were matched with individuals within their same ethnic or racial group (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). "Efforts to define or conceptualize youth mentoring have focused on characteristics of the mentor and his or her relationship with the young person involved" (DuBois & Karcher, 2013, p. 4).

DuBois and Karcher further rebut cross-mentorship through the introduction of a Neolithic term known as *Allo-Parenting*. Allo-Parenting is a parenting technique in which an individual who is not a child's primary caretaker takes on some caretaking responsibilities for a child (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). In a village mindset, it was hypothesized that as the evolution of humans ensued, there was an inherent need for survival and generational traditions to succeed continually (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). William M. Kenkel and fellow researchers (2017) determine that "by the age of 3, over 90% of American children have experienced regular Allo-

parental care, which is defined as the provisioning of care by individuals other than the young's biological parents. The quality and quantity of this Allo-Parenting care predicts social–emotional and cognitive–linguistic outcomes" (Kenkel, 2017, p. 214). To further understand the social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic outcomes, DuBois and Karcher divide youth mentoring into five distinct levels: activity (this level involves the participants involved in mentorship with the youth, and the nature of their actions within the mentorship process), relationship (interpersonal relationships that occur frequently), intervention (intentional mentoring efforts which occur in specific communities of persons), societal (public perceptions of youth mentorship) and policy (specific emphasis placed on government or institutional agencies which aid in long or short term mentorship activities) (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). Author Beverly J. Irby contributed further to relevant literature through the executed and implemented program of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB act, "compelled states to design school accountability systems based on annual student assessments. The effect of this federal legislation on the distribution of student achievements is a highly controversial but centrally important question". (Dee & Jacon, 2011, p. 418).

No Child Left Behind

A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Proverbs 24:5). Kenkel and colleagues (2017) focus in on the 2002 concept of mentorship through the full view, creation, and implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This area of study is critical to the research gap, as it highlighted statistics around instructive disparities in educational attainment among youth and the African American community compared to other races. During the implementation of this act, pressure was focused on K-12 school administrators' relationships amid student behavior and student achievement (Kenkel et al., 2020). As recent as 2006 early research suggested that the NCLB

implementation standards were not working. Therefore, administrators remained skeptical about

the results, specifically in part due to states regularly adjusting their standards and mandates (Dee

& Jacobs, 2011). Authors Thomas S. Dee and Brian Jacobs (2011) submit that the implications

of NCLB would enforce responsibility and accountability, as the federal government would have

control over almost 90,000 public schools in the United States. The resolve of this legislation,

> compelled states to conduct annual student assessments linked to state standards to identify schools failing to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the stated goal of having all students achieve proficiency in reading and math by 2013 – 2014, and to institute sanctions and rewards based on each school's AYP status (Dee & Jacobs, 2011, p. 418).

Ultimately,

> when educators develop the capacity to genuinely care for the well-being of the students, because of focusing on children's interests and needs, a culture of care had the possibility to emerge in regard to all relationships in the school. Also, these kinds of bonds can develop, based on respect for each other beyond self-interest, learners also begin to form these bonds with each other, resulting in friendships that further enhance a culture of care that permeates the institution (Kenkel et al., 2020, p. 25).

Since the early 1900s,

> Scholars have constantly documented a graded pattern such that higher levels of psychological distress were found among throws with low socioeconomic status (SES) and diminish as SES increases. Exposure to economic, social, and legal discrimination through the eras of slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration have uniquely shaped African Americans' opportunities to access and accumulate socioeconomic resources. Today, African Americans are disappointedly represented among those who row up poor, live in less hyper-segregated neighborhoods, attend underperforming schools, or are unemployed. In addition, African Americans with higher educational attainment typically earn less and accumulate less when than equivalently educated members of other racial/ethnic groups (Dennis, 2021, p. 120).

> Contributing authors Beverly J. Irby, et al. (2020), validate mentoring disparities within

this context. The primary focus is preparation in maneuvering through different personalities and

procedures, adapting to and implementing skills and knowledge gaps, leadership development

and employee retention, and giving individuals from diverse groups added and equitable access

to resources and information long-term (Irby et al., 2020). This is accomplished through spiritual

formation. In determining if career mentorship is needed within the researched population, spiritual formation is presented. Spiritual formation "in the life of a Christian means experiencing the life of Christ being formed within the person so that there is an increasing manifestation of Christ-likeness and inner wholeness" (Chiroma & Cloet, 2015, p. 4). Kenkel (2020) reports that without spiritual formation, functionalists and constructive methods are necessary.

The functionalist perspective of mentoring looks at the traditional approaches to mentorship where the mentee is the subordinate or inferior to the mentor (Kenkel, 2020). The primary goal of this perspective is to transfer as much information as possible from the mentor to the mentee in the quest of future leadership roles the mentee will undertake (Kenkel, 2020). Critical-Constructive Relational Mentorship is opposite of the functionalist perspective. It recognizes a high quality of mentorship, growth, learning, and mutual influence between both the mentor and mentee. Both parties enter a relationship with the expectation of growth and transformation. The overall focus of relational mentorship is based primarily on shared experiences of both parties, each with an understanding, desire, and responsibility to equally contribute to the relationship (Kenkel et al., 2020). In synopsis, the NCLB legislation is regarded as a communicative effort in which a community is built. For African American Male Youth Ministers, "Collaboration, social interaction, knowledge reciprocation, enterprise negotiation and shared problem solving are its purpose, with the hopes that relationships develop to the point where members communicate with one another beyond a Community of Practice (CoP)" (Holland, 2018, p. 115).

Mentoring in a Community of Practice

The researcher continued to investigate findings related to mentorship in African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church through the exploration of communities of practice. The Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) defines a

Community of Practice (CoP) as a group of people who share common concerns and problems, who work together to fix these problems both individually and within group settings (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, 2021). Author Russell Bernard (2014) professes,

> in the African American community, the church has functioned as a movement-building vehicle by meeting cultural, social, economic, political, and spiritual needs amid grave social inequalities and created spaces of refuge, nourishment, and hope in the face of overwhelming obstacles (p. 23).

The ERLC suggests that CoPs repeatedly concentrate their efforts towards the dissemination of best practices which seek to advance a field of professionals (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, 2021). Within a CoP, four distinct communities are recognized. These communities include Helping communities (communities which focus on everyday needs of the people), Best Practice Communities (communities who develop and disseminate information), Knowledge Stewarding Communities (communities who organize and manage constant influx of information), Innovation Communities (communities who initiate groundbreaking new ideas and practices) (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, 2021). Author Eimear Holland (2018) critiques the ELRC's CoP communities based on its Initial Teacher Evaluation (ITE) approach. For instance, in the mentorship stage, the ITE process is reportedly unstructured and unsupported due to the negative attitudes towards teachers' (the mentors') evaluations (Holland, 2018). This finding is solely based on the idea that "the degree to which mentors can accrue benefits is dependent upon the nature of the school-university partnership and where on the school placement continuum the system resides" (Holland, 2018, p. 111). The systems in rural populations are largely affected.

Authors Noelle Rohatinsky, Janelle Cave, and Chant Krauter (2020) deliberate on the ELRC by suggesting establishment of mentorship programs in rural places. A study was conducted over a four-month period in which 30 volunteer nurses, mentors, and mentees were

recruited from a Canadian town. These participants were chosen to work with communities of less than 10,000 residents. In their findings, mentorship connections were the proposed strategic makeup in evaluating, easing workplace transitions, and strengthening community relations (Rohatinsky et al., 2020). The mentors and mentees in this evaluation were matched with coordinators with whom they shared similar interests. Three themes emerged from this experiment: connection, communication, and support. The connections focused primarily on the relationships that were formed throughout the mentorship program. These connections were peer to peer, internal, and mentor to mentee. The communication focused on the current state of the mentorship program, and the suggested promotion and implementation of future programs. The support focused on interpersonal and professional assistance given to the mentee from the mentor during the process (Rohatinsky et al., 2020). Authors Matthew Hagler, Sam McQuillin, and Sam Rhodes (2020) explain mentoring scholarship literature as it relates to the community of practices in youth development and mentorship.

Mentoring literature is focused on the understanding of functions and outcomes of mentoring relationships (Kenkel et al., 2020). Matthew Hagler et al. (2020) affirm, "Youth mentoring programs seek to address social problems, such as educational disparities, adolescent delinquency, and familial fracturing, by cultivating relationships between youth and caring, nonparent adults" (Hagler et al., 2020, p. 209). DuBois and Karcher suggest that Positive Youth Development (PYD) grew out of the concern and assumption that youth are broken or are in the process of being broken (DuBois & Karcher, 2013). In fact, PYD suggests "the capacity to change is linked to the development of new cognitive abilities, interests, behavioral skills, and social relationships" (DuBois & Karcher, 2013, p. 17). In essence, contributors Nathan H. Chiroma and Anita Cloete (2015) agree that "mentoring as a supportive pedagogy (teaching) which enhances the character formation of theology students. Character is more caught than

taught, and modelling plays an important role in character formation and leadership development" (Chiroma & Cloet, 2015, p. 4).

Leadership Development

An ongoing debate on career mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church concerns whether leaders can be created or are born with the inherent desire to lead (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). However, one thing is certain—good leadership is an important component of social life (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). One significant difference between general leadership and Christian leadership is that Christian leadership is built on pursuing the same goals that Jesus pursued so that God is glorified in all formats (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). Morenammele and Schoeman (2020) highlight three levels of leadership essential for positive mentorship models: strategic leadership, leadership through example, and a caring style of leadership. Strategic leadership focuses on vision, for "consequently, all spiritual work needs to start with a vision. Having a vision is the alpha and omega of everything we do" (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020, p. 89). It is not the responsibility of a Christian leader to solve their mentees' problems. In fact, it is their responsibility to equip them with the skills they need so that they can confront their own life challenges independently (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020).

Leadership through example forces leaders to analyze the problem, doing their due diligence to listen carefully to issues presented before offering advice and involving advisors at all levels to suggest answers to the issues at hand (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). Morenammele and Schoeman state "any leader who wants to impact lives had better start by living a life of integrity, as character is not what we have done, but who we are in private and in public" (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020, p. 90). As it relates to the subject of Christian youth leaders, the caring style of leadership is where dedicated servants are advised to perform

wholeheartedly for the sake of those following them. It involves commitment, which is at the

heart of authentic leadership (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). The caring leadership style

consists of several areas significantly affecting Christian leaders: popularity and fame, pride,

power, infidelity, and money (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). Leadership is a call from God,

and those called into positions of leadership must rely on him and involve him in all their plans

and works (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). Within the caring leadership style,

encouragement is not optional (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020). In summation, "the leader

must be sincerely and deeply concerned about the welfare of people. The caring leader never

tears down, belittles, or diminishes people" (Morenammele & Schoeman, 2020, p. 92). Career

mentorship and leadership development for African American male youth ministers in the non-

denominational church can be understood more through studying the concepts of mentors and

protégés.

Mentors versus Protégés

Authors Amy Randel, Benjamin Galvin, Sharifa Batts, and Christina Gibson (2021) saw

race through the lens of historic, social, and psychological injustices (Randel et al., 2021). These

authors claim mentorship is paramount for African American proteges as well as their mentors,

as there is a "need for mentoring across races is all the more urgent, given recent events around

the world such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which have brought to the forefront

highly discriminatory practices" (Randel et al., 2021, p. 108). Writer Laura Gail Lunsford (2016)

contributes to this research dilemma by suggesting it is very important to understand the

definition of mentorship and its unique ecosystem (Lunsford 2016). Lunford's approach focuses

on a three-part mentoring ecosystem; mentors, protégés, and the organizational setting. And, in

order to have a successful mentorship program, this system allows one to meet the individual and

organizational needs and goals simultaneously (Lunsford, 2016). Lunsford defines a protégé as

one who is protected or trained, or whose career is furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence (Lunsford, 2016). Much like contributing authors Sydney Freeman Jr. and Francis Kochan, Lunsford stresses the idea that gender and race are important characteristics in mentorship placement. However, there is little evidence to support this claim as factual (Lunsford, 2016). In fact, Lundford's research ascertains, "shattered attitudes, values, and beliefs, also known as deep-level characteristics, are associated with better mentoring relationships" (Lunsford, 2016, p. 30). Inasmuch, mentors who previously had good relationships with a mentor are more likely to be great mentors to their protégés (Lunsford, 2016). In defining this pattern, the personality traits of an effective mentor were further identified by the key acronym OCEAN: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (emotional stability) (Lunsford, 2016).

With reference to the organizational setting, the systems theory is aligned with Lunsford's ideology. The systems theory advocates that people are influenced by and within the systems they are a part of (Lunsford, 2016). William J. Rothwell and Dr. Peter Chee (2013) suggest a mentor "gains satisfaction and pride in seeing mentees grow. A mentor wins the respect of others and enjoys reputation enhancement. A mentor can learn new things from his or her mentee. A mentor can build a support network consisting of past and present mentees" (Rothwell & Chee, 2013, p. 93). Authors Jocelyn S. Wikle and Alex Hoagland (2020) claim "adolescents spend 83% of their wakening hours in the company of others. And respond emotionally to the people they spend time with" (Wikle & Hoagland, 2020, p. 544).

Past research has shown the positive effects that the combination of religion and education offers (Erickson & Phillips, 2012). Research studies also show religious youth are from a young age placed in environments that facilitate educational attainment and further define individual purpose. As such, youth who grasp these principles from mentors are more likely to

take full advantage of what mentors have to offer (Erickson & Phillips, 2012). Similarly, "emphatical research confirms that religious participation offers access to a religious-based social network within which adolescents can draw resources and information" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 572). Further, "religious based mentors may actually be more important for educational outcomes than mentors who come from other social contexts because of the unique organizational and cultural characteristics of religious organizations" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 572). Mentoring young adults should incorporate various social contexts which coincide with global trends and models of Christian Leadership.

Models of Christian Leadership

Author David Canales's (2014) literary contribution was critical towards research in this study, because he suggested Christian leadership for youth ministry is more than teaching—it "requires a lifestyle that empowers adolescents to become responsible and genuine leaders in their schools, churches, neighborhoods, and communities" (Canales, 2014, p. 24). As the topic of leadership continues to grow each year, Canales focuses specifically on four models of leadership: servant, moral, spiritual, and transformative. Canales notes that Jesus was the ultimate servant leader, and when leading by his example, servant leaders are directed to put their subordinates first (Canales, 2014). In youth ministry, "Christian youth ministers are advised to adhere to 10 characteristics of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community" (Canales, 2014, p. 27). Above all, it is important to love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Christians are to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, 1 Peter 4:89). Canales suggests that Christian youth ministry morals "may be a place to help guide young people to learn about morality and moral leadership" (Canales, 2014, p. 32). When the Christian youth minister

dedicates time to learning about morality and moral leadership, the youth minister learns about what shapes morality: "ethical behavior, justice, beneficence, integrity, dignity, respect, and equality" (Canales, 2014, p. 33). Likewise, moral theologian James F. Keenan believed "moral wisdom is gained through hope and is a byproduct of leadership. Ideally, moral leadership highlights and exhibits characteristics and virtues like integrity, honesty, humility, trustworthiness, and prudence" (Canales, 2014, p. 33).

In youth ministry, spiritual leadership empowers followers through cultivating their internal faith and lives (Canales, 2014). This type of cultivation occurs by aiding in driving groups or individuals to fulfill God's true purpose and calling in their lives, while driving them also towards Gods agenda (Canales, 2014). Canales (2014) states "the predominant foci of spiritual leadership are vision, altruistic love, and faith/hope, which influence inner life (spiritual practice), calling (making a difference, life having purpose), and membership (being understood and appreciated)" (Canales, 2014, p. 35). Likewise, "the positiveness that a youth minister may be able to generate by teaching adolescents about spiritual leadership is potentially tremendous. It gives direction to the youth ministry by focusing on spirituality, which has not always been the primary focus of Christian youth ministry" (Canales, 2014, p. 36). The primary focus of Christian leadership and mentorship should be found in servant leadership.

The Servant Leader

Embracing the theology of servant leadership has the potential to lead Christian churches to become pillars of faith within their communities and cities (Canales, 2014). Servant leadership, a term introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990), is a model for youth ministry (Canales, 2014). When the term servant leadership was introduced, it was not readily embraced because servant leadership is geared towards putting a service before self-attitude towards the lifelong development of mentees (Canales, 2014). Moreover, the servant leadership theory "is

not only uncommon, but deeply reflective because servant-leadership is embedded in the leader function in the role of a servant" (Canales, 2014, p. 44). The entire foundation of servant leadership is the involvement of staff, parents, and youth (Canales, 2014). "Servant leadership provides a great lens by which youth are able to understand and interpret leadership. It is a model for doing youth ministry and it is legitimate, necessary, and attainable" (Canales, 2014, pp. 46-47). Leadership development calls "forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents" (Canales, 2014, p. 46). Two significant things occur when a youth minister shifts their mindset to the mindset of a servant leader: "(a) the people involved within the youth ministry are slowly but surely being transformed into servant-leaders who lead by and through service, permeating through the youth ministry into the larger parish-community and (b) the adolescents themselves begin to emphasize the needs of others above themselves" (Canales, 2014, p. 56). The attitude of putting service before oneself can clearly contribute to career mentoring in young adults.

Mentoring Young Adults

Geoffrey Brailey and Stephen Parker's (2020) contributed to this area of related literature also by focusing on young adults and identification. Identity formation, defined by William H. Herman, "has to do with the complex way human beings establish a unique view of self and is characterized by continuity in inner unity. It is highly related to terms such as self, self-concept, values, and personality development" (Herman, 2011, p. 1). Herman also agrees that identity formation is a massive need for Christian young adults. Likewise, the early church understood that an identity should be initially rooted in Christ (Brailey & Parker, 2020). Intrinsically, identity formation in the mentorship process is broken down into three categories: deepening the mentor's intimacy with God, assisting the mentored to discern their own God-given identity and

helping the mentored develop character like Christ (Brailey & Parker, 2020). Brailey and Parker concede that new mentoring communities are necessary, as young adults are suffering from the absence of mentorship communities which were previously present. The summation of what it means to be an adult has taken on many different meanings (Brailey & Parker, 2020). Brailey and Parker confirm "unprepared young adults that are disconnected from support structures, might be unable to find themselves despite their consumeristic behaviors, growing online social network, vast travel experiences and unlimited access to information" (Brailey & Parker, 2020, p. 114). This absence of mentorship causes negative experiences in the workplace or church and is a leading factor in young adults struggling to find their identities (Papppas, et al., 2015).

Individuative-reflective faith, further defined, aids in understanding and repairing this lack of mentorship for young adults. Individuative-reflective faith is "interim to this stage at young adulthood (although it may arise in the thirties or forties). It is when the late adolescent or adult takes seriously the responsibility for his or her own commitments, lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes" (Dinani, 2018, p. 8). Contributing authors Brailey and Parker (2020) express the primary reasons why alienation, insecurities, and declining religious affiliations affect modern day youth. Their research confirms "youth are increasingly secular, reliant on technology, battling an identity crisis and experiencing structural upheaval across institutions like families, schools and organizations like the church" (Brailey & Parker, 2020, p. 112).

With regards to the educational system, the traditional picture of college students was represented by individuals between ages 18 and 22. As much time has passed, young adults over the age of 25 are now a part of this populace (Pappas et al., 2015). Adult learners face returning to the classroom based on a myriad of factors: career growth opportunities, stagnant careers, changes in recent technology, or the simple fate of choosing to go back to school versus the alternative of being laid off or terminated (Pappas et al., 2015). Brailey and Parker (2020) state:

The lack of identity in today's young adults has caused emerging adolescents to construct temporary images for transactional approaches to life, family, peer relationships, and spirituality. This transactional approach has allowed for a compartmentalized, pluralistic approach to life which sadly lacks substance, buoyancy, or sustenance (p. 115).

Also, "churches and Bible colleges should be encouraged to define, promote, and train mentoring through their congregations and the broader community. The need for mentoring should be seen as an essential part of Christian discipleship" (Brailey & Parker, 2020, p. 119). Ultimately, "Christian mentoring sits within the field of pastoral theology and is a spiritual practice that helps assist and develop believers by seeing their life through holistic, integrated approach" (Brailey & Parker, 2020, p. 110).

Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature

On November 4th, 1922, the tomb of King Tutankhamun "King Tut" was discovered in Egypt. Authors report that King Tut was only nine years old when he began his reign, and he also died at an early age. In addition, King Tut's tomb was not discovered or disturbed for more than 3,000 years (National Geographic, 2021). In relation to mentorship, the questions that arise from this real-life scenario are: who is qualified to lead at the age of nine? Who has the qualifications to mentor a ruler? How can mentorship be accomplished, when the individual in a position of authority is younger than the mentor? In relation to this ethnographic study, the answers to these questions can be found, through the appropriation and use of the Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling.

The JPC&C was initially founded in 1947 and has over 70 years of continuous publication (JPC&C, 2023). However, any reference to non-denominational churches is visibly absent. In order to further determine if career mentorship is needed from cradle to grave within A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, becoming an active participant in the JPC&C is relevant. The relevancy is based on JPC&C's published articles related to the

importance of pastoral and spiritual care with intensive discussion and articles advancing the

studies of clinical pastoral education, counseling, psychotherapy, and ministry and spiritual care

in relation to other helping professions (JPC&C, 2023). As previously referenced, the Black

Church and its pastors are considered a staple of the African American community. This

statement has been found to be factual because African Americans consider it to be a social

institution fully controlled by Black people (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). Figure 4 shows

religious organizations belonging to the Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling (JPC&C).

Figure 4

Organizational associations with the Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling

Organization Name	Dates of Association
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)	1947-2013, 2015 – Present
American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)	1969-2022, 2017 – Present
Canadian Association for Spiritual Care (CASC)	1972 – Present
American Protestant Correctional Chaplains Inc.	1982 – 1995
Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)	1988 – 2009
National Institute of Business and Industry Chaplains (NBIC)	1984 – Present
National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC)	1986 – 1995
Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC)	1992 – Present
College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy Inc. (CPSP)	2002 – Present
Coalition of Spirit-Filled Churches (CSC)	2015 – Present

Source: https://jpcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JPCP-History-Diagram-2017.pdf, accessed
November 13, 2020

Authors Lance D. Erickson and James W. Phillips (2012) confirmed the relationship

between religious participation and beneficial youth outcomes that received considerable

attention over the years (Erickson & Phillips, 2012). Moreover, further research suggests,

> religious behavior is beneficial for adolescents by decreasing participation in deviance
> through social control, providing a conventional socialization environment, and
> increasing access to social support. In fact, less attention has been given to how religious
> participation might act as a conduit for instrumental benefits in other fields related
> (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 568).

The researcher concludes that the rationale for this study is the importance of exploring

differentiation between mentors, their relationships with mentees, and the key differences

between mentees and protégés. After exploring this topic, this researcher will be able to contribute additional research that aligns with hopefully improving mentorship for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church. Gaps within this literature framework do exist, and therefore this study is beneficial.

The literature surmises that mentoring the ministerial leader is not only a cradle-to-grave process, but an indefinite learning process. Authors Kimberly Strike and John Nickelsen (2011) agree that today's leaders need a different type of skillset than past generations. Strike and Nickelsen outline six leadership styles, from best to worst, that can aid in fixing this gap: Visionary (a leader creates a vision and encourages buy-in), Coaching (the ability to connect individual wants and needs with organizational goals), Affiliative (connecting people through teamwork), Democratic (recognizing that each team member has value, voice, and opinions), Pacesetting (leaders set goals but promote themselves over all others), and Commanding (providing clear direction but making all the decisions) (Strike & Nickelsen, 2011). The gap within this literature is that there are no formal hierarchal structures of leadership and development within the non-denominational church. Specifically, there are differences between leaders and managers. All managers are not leaders, and all leaders are not managers (Strike & Nickelsen, 2011). "A good leader understands that she or he earns the right to be responsible for others through integrity and building trusting and respectful relationships. It is the ability to lead others that truly separates a leader from a manager" (Strike & Nickelsen, 2011, p. 24). Consequently, a gap existed in the field of research related to this subject matter.

The researcher was not able to determine any studies that directly explored the effects of mentorship in African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church. This is largely in part due to the informal structure of the non-denominational church. The conclusion of this literature review is a starting point in recognizing African American male

youth ministers within the non-denominational church, who can further benefit from understanding the necessities of mentorship and application through lifecycle processes.

Profile of the Current Study

This ethnographic research study is presented with a goal of exploring if career mentorship is needed for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. The research population was limited to non-denominational churches within the city of Atlanta Georgia. There is apprehension that younger, less-seasoned African American male youth ministers will become senior pastors without having proper mentorship and training, neglecting the true teachings and lifestyle outlined in Christianity. This research population included churches who identify as non-denominational and are not part of a larger denomination. The research participants only included African American male ministers currently serving in ministry within the non-denominational church who have served for the past three to five consecutive years, are under the age of forty-five, are ordained, and attend church at least three times a month virtually or online. The research participants numbered no greater than ten and no less than eight.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative ethnographic study sought to determine if the exclusion of career mentorship programs singularly affected African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. This study utilized qualitative research techniques. This chapter presents a synopsis of the research design, setting, participants, researcher's role, ethical considerations, data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

As non-denominational churches grow, there is apprehension that younger, less-seasoned African American male youth ministers will become older mentors without having received proper mentorship and training. Research around religious attendance has shown that young people are increasingly disengaged, habitually leave the church indefinitely, and ultimately fail to return to the church as adults (Moser & Nel, 2019). This phenomenon is directly related to the proposed qualitative ethnographic research design because it presents further debate about the lived and learned behaviors of Christian youth disengagement. Also, nonattendance in the non-denominational church within this community is described as a "result of the church's movement towards a style of programing that has created a division between evangelism and discipleship" (Moser & Nel, 2019, p. 2).

Author Courtney Handman (2018) suggests the focus on evangelism solely leads to the creation of powerful institutions, that in turn circulate multiple forms of biblical teachings which are then forwarded into a wide array of communities (Hardman, 2018). The community in reference is a community of mentorship. Unlike Hardman, author Leslie Francis (2020) opposes this argument. Leslie states,

Psychological factors shape preferred pathways of discipleship that perceived church support is important for growing both depth of discipleship and strength of vocation, for those called to evangelize. In plain language, author Francis agrees that inclusion and on the job training, aid in continuous instruction and stewardship in ministry. Similarly, for persons called into ministry, self-identification is recognized based on the calling of ministry from God, which is found through discipleship (Francis, 2020, p. 563).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research proposal was to explore and determine if a lack of mentorship standards have any effect on African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. Exploration of proposed research is based on the perception of individual ministers in non-denominationalism. As men move into supervisory roles, recounting their experiences in transitioning into supervision is precarious (Clark, 2021). These delicate experiences lived by this population are utilized in attempts to attain positive outcomes attached to teaching and mentorship (Clark, 2021). Research questions that guided this study follow.

Research Questions

RQ1. What areas of formal education do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ2. What areas of informal, continuing, or on the job education and training do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ3. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if there is a need for mentorship beyond ordination in their career?

RQ4. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if their success or failures are attributed to leadership effectiveness or leadership ineffectiveness based on mentorship in their career?

Research Design and Methodology

For the purpose of deliberation, the author chose a qualitative ethnographic research design for exploration of lifespan mentorship among African American male youth ministers within non-denominationalism. This area of study was pertinent as current research shows an ongoing interest in the area of spiritual growth specifically geared towards discerning how people perceive and respond to leaders (Offerman & Coats, 2018).

This ethnographic research study was approached to determine if negative or positive ministerial developmental patterns exist in the absence or presence of mentorship and training. The ethnographic study was conducted to provide moderate research information on the non-existence, potential implementation, or existing training and mentorship programs for youth minsters within the non-denominational church. The implementation of this design is necessary, as qualitative research aids in understanding subjective experiences, beliefs, and concepts as well as permits adjustments for the researcher, as the research is being conducted, based on their findings (Moser & Nel, 2019). The design highlights detailed studies surrounding the culture of African American male youth ministers serving in ministerial leadership positions. The methodology contains structured interviews, open ended questions, and questionnaires. Data analyses were performed through written transcription, audio, and video. In an effort to ensure the widest dissemination among audiences and participants, the setting for this research assignment was critical.

Setting

Based on the proposed research group, the researcher elected to conduct a physical ethnographical study in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta was founded in the 1830s as a major railroad town (Atlanta.gov, 2022). The city of Atlanta contains the busiest airport in the world:

Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport (Atlanta.gov, 2022). In addition to being a major

hub in Georgia, Atlanta was a groundbreaking city for the Civil Rights Movement, as Civil

Rights leaders foresaw the coming of a 'new' south (Atlanta.gov, 2022). As a significant beacon

of African American history, selection of the city of Atlanta was preferred because Atlanta was

formerly known as the heart of the Old Confederacy. Currently, the city of Atlanta has been

renewed towards a new path which presently contains a diverse metro population of 6,013,000

residents (Atlanta.gov, 2022).

Furthermore, the majority race in Atlanta is comprised of white residents equating to

47.2%, and the most common minority group, African American, is 33.6% of the population

(atlanta.gov, 2022). The physical setting of Atlanta was crucial to the proposed qualitative

ethnographic study because, "churches are an important asset and a trusted resource in the

African American community" (Maxwell et al., 2019). For just as we have many members in

one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body

in Christ and individually members one of another (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001,

Romans 12:4-5). Participants researched within this population choose non-denominationalism

because the non-denominational church is not part of a structured religious group (Brauer, 2017).

Researchers suggest individuals who select non-denominationalism make their choices

based on the freedom that it presents towards their religious views (Brauer, 2017). This facet of

freedom is formed based on the knowledge of limited outside interference and control from

larger religious sects or governing bodies (Brauer, 2017). The setting and organizational

structure of the non-denominational church was initiated based on the direction of Christian

higher education. Throughout American history, Christian higher education took on many

different names— "sectarian, church-related, church-sponsored, and church-affiliated", to name

a few (Cockle et al., 2019, p. 207). As the increase in non-denominational instruction emerged, ongoing interpretations were cemented around declarative statements of non-existent hierarchical structures (Cockle et al., 2019). As previously referenced, the perception of a limited structure took form based on the church's absence and exclusion from larger denominations (Cockle et al., 2019). To bring this into focus, the researcher introduced specific demographics of denominationalism.

The Pew Research Center offers the following categories of religious compositions of adults in the Atlanta metro area; Christians rank at an overall 76% of the population with the breakdowns of Evangelical Protestants at 33% and Historically Black Protestant at 18%. The non-denominational family is comprised of only 3% of the total Black Protestant religious group (Pew Research Center, 2022). Supplemental categories of religious identification identified by the Pew Research Center for the Atlanta metro area are as follows:

(1) Belief in God as certain; 71%.

1. Belief in God as certain, 71%

2. Importance of religion in one's life among adults; 59%.

3. Attendance at religious services among adults; 41%.

4. Frequency of prayer among adults at least daily; 64%.

5. Frequency of participation in prayer, scripture study or religious education gaps among adults at least weekly; 29%.

6. Sources of guidance on right and wrong among adults in religion 44%, Philosophy & Reason 10%, Common sense 36%.

7. Belief in absolute standards for right and wrong among adults; 39% believe there are clear standards for what is right and wrong, whereas 60% argue right or wrong depends on the situation.

The categorization listed above was beneficial to the proposed qualitative ethnographic research platform, as it identified a significant gap, an understudied population—the identification of only 3% Non-denominational historically Black Protestants. There is no mention of a categorized number of African American men or women currently practicing ministry within the church, further shedding light on a gap within this researched population. In 1998, James Burtchall authored a book titled *The Dying of the Light*. Within his book he argued, "The disengagement of seminaries and universities from their sponsoring denominations help lead to their liberalization and secularization" (Cockle et al., 2019, p. 208). Burtchall appeared to believe, "without a sponsoring denomination, a non-denominational church could not retain its Christian identity in the midst of powerful cultural, typically secularizing forces" (Cockle et al., 2019, p. 208).

Furthermore, the level of individualism presented in non-denominationalism includes freedom to direct and teach ministry without fear of reprisal or reprimand, as well as the freedom to report directly to God and not to man's regulations (Brauer, 2017). The qualities of any church's denomination are not measured in its name or how well it is organized, but by how authentically it obeys the teachings and Word of God (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Matthew 16:18). As a body of Christ, Atlanta Georgia has been chosen in order to gain holistic prospective into the persons belonging to the ethnographic group in this area. Participants chosen are African American male youth ministers currently serving in ministry in the non-denominational church in the city of Atlanta Georgia, as previously mentioned.

Participants

The participants within this research proposal included African American (A.A.) male youth ministers actively serving in ministry in the non-denominational church. The participants included A.A male youth ministers who attended church on a consecutive basis within the last three years. Consecutive in this research scenario equates to at least 36 times a year or three times a month, virtually or in person. The virtual statistic was included due to the Covid 19 pandemic of 2019-Present. The research participants included A.A. male youth ministers who identified as non-denominational. For questions relating to mentorship trends or selection, the participants included A.A. male youth ministers who also identified as senior ministers based on the size of their non-denominational church and their status of working as the sole senior pastor. The participants included A.A. male youth non-denominational ministers actively serving in ministry and who are seeking higher ministerial leadership positions. The total number of participants included in this proposal was at least eight and no more than ten persons. The researcher utilized snowball sampling as a preferred sampling method to ensure the widest dissemination and inclusivity. The demographic information the researcher collected on each participant included info regarding if they are A.A, male, youth ministers, youth ministers actively serving in ministry in the non-denominational church, and senior ministers. The sample included A.A. male youth ministers who have been in ministry for at least five years, and who are actively serving in ministry part time or full time.

Role of the Researcher

For the researcher to comprehend the topic of A.A. male youth ministers within the non-denominational church firsthand, the feelings and thoughts of participations were studied (Moser & Nel, 2019). The use of a qualitative design allowed a clear, richly descriptive inquiry. Thus,

"the church must seek to remove this dichotomy to identify a demission first and utilize strategies that work with identity rather than against it" (Moser & Nel, 2019, p. 3). The role of the researcher in this study involved implementing information in attempts to identify the persons who will benefit from the research. The targeted groups that will receive benefit are current A.A. male youth ministers in leadership positions within the non-denominational church, and those who wish to implement training and mentorship programs for junior ministers within the non-denominational church.

Ethical Considerations

On July 12 of 1974, President Nixon signed the National Research Act (Campbell & Morris, 2017). This singular act established a set of conglomerates whose purpose was to identify and prescribe basic ethical principles utilized in conducting biomedical research (Campbell & Morris, 2017). The individuals selected published sets of principals which set ethical guidelines for receiving participatory informed consent, kindness, justice, and if needed, risk assessments in human test subjects (Campbell & Morris, 2017). Through the formation of this act, systematic ethical research practices evolved for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research practices (Campbell & Morris, 2017). Ethical considerations during this stage of research are established during the planning, implementation, and conclusion of the present qualitative ethnographic study (Creswell, 2017).

The researcher was cognizant of maintaining flexibility at every stage of the research process, as conditions varied (Creswell, 2017). Ethical considerations in participant identification were based on ensuring participants were given background information on the nature of the study. This item was discussed further under procedures, with approval from the Liberty University Institution Review Board (IRB). After background information was

introduced, participants were given non-disclosure statements and information on how to self-identify using pseudonyms or complete autonomy (Creswell, 2017). These initial ethical considerations aided in protecting each participant's identity (Creswell, 2017). The data gathered were protected through a standard filing system on an external hard drive. Only the researcher had access to the external hard drive, and the files are maintained for a period of three years. Interviews with participants were face-to-face and recorded via audio and or through a web-based video platform. Transcription of the interviews occurred within Microsoft word, which was password-protected. This document is maintained for two years. At any point during the interview, a participant could withdraw from the study.

In additional efforts to maintain confidentiality between the researcher and participants, the researcher conducted interviews in a general location of the participants' choosing. If at any time during the interview process the participant felt uncomfortable with the current settings, the interview was delayed or restarted later. The steps that the researcher took to ensure confidentiality included a written and signed agreement presented by the researcher to the participant, binding them to a confidentiality agreement. Participants under the age of 18 were not included in this research study. Participants over the age of 46 were also not included within the study. It is important to note, within qualitative ethnographic studies participants are not quantified (Creswell, 2017). As such, data collection was incorporated utilizing a variety of methods to ensure the quality research standards were met.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

In many denominations there is a visible decrease in membership, while other denominations are rapidly flourishing (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2017). Where there is increase in learning, training for those who seek to educate learners also increases (Ehrkamp & Nagel,

2017). Within the non-denominational church young ministers, and even younger senior pastors, are leading flocks who doubt the authenticity of their callings simply because of their ministerial underdevelopment (Maxwell et al., 2019).

The goal of this proposed qualitative ethnographic research study was to generate significant insight and evidence surrounding mentorship and growth based on the lived experiences and behaviors of African American male youth ministers. Ethnographic research was designed to explore daily social habits, discover systematic routines, and comprehend how people behave in their natural environment. In qualitative research it is important to understand that ethnography is human-centered research and capturing human-centered research data in qualitative research "relies on test and image data, which has unique steps in data analysis, and draws on diverse designs" (Creswell, 2017, p. 179). Designs and themes are created based on data collection.

Collection Methods

Dr. Bernadette Sanchez (2016) examines mentoring in Black male youth, intuitively stating that mentoring promotes a pathway of care when appropriate and adequate training is available within a community (Sanchez, 2016). Within her research, Dr. Sanchez (2016) notes,

> Black men are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors based on their shared experiences, which are impacted by cultural mistrust. This level of mistrust significantly influences Black boys' perceptions of their white mentors and alters the quality of their relationships with them and others (p. 1).

The collection method was specifically geared towards removing the status quo of mistrust through the utilization of a test survey. Data collection was conducted in two stages: (a) stage one – test questions on a sample population, and (b) stage two – utilization of standard or revised test questions on research participants.

Instruments and Protocols

To ensure proposed research questions were unbiased, the researcher generated a trial questionnaire which included open-ended questions. This questionnaire was initiated once approval from the Liberty University IRB was granted. The goal of the questionnaire was to elicit responses from 4 ministers actively serving in ministry in non-denominationalism. The questionnaire consisted of 4 questions, some with sub-questions, and were as follows:

(1) Education History

1. Education History

    a. Did you attend a formal educational institution?

    b. What educational institution did you attend?

    c. Did you attain a certificate or degree?

2. Ministry classification

    a. Are you an ordained or licensed minister?

    b. What was the date of your ordination?

    c. What is the length of your service?

    d. Describe the quality of your experience in serving with a team of ministers.

3. Describe other specialized ministry experiences for which you possess special gifts or skills.

4. Describe other secular work or experience that have helped you in preparation for ministry.

Approval was gained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the selected ministers had one week to respond to test questions, and they remained anonymous, as only their data were presented in gaining the trust of actual research participants. At the

conclusion of the one-week period, research participant data collection was initiated. Data collection procedures set the boundaries for a proposed research study through sampling and recruitment, interviews, documents, and visual materials (Creswell, 2017). Likewise, collection methods were best initiated based on early identification of participants (Creswell, 2017). Early identification of research participants aids in confirmation of the research sample size and provides maximum coverage of the population of interest to the researcher (Creswell, 2017). Purposeful selection assists the researcher in understanding the problem and proposed research questions (Creswell, 2017). The method identified enhances instrumentation use, as it was the researcher's intent to develop a categorized fluid platform within the query process, initiated through interviews and questionnaires.

Interviews

The Interviews required a list of specific questions to be asked and a rationale for why those questions were included. The researcher's interviews for candidates were related specifically to the proposed research questions. The questions were validated based on candidate recorded responses and transcriptions.

Questionnaires

The researcher opted to utilize an optional exit interview questionnaire for candidates at the conclusion of interviews. The researcher generated exit interview questions based on perceived probable responses from interviewees. However, during the research process it was determined that the exit interview questionnaires could have been better utilized as a form of introductory questions for each candidate.

Procedures

Prior to conducting research, permission was obtained for approval from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the research application was submitted to the IRB and approved, the researcher performed data collection based on feedback received from the IRB (Appendix A). The researcher then initiated phase 2. In initiating phase 2, the researcher contacted gatekeepers via phone and email to obtain buy-in for participant selection. After access was gained, a meeting was initiated with gatekeepers to discuss the preliminary logistics of the research proposal. A detailed letter was submitted to gatekeepers to find potential participants (Appendix B). The intent of the gatekeepers meeting was to gauge their level of involvement and expertise in selecting candidates for the study. From the initial participants, the snowballing strategy was utilized to obtain additional participants. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique in which key informants are identified and interviewed with aims of leading to additional participant through word of mouth (Young, et al., 2017). Once participants were identified through snowball sampling, consent forms were obtained, initiated, and received in a 3-week window. The proposed qualitative ethnographic study anticipated no more than eight candidates.

Due to the sensitivity of this study, the gatekeeper provided the researchers contact information to the participants, as the records of this study will be kept private. Published reports did not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records were stored securely, and only the researcher has access to the records. Participant responses were kept confidential using pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted in a location where others could not easily overhear the conversation. Data have been stored on an external hard drive through password encryption. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Recordings were stored on a password-locked computer, will be

maintained for three years, and then will be erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. To attain additional buy-in, the key informant strategy was utilized. The researcher utilized qualitative interviews for the selected participants in conducting the study, starting with KIIs. The KIIs are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who are cognizant on issues currently affecting a research community (McAlearney et al., 2016). The key informants are typically community leaders, residents, or professionals who have first-hand knowledge about the community being researched (McAlearney et al., 2016). Additionally, key informants have the ability of providing insight on the nature of problems within their communities and their communities' beliefs, and they offer recommendations for solutions (McAlearney et al., 2016).

Similarly, KIIs gave the researcher unlimited access to a limited number of interviewees which are well-connected, ultimately granting the researcher an opportunity to discuss sensitive topics with individuals or small groups (McAlearney et al., 2016). Authors Steven Taylor, Robert Bogdan, and Marjorie DeVault (2016) state,

> the researcher must negotiate access, gradually win trust, and slowly collect data that only sometimes fits his or her interest. It is not uncommon for researchers to spin their wheels for weeks, even months, trying to break into a setting or become accepted by others (p. 40).

If applied successfully, a letter of recruitment for potential participants can begin, which is what occurred (Appendix C). Participants received consent forms (Appendix D).

The interviews were initiated by the researcher and consisted of 45-minute sessions with participants. The interviews were conducted via Zoom or a participant-preferred video conferencing platform, in the event Zoom was not a participant's preference. Each interview was recorded. During the interview, the researcher used five structured open-ended questions for the participants. The five questions focused on participant experiences in formal and on-the-job training received or absent during pursuit of ministerial leadership. The interview questions

served as a platform in permitting the researcher insight into the learned and understood behaviors of participants related to ministry in non-denominationalism. The questions presented were targeted to each participant's current understood and lived ministerial organizational structure in their current institution. Interview questions can be found in (Appendix E). At the conclusion of the interviews, an amended optional questionnaire was disseminated to participants, and they had a 7-day response period (Appendix F). At the conclusion of instrument collection, procedures to justify ethical practices had been maintained and were submitted through procedural processes. A level of trust between the interviewer and interviewees aided in the formulation of data analysis, as is recommended (Taylor et al., 2016). Barna Group permission and copyright verbiage for figures 1 and 2 are found in (Appendix G). Pew Research Center permission and copyright verbiage for figure 3 is found in (Appendix H), and Sage Journal permission and copyright verbiage for figure 4 is found in (Appendix I).

Data Analysis

"Organizing and preparing for data analysis involves transcribing interviews, optically scanning material, typing up field notes, cataloguing all of the visual material, and sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information" (Creswell, 2017, p.179). When implemented correctly, material collected in the research study produces codes and themes in data analysis (Creswell, 2017).

Analysis Methods

Research studies conclude "the analysis is useful in designing detailed descriptions for case studies, ethnographies, and narrative research projects" (Creswell, 2017, p. 180). The data analysis method utilized was as follows: participants were identified based on participant coding of numbers 1 – 8. Designations of age were identified as follows: 18-25, 26-35, 30-40, and 36-

45. Identification of the participants' current church affiliations were identified by the letters of the church's name. Additional categories were produced as necessary and as the study progressed.

Example: Coded participant

Participant	Age Range	Church Name	Years of Service (M)	Years of Service (ND)
P1	18-25	BA	5	3

*(M) Denotes Ministry
*(ND) Denotes Non-Denominationalism

Open-ended structured research question responses were also coded based on participant pseudonyms. Readers are reminded that expected codes are "codes on topics the readers expect to find based on the literature and comment sense" (Creswell, 2017, p. 180). Through coding, themes produced were reflective of patterns identified based on coded information. Themes produced included average years of experience of youth ministers, average years youth ministers connected to senior mentors, average years of active mentorship, average years of on-the-job training, etc. The themes identified focused on years within ministry and years within non-denominationalism as well. These designations easily identified trends in the population.

THEME
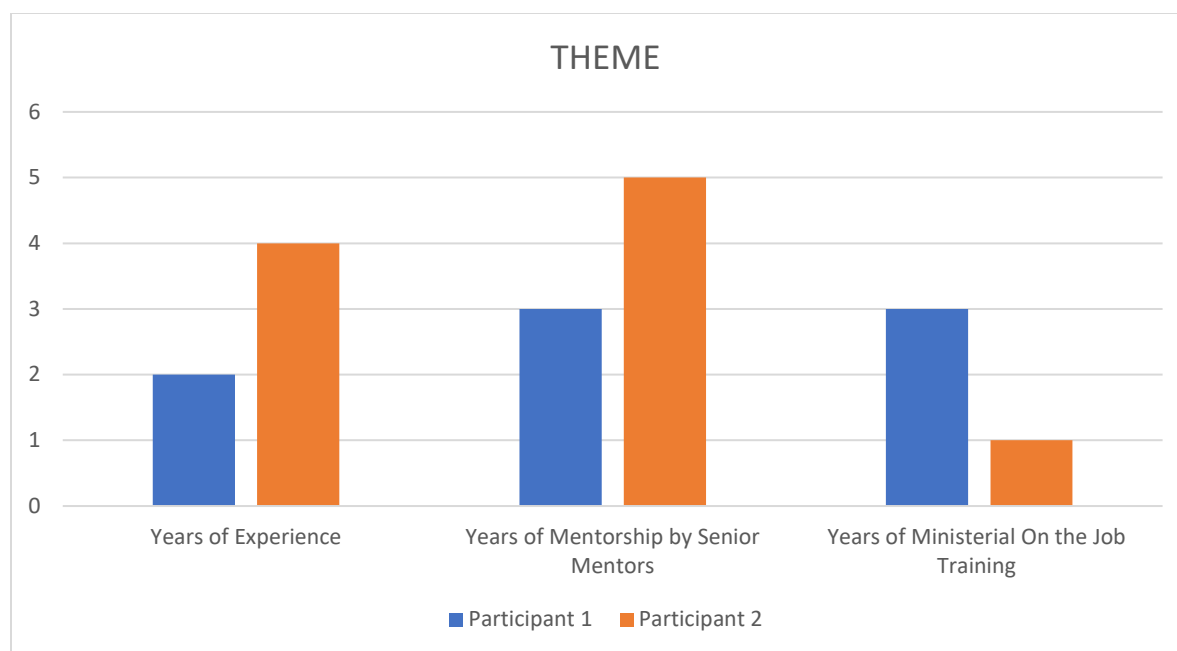
Prior to implementation of the questionnaire, the researcher utilized inductive and deductive coding standards during the data analysis phase. Inductive coding allows the researcher to establish a scale (i.e., a feedback survey) to tag data (Watts et al., 2021). This type of coding was great for the first round of questioning because it presented the researcher a platform (Watts et al., 2021). Deductive coding is best utilized when the researcher has a scale or set of tags they want to use in their data (i.e., on a scale of 1-10, type of questioning) (Watts et al., 2021). Within deductive coding, researchers are advised to use a small set of sampling of their data to ensure what they are using will be applicable to the remainder of the set of data (Watts et al., 2021). To produce trustworthiness within this ethnographic group, identifying trends was necessary to present full transparency (Watts et al., 2021).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was based on the review of literature, the lived experiences of research participants, and full transparency from researcher to participant. In

addition, phases of the study were scrutinized for trustworthiness, from initial preparation and analysis to the conclusion of the research study. The importance of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, "refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study" (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). This was achieved based on research credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility essentially asks the researcher to evidently link the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the research study's findings (Cope, 2014). In this proposed qualitative ethnographic study, the researcher utilized audio recorded interviews and video recorded interviews to ensure authenticity. Additional steps taken to ensure credibility standards were maintained were as follows: (1) conducting the interviews in a safe and nonthreatening environment (2) presenting interview questions in writing without deviation and follow-up probing questions, and (3) delivery of final themes, findings, and descriptions presented to the participants to determine accuracy of findings.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the "stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study in which procedures for dependability include maintenance of research notes documenting what occurred during the study" (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). The construction of the proposed research design was fully transparent and consistent. All field notes, archives, and reports were made available to participants and disinterested parties to further confirm authenticity of research study. The researcher will retain files and field notes for a period of 2 years. The researcher has elected to utilize a disinterested party to vouch for validity of conducted research.

Confirmability

> Author Diane Cope (2014), states,
>
> Credibility is enhanced by the researcher describing his or her experiences as a researcher and verifying the research findings with the participants. A qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the same experience (p. 91).

The researcher implemented ethical clearances to perform confirmability. Ethical clearances are tailored to the level of confidence that the research study's findings are based on the participants' stories and words rather than researcher bias (O'Kane et al., 2019). This corroboration was based on participant interviews and based on autonomy. Confirmability of this qualitative study was achieved with the use of accurately documented techniques, specifically reflective journaling. "Qualitative researchers keep detailed notes to all their decisions and their analysis as a study progresses" (Connelly, 2016, p. 436). The researcher's journal was included as part of the research study and will be kept for 2 years.

Transferability

The nature of transferability is "the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings, as qualitative research focuses on the informants and their story without saying this is everyone's story" (Connelly, 2016, p. 436). This qualitative ethnographic study aimed to benefit youth ministers in non-denominationalism, as well as those who wish to gain positions of leadership in non-denominationalism. Additional groups who benefited from this study were youth ministers actively serving in denominations outside this research population. The focus of this proposed research paradigm was aimed towards youth ministers.

This population may have greater insight on how research participants within this study were affected through on-the-job training and mentorship within this community. In

retrospect, this research study did not transfer to ministers actively serving or seeking

leadership positions within the proposed researched community. The principles guiding this

decision was transparency and autonomy. Authors David Fowler, John Musgrave, and Jill

Musgrave (2020) profess,

> Elders have the tendency to promote a sense of trust in other members by mentoring, which provides an outlet for younger members to engage in confidential conversations. Without this venue, many younger members might not have the inclination to engage with someone else, owning less life experience, if they have a personal issue that needs to be addressed (p. 211).

Chapter Summary

A qualitative ethnographic research study on the exploration of career mmentorship

among African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church was presented.

The overall goal of this research study was to identify if a gap in mentorship affects African

American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, and identify a process which

can potentially correct the gap. Dr. Sanchez (2016) noted,

> Black men are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors based on their shared experiences, which are impacted by cultural mistrust. The level of mistrust significantly influences Black boys' perceptions of their white mentors and alters the quality of their relationships with others (p.1).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of this qualitative ethnographic study. Data were collected from seven non-denominational churches within the city of Atlanta Georgia. The snowball sampling technique, the use of gatekeepers, and letters of recruitment aided significantly in participatory involvement. At the conclusion of snowball sampling and recruitment, the utilization of structured qualitative interviews was initiated for selected candidates through the use of Key Informant Interviews (KII). The KIIs are qualitative, in-depth interviews with people who are cognizant on issues currently affecting the research community (McAlearney et al., 2016). Key informants are community leaders, residents, or professionals who have first-hand knowledge about the community being researched (McAlearney et al., 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to explore if there was a need for lifespan career mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. This study was investigated due to concern that an absence in lifelong training and mentorship may lead to increased doubt in Christian believers, a decreased presence in converting non-believers, and stunted spiritual growth within congregants of the non-denominational church (Easum et al., 2006). The most relevant themes developed from analysis of the data included mentorship experiences, mentorship hindrances, mentorship best practices, and mentorship availability. For the purpose of discussion, the researcher defined themes as mentorship experiences, mentorship hindrances, mentorship best practices, and mentorship availability as follows:

1. Mentorship experiences are detailed responses based on a rating spectrum of average or above average responses.

2. Mentorship hindrances are barriers surrounding receipt of or inaccessibility of mentorship training.

3. Mentorship best practices are organized, or systemic actions previously and currently taken.

4. Mentorship availability includes discussions that improve, sustain, or establish proposed mentorship standards.

To achieve a detailed, accurate data sample, compilation protocol measures were indicated.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

The data presented within this research model were compiled for analysis through a series of six stages. These six stages included obtaining approval from the Liberty University Institution Review Board (IRB), obtaining buy-in from gatekeepers, identification of qualified candidates, letters of recruitment and snowball sampling, video and audio recordings, and written transcription. Audio recordings were utilized in the event technical difficulties ensued during video recorded interviews. Author Lynda Kay (2019) maintains, "gatekeepers are an integral part of an ethical process of seeking authorization for research" (Kay, 2049, p. 37). Alternatively, snowball sampling was, "frequently advocated and employed specifically by qualitative social researchers. Under certain circumstances, however, it is prone to faltering and even failure" (Geddes et al., 2016, p. 347). In an effort to show full transparency with the utilization of gatekeepers and the snowball sampling technique, the trustworthiness of this study was presented based on the review of literature, the lived experiences of research participants, and full transparency through written and audio recorded transcriptions from researcher to participant. The importance of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, "referred to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study" (Connelly, 2016, p. 435).

Stage One

During stage one, the research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board as the researcher awaited approval prior to conducting research. Once approval was granted, the researcher contacted 46 non-denominational churches within the city of Atlanta Georgia. The churches selected were initially identified by utilizing the search engine Google with the key words 'Non-Denominational Churches and Atlanta Georgia'.

Stage Two

In stage two, gatekeepers were contacted and presented with the letter titled Request for Information Related to Potential Participants (Appendix B). Letters identified in Appendix B were submitted to the 46 churches through the utilization of the United States Postal Service (USPS). The researcher utilized USPS in an effort to gain the widest participation and buy-in from gatekeepers. The researcher allowed one week to pass before submitting a follow-up email to the 40 churches at the start of week two. The emails submitted to the 40 churches were comprised of a copy and paste of the Request for Information Related to Potential Participants letter (Appendix B). Noteworthy, emails were only submitted to churches which contained an email address on their church's website. At the conclusion of the second week, the researcher waited for responses from gatekeepers on potential candidates.

Stage Three

Stage three was initiated once gatekeepers responded to requests via USPS or email. The intent of initially contacting gatekeepers was to gauge their level of involvement and expertise in the selection of candidates for the study. As the research procedure progressed, the researcher noticed most gatekeepers were also research participants actively serving in ministry rolls within their church. The discovery presented qualified participants versus gatekeepers' responses to

requests for candidates via email, further aiding in confirmability. In light of the discovery, recruitment letters and emails were sent to participants based on questions presented to the researcher on the researcher's background, gender, upbringing, and involvement within the non-denominational church. This action aided in gaining the trust of participants.

Stage Four

Stage four was initiated through the identification of potential participants. Once participant identification occurred, Letters of Recruitment for Potential Participants (Appendix C) were started. Upon initial implementation of research recruitment, the snowballing strategy was utilized significantly to obtain supplementary participants. The researcher points out again that snowball sampling is a sampling technique in which key informants are identified and interviewed with aims of leading to additional participants through word of mouth (Young et al., 2017). One non-denominational church yielded an additional participant through the utilization of the snowball technique. A second non-denominational church yielded four additional participants through the utilization of the snowball technique. At the conclusion of stage four, research participants were provided with Consent Forms (Appendix D). Once consent forms were received, the researcher scheduled participant interviews via email, reconfirming the utilization of the web conferencing service Zoom as the preferred teleconferencing and interview platform. Participants were given Interview Questions (Appendix E) in advance in preparation for their interviews. Twice the researcher ran into technical difficulties while utilizing Zoom, which led to one interview being conducted via audio only, and a second interview was restarted on an alternative date. Full transcripts of each interview were provided to the dissertation supervisor. In addition, at the introduction and conclusion of each interview participants were informed that full transcripts, audio, and video recorded interviews would be made available to

them at any time during or after the research process concluded. The researcher reinitiated dependability at the start of the interviews by informing the candidates how the transcriptions would be maintained. Participants were informed the data gathered would be protected through a standard filing system on an external hard drive. They were informed only the researcher would have access to the external hard drive containing all files for a period of three years, and that the researcher and dissertation supervisor would have access to interview transcripts. Additionally, participants were informed at any time during the interview or later they could obtain transcripts of their interviews. At the conclusion of stage four, stage five was initiated.

Stage Five

During stage five, the researcher carefully saved each interview in accordance with the previously mentioned computer-aided software. Additionally, full transcriptions of each interview were transcribed via Microsoft Word and password protected. The Zoom networking platform autosaved recorded interviews via a Zoom Cloud service at no additional cost. At the conclusion of stage five, full audio recorded interviews and transcriptions were emailed to the researcher's dissertation supervisor through the Liberty University email account for transparency and validity.

Stage Six

Stage six was initiated at the conclusion of participant interviews via email through the application of the Revised Final Questionnaire (Appendix F). This step would not have added or taken away any value to the research model. The proposed qualitative ethnographic study anticipated no less than eight candidates and no more than ten. The researcher obtained eight candidates for the study. If in the event additional candidates wished to participate in the research study, the researcher took their appeals under advisement, with the explicit consent from the

assigned dissertation supervisor. Additional participation requests had to occur no later than thirty days of course conclusion. However, there were no additional participants.

Demographic and Sample Data

The qualitative ethnographic research study was constructed and designed to provide moderate research information on the implementation of mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church. The demographic information collected on participants was based on candidates who identify as African American males. Participant sample data collected was categorized as follows: A.A. male youth ministers, A.A. male youth ministers under the age of 46, A.A. male youth ministers actively serving in ministry within the non-denominational church, A.A. male youth ministers serving in ministry in the non-denominational church for at least five years, and A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church actively serving in ministry part time and full time.

The study was conducted through qualitative interviews specifically designed for African American male youth ministers actively serving in ministry in the non-denominational church. Access to the research population was gained through letters of recruitment and a detailed email of like-mindedness in relation to the study. Additionally, open-ended structured research question responses were coded based on participant pseudonyms. The researcher identified the tone of the research participants based on the feedback received after the letter of recruitment was initiated. A.A. ministers P1 and P2. asked why the researcher pursued the research topic. The researcher informed P1 and P2 via email response,

> As an African American woman, I was raised in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and I found myself joining the non-denominational church at the age of eighteen. The choice was made based on my spiritual growth. It was in the non-denominational church where I fell in love with God and personally developed a relationship with him (Crayton, 2023). The theory of evolutionary leadership proclaims the Black Church, and

its pastors are considered a staple of the African American community (Clemons & Johnson 2020).

The researcher annotated that the response was submitted via email in the event additional participants asked the same question. For full transparency and non-redundancy, it was best to answer each participant in the same manner. Also, this level of extensive information was provided to participants to enable transferability. Transferability is "the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings, as qualitative research focuses on the informants and their story without saying this is everyone's story" (Connelly, 2016, p. 436). As research participants consented to voluntarily participating in the study, they were given a list of questions which included three categories of questioning: (1) understanding mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church; (2) formal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church; and (3) informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church.

Category One

In category one, understanding mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, the attitude of participants showed tones of esteem, serenity, anxiety, enthusiasm, and command tones.

Participant P2

Participant P2 was noted to be anxious as he frequently paused, ensuring that his responses weren't contradictory. It was evident during the interview that P2 was caring for his infant child, yet his responses were not lost. The mood P2 presented was apprehensive, as this was his first recorded interview as a youth pastor. The researcher placed P2 at ease by reiterating the nature of a qualitative interview, stating there were no right or wrong answers. When asked

what mentorship meant to him, P2 stated he was a Preachers Kid (P.K.). In his argument, P2 stated,

> I believe mentorship means a commitment to imparting the best parts of yourself into someone else. You know, usually centered around a specific subject matter. Or sometimes it's very broad in general because this person is very sound in their decision making or they have a process of decision making when they make their choices.

In relationship to this category, Author Louise Wetherbee Phelps (2022) adds, "individuals participate in multiple generational systems that are foregrounded or backgrounded in particular situations and are reconstructed and renegotiated continually over the lifespan. Individuals entering a discipline are already generationally identified in their families and in popular culture" (p. 109). During his mentorship journey, P2 found he received above-average mentorship beyond ordination based on having received face-to-face and self-directed applications of mentorship. Participant 4's interview was completely opposite of participant P2.

Participant P4

When questioned about category one, P4 was noted to be peaceful and demonstrated an interview tone of learned behavior through the application of personal growth as a youth minister. The mood of P4 was solemn, as he was eager to answer questions. The researcher quickly noted P4's desire to effectively communicate his humble beginnings as a youth pastor and experience through trial and error. In his response to category one, P4 stated,

> Mentorship to me is honestly access. When I first started actually venturing outside of the house, i.e., high school, college, that kind of thing, it was told to me that you learn by one or two ways, either mentors or mistakes. Mentors are a lot cheaper than mistakes. So, mentorship to me is giving individuals access to knowledge they previously didn't have, or wouldn't have, if not for the mentorship.

Participant 4 stated mentorship is a lot cheaper than mistakes. Inasmuch, Author Kevin Hall (2020) reinforces the belief that mentorship is a non-negotiable responsibility of successful leadership (p. 29). Hall (2020) believes leadership development is "an intentional process of

influencing established and potential leaders to acquire, reinforce, and translate proper leadership character and behaviors into effective leadership" (p. 29). Attaining appropriate and adequate leadership development is accomplished through the social learning theory in four categories: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Hall, 2020). Attention is defined as recognition of the model's behavior; retention is defined as meaningful retained knowledge through observation; reproduction is defined as learned and practiced capabilities; motivation is defined as leading but acknowledging when to intervene and redirect (Hall, 2020). During his mentorship journey, participant P4 found he received above-average mentorship beyond ordination based on having received face-to-face, digital (CD's, DVDs, Google, etc.), and on-the-job training.

Participant P6

When questioned in category one, participant P6 was noted to be passionate and demonstrated an interview tone of esteem and knowledge. The participant's commanding presence was based on wisdom gained from planned succession, biblical knowledge, and application. Participant P6's mood was preachy, if preachy can be described as a mood. The diction in his responses and body language showed a level of confidence and experience not seen in other participants. In his response to category one, P6 stated,

> Wisdom is the book of Proverbs, is like a mother, you know. Roosevelt Author states, there are two ways in which you can get wisdom. Either you can borrow somebody else's, or you can pay for your own. And to pay for your own, it means make the bumps, the bruises, the licks on the chin. When there is mentorship, there is the nurture, that is there. There is this intimate relationship that is established with protégé and with the mentee and mentor.

Authors William Vanderbloemen, Warren Bird, and John Ortberg (2014) agree that succession planning cannot wait, and every church goes through changes in leadership, especially with the Baby Boomer generation headed into retirement. When pastors leave a

church through planned and unplanned stages, ministries are disrupted and the members drift away (Vanderbloemen et al., 2014). Participant P6 spoke of the intimate relationship that is formed between a mentor and mentee based on nurturing. Authors Vanderbloemen, Bird, and Ortberg elaborate on the benefits of development and cultivation and presented the Ten Commandments of preparing for succession. The first commandment being to read their book, especially for young pastors. The next nine commandments were as follows: set a healthy pace for the long run (establishing a sabbatical policy to avoid fatigue and burnout), prepare an emergency envelope (forming a succession plan and communicating pieces with proper parties), develop a plan for nonemergency but unforeseen departure (having a plan in place for your church in the event of an untimely departure), annually evaluate the state of your succession plan, create a broad culture of leadership development, share the teachings, share the leadings, and look beyond the baton pass (Vanderbloemen et al., 2014).

The ten commandments referenced were paramount to category one questioning based on P6's claims of having received average and "indispensable mentorship from a birth father." Participant P6 stated, "there have been critical men and women that the Lord has sent that mentored me and my wife, to which there could be no amount of money tagged on that it is that their wisdom, their mentorship has taught me." Most of participant P6's mentorship training beyond ordination, outside of his father's tutelage, was self-directed in the form of digital media content and books. Of all participants interviewed, the author found P6 to showcase the more significant stages of career mentorship.

Participant P7

When questioned in category one, participant P7 was noted to be enthusiastic and demonstrated an interview tone of conviction. Participant P7 stated there is always room for

improvement in mentorship, both as a mentor and a mentee. Participant P7's mood was keen, as he displayed both confidence and a level of anxiety in his responses. For instance, during the interview P7 was caught off guard by an interview question, and stated the questions were difficult. P7 jokingly laughed and stated he did not know the questions would be so in-depth. In his response to category one on the question of mentorship, P7 stated,

> The first thing I would think about is taking somebody by the hand and walking them through their process of growing their relationship with God. Walking somebody through that process, you know, and being right there with them helping them grow closer to God. I was blessed to have a mentor, so he's still in my life. We did a lot of face-to-face, but I feel like you can also be mentored by somebody that maybe you don't know face to face. But their testimony connects with you, and you follow them, and then learn from their life lessons.

Participant P7 suggested complete mentorship comes in many forms that are not necessarily a one-size-fits-all platform. In relation to category one questioning author David Robinson (2015) added, "mentoring is more about compassion and character than tools and techniques" (Robinson, 2015, p. 2). Robinson stated more than a thousand years ago, there was a centralized platform to follow when training occurred outside of the home (Robinson, 2015). Currently, people who graduate with a diploma have little to no hands-on experience but are subjected to being experts when it comes to mentoring others (Robinson, 2015). Certainly, "like any human endeavor, there are skills to learn and techniques to master. First though, there is a sense of compassion, the inner passion to step alongside the life of another human being to listen and learn, to love and be loved" (Robinson, 2015, p. 1). Robinson also agrees the digital age of the internet has made distance mentorship and learning easier than face-to-face mentorship. During his mentorship journey, P7 found he received average mentorship beyond ordination mainly through a combination of digital mentorship and face-to-face mentorship.

Participant P8

When questioned in category one, participant P8 was noted to be calm and demonstrated patience and enthusiasm when responding to questions. The mood of participant P8 is described as jovial, as his excitement was on display and visibly evident during his interview. In his response to category one, P8 stated,

> Mentorship has everything to do with modeling for African and young African American men, because remember I told you I was a youth pastor for 5 years. One of the things I see is that they don't have a model or a blueprint to follow. So generally, what happens is they follow culture, which culture can be good. But then culture can also be bad, and culture can also be confusing. So, providing a model in front of them helps them to say, okay, this is the this is the way I want to go. Because I see the fruits of going this way. And this is the way I don't want to go, because I see the fruits of going that way, because fruits can be good or bad.

On the basis of culture and followership, authors Randy Reese and Robert Loane (2012) stated, "culture acts in many ways like a template shaping the way we see the world. It is not until well into our formation that we realize the nature of this template we have given" (p. 84). Likewise, "cultural contexts are most often taken for granted and go unnoticed until we have an encounter with a different cultural template" (Reese & Loane, 2012, p. 84). During his mentorship journey participant P8 found he received average mentorship beyond ordination based on having received digital mentorship but limited face-to-face mentorship. The limitation of P8's face-to-face mentorship was based on the ministry he was a part of, having received unintentional mentorship in passing rather than intentional standardized mentorship. Participant P8 stated, "the Bible says, the blind can't lead the blind. If I'm blind, and then I lead somebody else that's blind, we're going to end up somewhere in a ditch."

Participant P3

While being questioned about category one, participant P3 was noted to be enthusiastic and demonstrated little to no delay in his answer pattern. Participant P3's mood was edgy, as he was irritated by his toddler running around in the background. The researcher observed P3's

mood as irritable based on his body language, specifically his eyes, which indirectly conveyed to

the researcher he was likely going to pause the interview to discipline his child. When asked

what mentorship meant to him, P3 stated,

> I think mentorship is one of the, for lack of better terms, one of the pillars of growth. I
> think that everybody should have three people in their life. Somebody that they pour into,
> somebody that you pour into each other, and somebody that pours into you. I think
> mentorship is valuable because you have someone who ultimately is where you want to
> be.

Participant P3's stance on mentorship was based on how others perceived him. In his

declaration, when people see him, both spiritually and figuratively, they see a youth pastor, a

father, a caretaker, and a married man. He also stated others see his display of leadership and

based on how he carries himself, others may be inclined to emulate his behaviors. When viewing

how parenting and mentorship coincide, author Fazel Freeks (2021) stated,

"Fathers were once considered the pillar of the family, but, over time, society has begun to

grapple with father absence as a family issue" (p. 1). As such, "the absence of fathers is a

destructive phenomenon and tendency that society must deal with globally. The role of the father

has been devalued and degraded because of father absence" (Freeks, 2021, p. 1). A father figure

example in this passage is seen as vital in a student-to-teacher scenario. For participant P3, his

responses to his level of mentorship received past ordination were received with positive notes

and an above-average rating. However, there was a slight hesitation to his reporting. Participant

P3 noted, "With my situation, I live about 40 minutes from my church, so I'm not necessarily in

the community in which I serve." With distance being a negative component in receipt of

mentorship delivery and sustainability, P3 relied heavily on delivery of mentorship training

through computer-based training as well as face-to-face training. Author Willem Oliver (2022)

states that online worship is simply the new normal, and "online religion, on the other hand,

makes space for new practices as well as different social structures, not necessarily located in the church building" (p. 2).

Participant P5

When questioned in category one, participant P5 was noted to be calm and demonstrated self-confidence. Participant P5's mood was very nonchalant and neutral. The researcher did not notice any significant highs or lows in his responses, facial expressions, or body language when answering questions. When asked what mentorship meant to him, P5 stated,

> Mentorship for me, I guess would be, time to pouring into me in places where I don't have experience. And so that's especially in in in pastoring and in leadership, right. The whole administrative side handling people who have very different ideas than you. And you can just kind of write them off. I also feel like a mentor should be consistent. I've had people claim to be mentors that check in with me like once every 3 months, that does not work in mentorship at all.

Authors Robin Broughton, Marie Plaisime, Parker Green, and Melissa Parker (2019) confirm that a one-size-fits-all method is outdated, as P5 stated. In the United States the population alone is becoming more and more diverse, and intentional mentorship, such as sharing personal stories between the mentee and mentor, nurture solid relationships (Broughton et al., 2019). Robin, Marie, Green, and Parker also stated, "individual wisdom is an invaluable tool for intentional mentorship. Mentors who take time to reflect on personal experiences and note what has helped to inform their career path purposefully awaken a specific level of knowledge within mentees" (p. 318). During his mentorship journey, participant P5 found he received above average mentorship beyond ordination based on having received face-to-face, self-directed, and digital-based training seminars.

Participant P1

Category one questioning ended with commentary by participant P1, as participant P1 presented a commanding presence. Participant P1's commanding presence was based on his

achieved pedigrees which include Doctor of Philosophy. The mood of P1 was unwavering, as the researcher noted his responses to questions and body language were alike. When asked what mentorship means to him, P1 stated,

> Mentorship, to me is likened unto discipleship. The same way that Jesus took, not just the twelve, but also others under his wing. And really taught them fundamental principles. Not necessarily about religion, but more so about life. True mentorship inside of the African American non-denominational male experience, as far as clergy is concerned, I think, should be exactly like that.

Related to category one questioning, author William Turner (2022) stated that mentorship is likened to discipleship and states "leadership that is transformational engages leaders and followers in a relationship that is mutually formational. The idea of transformational leadership is that it transcends transactional models of leadership; exchanges between leaders and followers" (p. 53). When leadership is transformational, "leaders seek to motivate their followers to reach their fullest potential by being attentive to their needs" (Turner, 2022, p. 55). Participant P1 considered his receipt of mentorship to be above average, and proclaimed qualifications of becoming a mentor should include starting with a cradle-to-grave process and having a mentor who "understands the vision you have for your ministry as well as having experience as a mentor." Participant P1 also stated, "lacking the key component of lifespan mentorship, brings failures in direction between a mentor and mentee." To understand P1's standpoint on lifespan mentorship in African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, leadership standards between Black and white leaders have to be explored.

Authors Robert Crosby and Janice Edwards (2021) imply the most significant difference between Black and white leaders is that black leaders have overcome a significant number of obstacles just to have an opportunity to lead. At times, their leadership is learned without the

same tools and opportunities as possessed by their white counterparts (Crosby & Edwards, 2021, p. 509). In essence, "to understand current Black leaders, we must look at how history, once context, has influenced the present" (Crosby & Edwards, 2021, p. 509). The history that has influenced Black leadership is often found in mentorship practices through formal education.

Category Two

In category two, formal education, and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, participant P2 maintained the position that education past high school was appropriate in order to become a mentor in the non-denominational church.

Participant P2

When asked how mentorship had shaped P2's career in ministry, P2 stated, "I have been mentored by pastors at different times through different seasons. Good mentors have shown me how to do things, and bad mentors have shown me how not to do things."

Participant P4

Participant P4's reflection on category two was opposite of participant P2. In his answer, P4 stated only certain areas of formal education should be a requirement for mentorship between a mentor and a mentee. In his statement, "if there is a skill, base, or a knowledge, space that is needed and get a formal education, of course, should be a prerequisite. Without having the real-life experiences or opportunities, I don't think it has its full value." Participant P4 maintained his stance on his preference to have mentorship from someone based on experience rather than formal education and felt that education past high school and a college education were equally important. When asked how mentorship had shaped P4's career in ministry, P4 stated,

> In a lot of ways. It's helped me to like, avoid some of the some of the pitfalls and stumbles and traps that that I've seen others endure that did not have mentorship. It's also

opened up opportunities to me that I never had even thought about for myself. For instance, when I took over the youth ministry at 27, there was only 3 kids in the youth ministry, and all 3 were the senior pastors' kids. So not only was he putting me over a youth of his newly or ordained church, but he was also giving me the autonomy to actually mentor, and pour into his kids, his own kids.

Participant P2's and P4's comments about receiving mentorship through a trial by fire approach brought up interesting commentary. Author Antonio Ellis (2020) comments on the importance of gaining knowledge based on his perspective on literacy. In his words, "critical literacy is grounded in the sociocultural perspective and way of thinking about curriculum, literacies, and honoring students' lived experiences" (Ellis, 2020, p. 16).

Participant P6

Participant P6's reflection on category two was opposite of P4's. In his answer, P6 stated that he disagreed with formal education being a requirement for mentorship in the non-denominational church. In addition, P6 maintained that integrity, above any form of education, should be a requirement. In his statement, P6 claimed that mentorship can often come down to a collection of trophies, and selectivity is important—"If you think that mentorship and this is overall for the non-denominational church, I think the youth minister is just a biopsy of a greater organ. And I think at large ministers aren't educated to the point where it matters." When asked how mentorship had shaped P6's career in ministry, he stated,

I wasn't mentored around money and, you know, just having the keys of the kingdom. Not having mentorship around money, caused some deep ditches that I had to get out of. And so, whereas there's the richness of ministry, what looked good, and you know who wouldn't want this kind of life, I had an unhealthy relationship with money.

Bringing participant P4 and P6's statements together, author Melissa Kruger (2020) speaks on pouring into others in mentorship while discussing Gospel-Centered Discipleship. Melissa confirms the most significant reason why mentorship is deficient is based on individual guilt and shame (Kruger, 2020). The guilt and shame are often uncovered because the mentor

may have a history with greed, lying, addiction, and cheating in their lifetime, which causes them to want to hide, but Christ was our redeeming story and we are no longer enslaved to our sins (Kruger, 2020, p. 33). Continuing the conversation on category two, participants P7 and P3 spoke on lived experiences over formal education as appropriate for mentorship success.

Participant P7

Participant P7's reflection on category two was similar to his fellow participants, based on his statement that a mentor should be at the same level as the individual they are mentoring. In his response P7 stated, "to me, in order to mentor somebody, you need to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, because I think he's going to guide you." Participant P7 also stated, "I think you got to have been where you're trying to lead this person you know. I feel like you know it's going to be hard for me to show you how to get somewhere, I haven't got there yet." When asked how mentorship had shaped P7's career in ministry, P7 stated, "it's been everything. There would be no career ministry for me without mentorship. Also, I would have made more mistakes without mentorship based on age and inexperience."

Participant P8

Participant P8's reflection on category two was similar to P7's as he too stated that a relationship with the Lord was the most important form of formal education that a mentor could present. Participant P8 viewed mentorship in comparison to getting accepted into college and applying for a job. In his analogy, when someone applies for college, administrators will ask for your transcripts to determine what grades you received. The grades are also reflective of what courses an individual may be able to handle. In comparing formal education and mentorship to a job experience, P8 stated resumes are crucial because they give employers references on your past experiences. A resume aids an employer in determining how much one can handle.

When asked how mentorship had shaped P8's career in ministry, P8 stated, "because I'm effective in ministry, effective ministry leads to like popularity. And, if you're effective in something long enough, I think people will draw to you because they want a piece of you or something they say." Participant P8 also stated, "I've had some of that experience. But I think I'm effective in what I do. It draws people and it draws people in a sense that they say, I want him to mentor me." The mentorship experience P8 referred to be a lived experience.

Participant P3

Participant P3 spoke on his lived experiences and the connections they presented in the areas of formal education and mentorship. He agreed education past high school is appropriate for becoming a mentor in the non-denominational church. Yet the mentorship experience is not diminished by a mentor's decision to not receive formal education, because not everyone goes to college, graduate school, or post graduate school. In his discussion he stated, "people looked at me as a mentor before I was ordained…and, from a relatability standpoint, one must have the ability to connect to the people they are mentoring." Author John Bernau (2021) inserts data from the General Social Survey suggesting "a great deal of confidence in leaders of religious organizations fell from 45 to 30 percent among regular church attendees between 1972 and 2014; among all adults, these numbers fell from 35 to 20 percent" (Bernau, 2021, pp. 369-370). The reason for this decline is based on the role that ministers have in committing pastoral care to their congregants. For instance,

> Clergy in the past could afford to speak in explicitly religious language on account of their unchallenged monopoly on personal problems, whereas today's pastoral care professionals make it a point of emphasis to "meet people where they are" and let them define the terms and direction of their time together (Bernau, 2021, p. 369).

When asked how mentorship has shaped his career in ministry, P3 stated,

It works on your heart. It works on your heart because you get to hear the struggles and the things people go through. And I would say that it shaded my career, because it really gives you the heart of a pastor, the heart of a shepherd, especially when you're talking about youth**.**

Participant P5

Participant P5's reflection on category two was that a mentor within the non-denominational church should, at the very least, have a high school diploma. It is important to note participant P5 referenced historical content in his response. In his opinion, participant P5 said historically African Americans were denied the right to learn how to read. Participant P5 also stated that historically African American pastors led extremely large congregations, in his opinion, without knowing how to read or having a high school diploma. When asked how mentorship had shaped P5's career in ministry, he stated,

It has played, a very, very, very big part. There are spaces in ministry that I would not have known how to navigate if it wasn't for mentorship. Yes, the Holy Ghost is real. Yes, the Lord does speak to you. But we need wisdom. We need to know how to do certain things in applying Biblical principles, but in in the right way. And so, it has been a vital part to everything I've done in ministry.

Participant P1

Participant P1 was also asked how mentorship has shaped his career in ministry. Participant P1 states he would not be a quarter as successful as he is today without it. In contrast to the 35 to 20 percent decline mentioned above, P1's mentors placed a heavy emphasis on his mentorship journey. For instance, P1 currently has a PhD., and his chosen mentors also have a Ph.D. Participant P1 confirmed that it was through spiritual and academic mentorship where he found he was pushed to levels he would not have been able to attain without their leadership. He agreed that formal education is lacking in the non-denominational church as well as a push between mentors to mentees to pursue formal education. The reason this variable exists is based on mentorship platforms shared between mentor and mentee or a traditional perspective rather

than a non-denominational one. In his words, "there is no formal education that does not expose you to what mentorship looks like, because education within itself is mentorship." As P1 stated, any form of education can produce mentorship. In approaching category three, informal education was assessed to further explore the connection between mentorship and its relationship to A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church.

Category Three

In category (3), informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, participant P2 continued his commentary on mentorship.

Participant P2

Participant P2 stated, "I have been mentored by pastors at different times through different seasons. If anything, I could say, that I always take from anybody that was a mentor, whether that be in ministry or outside of ministry, picking a person that sets the right example." While being mentored by pastors at different times through different seasons, P2 agreed that informal education should also be a requirement between mentor and mentee, as "informal education can provide structure and the understanding of how to be educated." In the conclusion of the interview with P2 he was asked if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? Participant P2 stated he would "provide a format for how the ministry is ran, integrate the discipleship at that particular campus or church, and then create a program so disciples can learn exactly how things are done, to move people move forward in succession."

Participant P4

Participant P4 continued his commentary on informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church by discussing the importance of having a communal mentorship language. Participant P4 stated, "one can't effectively interpret the Bible in one language, without informal training." In referring to one language, P4 referenced one language being similar to the concept of one body in Christ. Participant P4 essentially agreed that informal education should also be a requirement between mentor and mentee. He stated, "mentors have been 100% transparent and showing me how to marry the two. Marry the education, and then marry the experiences and the real list that, that people need to actually be healed and actually get progress in their spiritual journeys." In the conclusion of the interview P4 was asked if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? Participant P4 stated,

> What I would do, what I think would be a great opportunity, would be to establish a sort of, I guess, collective where those African American ministers could actually gather and talk and share ideas and share experiences and share how they overcome certain things. I think that would be, that would be really helpful in creating that informal, I guess, database for knowledge to be shared and disseminated.

Participant P6

Participant P6 continued his commentary on mentorship by discussing how informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church means nothing if it cannot be applied in the area which needs application. Participant P6 did not agree or disagree with informal education being a requirement for mentorship between a mentor and mentee. In his statement, P6 said, "Well, it depends on the person, because some folks aren't worth my mentorship. They don't want it. They say they do, but they don't want it. And Jesus says, why cast your pearls before swine." In the conclusion of

the interview P6 was asked if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? In his response, P6 informed the researcher he currently has an 8,000 square-foot facility which is not being utilized. He stated he would use the space to bring modern educational platforms and technology to the non-denominational church. In his statement P6 confirmed he would,

> Turn the unused space into some kind of training facility, not just for pastors or people who have an interest in ministry. But the space could also be utilized for other denominations who don't have access. I would love to be an auxiliary campus for some seminary, where a teacher were there, and I'd love to pay for them to teach.

Participant P7

Participant P7 continued his commentary on informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, comparing it to lived life experiences. P7 stated, "informal education to me means experiences, life experiences, life knowledge, and things that you've learned outside of formal education." Participant P7 agreed that informal education should also be a requirement between mentor and mentee. P7 was asked if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? He stated,

> I think that I would require every young youth minister to hook up with an older minister or more seasoned minister, or a more prudent minister to walk with them, to be accountable to them, so that you can share your life, experiences it, bounce ideas off, even if this individual person may not have the same degree level as you somebody that's more seasoned than you to show you that other side of the coin.

Participant P8

Participant P8 continued his commentary on informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church by comparing it to servant leadership.

I think a lot of times what we do in church is, we think that I can only serve you by praying for you. but if I get some type of informal education, I might be able to train you on something more than just prayer. You know I might be able to train you on, how to raise, how to help raise a child that's depressed.

Participant P8 agreed that informal education should also be a requirement between mentor and mentee. As with the other participants, P8 was asked at the conclusion of the interview, if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? Participant P8 stated conferences are good, but he looks for alternative ways to engage youth, stating,

I can remember, I was trying to figure out how in the world am I going to get my teenagers involved at my church because I'm a talkative of this person. I'm the life of the party. So, you know you kind of want that to be the atmosphere if you're going to be mentoring the youth. Initially, they would come in, and everybody would be sitting down looking at their phone. So, I started a game room, and when I started the game, it brought a safe space for teens to talk about their problems, and ultimately created a safe environment for pastoring.

Participant P3

Participant P3's opinion on informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church was compared to "the school of hard knocks" as "sometimes life will teach you things that books can't." Participant P3 claims, "it's one thing for people to tell you what they went through. It's one thing for you to study about it. But it's another thing when you're in the mix, especially, if I can speak candidly, within youth ministry, you learn a lot about patience." P3 was asked, if presented with an opportunity to incorporate informal education for A.A. male youth male ministers in the non-denominational church, how could he display transparency? His response was straightforward as he claimed, in being a youth pastor, he understood that many times other ministers were facing the same challenges within their own ministries, perfecting or enhancing youth ministry. He was also

asked, if presented with an opportunity, how would you incorporate informal education for A.A. youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? Participant P3 stated,

> One thing I've learned when I was youth pastoring, I ran into a number of youth pastors, and I learned that I wasn't the only one going through certain things within the ministry. Even when you look and you see the really successful things in youth ministry, they still go through some of the same things. So, I would incorporate connections with others for the sake of perfecting or enhancing your ministry.

Participant P5

Participant P5 continued his commentary on informal education and its relationship to mentorship for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church in comparison to continuing or on-the-job training. P5 stated, "informal education is personal lived experiences for some, and informal education can be a form of unaccredited courses." Participant P5 agreed that informal education should be a requirement for mentorship in the non-denominational church between mentor and mentee. The specific reason why participant P5 agreed to this was based on what church goers need to see full transparency, which they do not see behind the scenes. In his statement, P5 mentioned praise and worship mimicking a club. However, behind the scenes, coregents do not see their pastors cry or go through personal, emotional, and mental struggles which could be destroying them. In concluding the interview with P5 he was asked, if presented with an opportunity, how would he incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church? Participant P5 stated,

> I feel like I would hold, what I called early on unaccredited class, and kind of just go over my success in lessons I don't want to call failures. Lessons in ministry. I guess, given a real-life picture of what it is. Because just observing it from the pulpit, it looks great. It looks, you know, a lot of churches have like flashing lights and spotlights, and you know it can look like the club sometimes. But, behind the scenes, it is tough, right when you can see your pastor crying.

Participant P1

Participant P1 closed out category three, as he strongly felt internships or trial by fire would be great ways to implement informal education for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. Participant P1 stated the trial by fire method is a great way to incorporate informal education because it "gives a greater level of responsibilities to the mentee, which that mentee might see as beyond their qualifications, and it creates the ultimate notable learning experience." Author Louise Phelps (2022) asks, "why do both older and younger generations seek history" (p. 130)? The answer is clear:

> For one, disciplines need to establish and sustain continuity over time. That means, for older generations, recruiting and mentoring new members who will advance the field while preserving and honoring their legacy. Younger scholars, regardless of how much they bring new agendas, need to claim forebears (Phelps, 2022, p. 111).

In closing out the demographic and sample data display, extensive background information was then introduced to show data, in the form of themes, of the qualitative ethnographic nature of participants within this research population. Proceeding to data analysis and findings, research questions displayed a more concrete analysis of the results.

Data Analysis and Findings

The qualitative ethnographic data analysis was performed through audio, video, and written transcription to ensure widest dissemination of buy-in, validity, and ethical integrity from the researcher and participants. The research setting for this model was the city of Atlanta Georgia based on its status as an overwhelmingly groundbreaking city for the Civil Rights Movement (Atlanta.gov, 2022). Also, the majority race in Atlanta is comprised of white residents equating to 47.2% of the population, and the most common racial group, African American, comprises only 33.6% (Atlanta.gov, 2022). The physical setting of Atlanta was crucial to the qualitative ethnographic study because, as previously mentioned, "churches are an important asset and a trusted resource in the African American community" (Maxwell et al.,

2019). The initial data analysis method utilized was structured to include participant

pseudonyms, age range, formal education presented, years of service in ministry, years of service

in non-denominationalism, and an active mentorship relationship.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

A.A. Youth Minister	Church Name	Age range	Active in N.D.	Active in N.D. > five years	Active in N.D. Ministry Full time	Active in N.D. Ministry Part time
P1	TWC	36 – 45	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
P2	TWC	30 – 40	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
P3	LFT	30 – 40	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
P4	NMBC	35 – 45	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
P5	TMONL	26 – 35	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
P6	TCA	36 – 45	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
P7	MOOM	30 – 40	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
P8	TLRS	35 – 45	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

* A.A. Denotes African American

* N.D. Denotes Non-Denominationalism

RQ1. What areas of formal education do African American male youth ministers in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

Table 2

Formal Education Present in A.A. Male Youth participants

A.A. Youth Minister	Age range	Formal Education Presented	Years of Service (M)	Years of Service (ND)	Active Mentorship
P1	36 – 45	Doctor of Philosophy	23	11	Yes
P2	30 – 40	Bachelor's degree	7	5	Yes
P3	30 – 40	Bachelor's degree	10	7	Yes
P4	35 – 45	Bachelor's degree	6	5	Yes
P5	26 – 35	Bachelor's degree	5	5	Yes
P6	36 – 45	Master's Degree	20	15	Yes
P7	30 – 40	High School Diploma	8	6	Yes
P8	35 – 45	Bachelor's degree	8	6	Yes

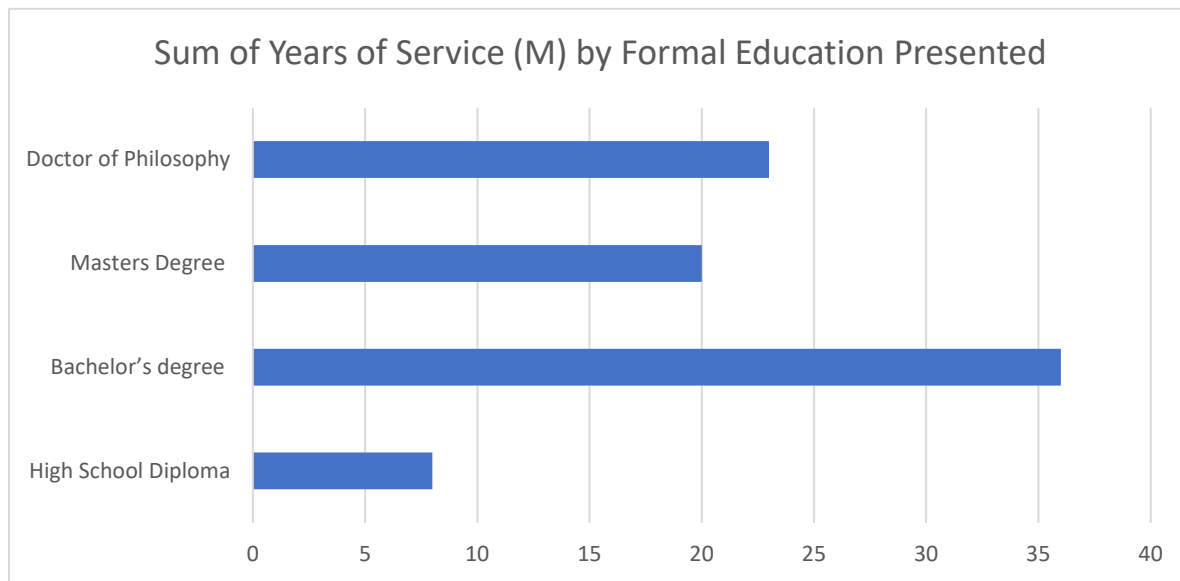*(M) Denotes Ministry

*(ND) Denotes Non-Denominationalism

Theme 1 RQ1: Average of Years of Service in Ministry verses Average of Years of Service in Non-denominationalism
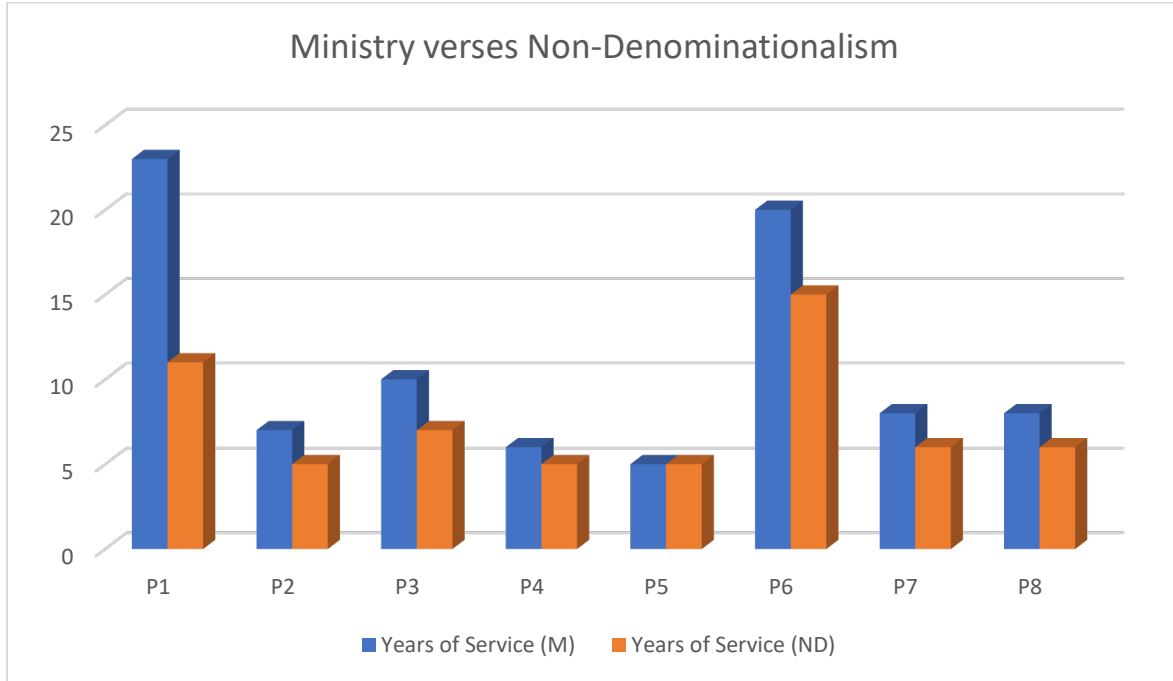
(M) Denotes Ministry

(M) Denotes Non-Denominationalism

Theme 2 RQ 1: Active Years of Service in Ministry and Formal Degree Presented

Sum of Years of Service (M) by Formal Education Presented

Degree	Years of Service
Doctor of Philosophy	23
Masters Degree	20
Bachelor's degree	36
High School Diploma	8

The data gathered were sufficient to provide an effective answer to RQ1. Theme one corresponds to average years of service each participant has held in ministry in comparison to average years of service each participant has spent in non-denominationalism. This theme was chosen to show similarities and differences among participants. Participants P2, P3, P4, P7, and P8 show their service in both categories are almost similar, as each participant's highest level of obtained formal education was between a high school diploma and bachelor's degree. A conclusion drawn here suggested participants P2, P3, P4, P7, and P8 shared more active years in ministry than their active years in non-denominationalism. These statistics also suggested age as a significant factor, with the youngest participant in the category being as young as 26 and the oldest being 45. Participants P6 and P1 had advanced degrees and claimed a significant amount of time spent in ministry in comparison to time spent in only non-denominationalism. While viewing the table of formal education present in A.A. male youth participants, a conclusion can be drawn that P6's and P1's years of service, and potentially ages, were appropriate in concluding the theme was present. In addition, based on the data presented, an alternative

conclusion drawn shows participant P1 had not been in non-denominationalism as long as he had been in ministry overall. Participant P5 was the youngest interviewee and his years of service in ministry and non-denominationalism were equal. No major conclusion was reached with P5's reporting.

Theme two represented active years of service in ministry which each participant currently held, and formal degrees presented which aided in cultivated mentorship. This function was chosen specifically to represent formal education present in each participant combined with active years of service in ministry. These statistics were produced based on participant responses to RQ1 interview questions. Participants who held a bachelor's degree and high school diploma shared almost equal amounts of years spent in ministry, which was more than 5 years. Participants who held a master's degree or post-graduate degree also shared the same amount of time in ministry, which was between 20 and 23 years. A conclusion drawn from participant responses suggested African American male youth ministers in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism needed or acquired formal education to aid in career mentorship.

RQ2. What areas of informal, continuing, or on the job education and training do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

Table 3

Informal Education Present in A.A. Male Youth participants

Participant	Agree or Disagree w/Informal Education as a Requirement for Training N.D. Ministers	Type of Informal Education Received
P1	Agree	Internships & On the Job Training
P2	Agree	Internships & On the Job Training
P3	Agree	On the Job Training
P4	Yes	On the Job Training
P5	Agree	On the Job Training
P6	Agree & Disagree	Self-Directed & On-The-Job Training
P7	Agree	On the Job Training

P8	Agree & Disagree	None

*(ND) Denotes Non-Denominationalism

The data gathered were sufficient to provide an effective answer to RQ2. Prior to implementation of the previous questionnaire, the researcher utilized inductive coding standards during the data analysis phase. Inductive coding grants the researcher to establish a scale (i.e., a feedback survey) to tag data (Watts et al., 2021). The scale utilized here was based on "agree or disagree" verses a "yes or no" response. This type of coding was great for a first round of questioning, because it gave the researcher a platform on which to begin the process (Watts et al., 2021). This table explicitly detailed informal education received while in ministry and while in the non-denominational church. Informal education questioning did not include questioning about formal education received in the form of certifications, licensing, or train the trainer courses. Author Alister McGrath (2021) points out "theology is fractured not only into multiple competing models (e.g., neoclassical, process, and open models of God), but also into fundamental disagreements on the function of doctrine (e.g., post-liberalism, metaphorical theology, analytic theology" (p. 19). Intrinsically, this table was chosen for the analysis of data to explore human reasoning. Each participant agreed or disagreed with informal education being a requirement for training ministers based on how they felt informal training influenced their careers. On-the-job training (OJT) was the most referenced category of informal training recorded, which aided in cultivated mentorship among A.A. male youth ministers in non-denominationalism.

RQ3. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if there is a need for mentorship beyond ordination in their career?

Table 4

Determination of Mentorship beyond Ordination

A.A. Youth Minister	Agree or Disagree Formal Education is lacking in A.A.M.Y.M. in N.D.	Level of Mentorship Received Past Ordination (Average; 0-4 Above Average; 5-10)	Qualifications of Being a Mentor (greater than > or less than<)
P1	Agree	10	Education > Graduate School
P2	Disagree	8	Education > High School
P3	Agree	6	Education > High School
P4	Disagree	7	Education > High School
P5	Agree	8	Education > High School
P6	Disagree	10	Education > Graduate School
P7	Disagree	4	Education > High School
P8	Agree	5	Education > High School

*(A.A.M. Y.M.) African American Youth Ministers

*(N.D.) Denotes Non-Denominational

The data gathered were sufficient to provide an effective answer to RQ3. Within deductive coding, researchers are advised to use a small set of sampling of their data to ensure what they are using is applicable to the remainder of the data set (Watts et al., 2021). The deductive coding utilized here represents participants' answers based on below average ratings of 0-4 in conjunction to above average ratings of 5-10. In addition, the predetermined scale was utilized in the analysis of data indicating how participants ranked their responses based on the qualifications of those whom they were mentored by. That category included four questions concerning: education past high school, education past graduate school, education past graduate school to include ordination, and education as a requirement to maintain ordination. To produce trustworthiness within this ethnographic group, identifying trends visually was necessary, as it presented full transparency (Watts et al., 2021). A conclusion drawn here suggested half of the participants agreed formal education was lacking in A.A.M.Y.M, and half disagreed that formal education was lacking in A.A.M.Y.M. Additionally, examining if there was a need for mentorship beyond ordination in A.A.M.Y.M was determined by asking questions divided into two categories—Education past high school and the level of mentorship received beyond

ordination—as eight participants reported on having above average mentorship beyond

ordination.

RQ4. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if their success or failures are attributed to leadership effectiveness or leadership ineffectiveness based on mentorship in their career?

Table 5

Determining Leadership Effectiveness/Ineffectiveness based on Mentorship.

A.A. Youth Minister	Successful/Unsuccessful Based on Leadership Effectiveness	Success Determined by Formal Education	Success Determined by Informal Education	Success Determined by On-the-Job-Training
P1	SUCCESSFUL	YES	YES	NO
P2	NEITHER	NO	YES	YES
P3	NEITHER	NO	YES	YES
P4	SUCCESSFUL	YES	YES	YES
P5	SUCCESSFUL	NO	YES	YES
P6	SUCCESSFUL	YES	YES	YES
P7	SUCCESSFUL	NO	YES	NO
P8	SUCCESSFUL	NO	YES	YES

The data gathered were sufficient to provide an effective answer to RQ4. When

participants P1, P4, and P6 were asked how mentorship shaped their careers in ministry, they

determined that their success was attributed to leadership effectiveness, formal education, and

informal education through continued lifespan career mentorship. Both participants P2 and P3

were asked the same question but did not mention how success shaped their careers until

informal education was introduced. Participants P5, P7, and P8 determined their success was

attributed to leadership effectiveness, but their success as mentors was not determined by having

received formal education. They attributed their success with having received informal

education. The categorization of data was chosen for analysis based on the relationship between

mentorship and the role of African American Male Youth Ministers in the non-denominational

church. The final question was asked for the purpose of identifying the research gap. For instance, as previously stated, the Black church and its pastors were considered a staple of the African American community (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). Author John Bernau (2021) cites The Journal for Pastoral Care (JPCC) as having "a deliberate interdisciplinary focus: to advance theory and professional practice through scholarly and reflective literature on pastoral and spiritual care, counseling, psychotherapy, education, and research" (p. 370).

Evaluation of the Research Design

Through the evaluation of the research design, the researcher elected not to collect data based on the initial two-stage data collection protocol . Instead, this step was omitted based on the timeliness of receiving IRB approval as well as similarities of questions found in the Revised Final Questionnaire (Appendix F). The purpose of this chapter was to produce the methodology of the research approached through qualitative ethnographic techniques, which included identification of participants through gatekeepers and the identification of participants through a direct reporting and snowball sampling. The research methods selected supported the researcher in showing strengths, weaknesses, and potential modifications to the research design. The initial findings indicated participants researched within this population chose non-denominationalism because the non-denominational church was not part of a larger denomination (Brauer, 2017). As such, recruitment of participants proved to be both an advantage and disadvantage. The researcher relied on both current and dated recruiting techniques in contacting participants; recruiting techniques included use of the USPS mail and email. These techniques were utilized based on the perception that candidates would be contacted faster in the research area of Atlanta Georgia.

When a deep dive was performed in initially contacting gatekeepers, it was noted that not every church selected had a website. In addition, many of the selected churches had a physical address and a separate mailing address. These factors delayed contacting gatekeepers and potential research participants. Ultimately, the wait time was initially intended to be two weeks, with potential candidates responding to their request to partake in the study in the third week. However, two months into compiling data, the researcher found that she was still receiving returned letters, negative responses, and non-responses from the 40 churches initially contacted. In hindsight the researcher should have physically visited each of the 40 churches, which may have yielded greater results and participants. The addition of this step would have been feasible since the researcher resided in the area in which the research was conducted. One positive takeaway from the recruitment process was snowball sampling, or in other words, word-of-mouth aided in producing qualified candidates for the study.

Upon considering strengths of the research design, the researcher found the ethnographic approach feasible for the population. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher determined the city of Atlanta Georgia was comprised of 33.6% African Americans (Atlanta.gov, 2022). With the data presented, the qualitive study was initiated to determine if the absence in lifelong training and mentorship leads to increased doubt in Christian believers, a decrease in gaining non-believers, and stunted spiritual growth among congregants of the non-denominational church (Easum et al., 2006). The research conducted aligned with research questions for African American male youth ministers. In the same vein, one significant weakness was locating African American male youth ministers in non-denominationalism in Atlanta Georgia actively serving in ministry within the non-denominational church under the age of 46. It was an assumption that since 33.6% of African Americans resided in Atlanta Georgia a greater pool of potential

candidates would easily be achieved. Nevertheless, this statistic proved to be a flaw. The research area should have included Atlanta Georgia, and surrounding counties within a 40-mile radius.

One strength and weakness of the research design was the qualitative, structured open- and closed-ended research questions. The strength was that the researcher found each participant candidly responded to the research questions with little to no delay. However, the weakness noted suggests more scales could have been utilized to better gauge reporting standards. In addition to adding numbered values to the design, this would have allowed qualitative reporting standards to be less subjective. For instance, in utilizing exit questionnaires more control would have been given to participants if they wanted to share anything else or inquire further about the research. This action could have eased any tension and anxiety in participants. Author Timothy Sowicz and colleagues (2019) stated, "A closing question may allow research participants time to reflect, share additional information, and decompress; however, how this information informs the research is unclear" (p. 10). In summation, the qualitative ethnographic study could have been better produced through the utilization of a mixed methods approach.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The objective of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to identify the barriers surrounding a lack of career mentorship in A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. Below, the researcher has pinpointed analysis for each of the four research questions designed to achieve this objective. Chapter Five restates the purpose that drove this academic work. Following that, the researcher discusses findings in relation to the existing literature as reviewed in Chapter Two. Next, the researcher discusses research conclusions, implications, and applications for this study, including a list of research limitations and applications, followed by the summary.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research study was to explore if the absence or presence of formal mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church in Atlanta Georgia beyond ordination are necessary. Based on statistics, participants were generally defined as those who attended church at least 3 times a month and were actively serving within ministerial department(s) of the non-denominational church. The theory which guided this study was the Transformative Learning Theory. The Transformative Learning Theory, or Mezirow Transformative Learning Theory (MTLT), "invites learners to reflect on their deeply engrained beliefs or frames of reference and to become open to changing these in response to evidence gained around a new, changing, or uncertain environment" (Campbell, & Brysiewicz, 2018, p. 3). The theory was chosen because its focus was heavily centered on young adult instruction and learning.

Research Questions

RQ1. What areas of formal education do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ2. What areas of informal, continuing, or on the job education and training do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, possess in their career and church institution which aid in cultivated mentorship?

RQ3. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if there is a need for mentorship beyond ordination in their career?

RQ4. How do African American male youth ministers, in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism, determine if their success or failures are attributed to leadership effectiveness or leadership ineffectiveness based on mentorship in their career?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

Research Conclusions

The research conclusions reached within this study sought answers to four research questions.

Research Question One

Research question one was posed in order to determine which areas of formal education were present among African American male youth ministers in non-denominationalism that aided in cultivated mentorship. The research conclusion recognized having both a high school diploma or GED and education past high school were a necessity. Upon determining the level of education obtained by each participant, seven participants with a combination of a high school diploma, bachelors, graduate, or post-graduate degrees agreed in favor of advanced formal education aiding in cultivated mentorship. One participant with formal education past high school did not agree formal education aided in cultivated mentorship.

The determination suggests advanced mentorship, given and received, does not always go hand in hand with education obtained in high school, graduate, and postgraduate. This conclusion was founded based on interviews conducted which determined mentors within mentorship roles do not always pursue formal education. The conclusion was also founded based on interviews conducted which determined seven mentees elected not to pursue post-graduate education. Finally, participants who completed formal education programs past high school claimed having a mentor being formally educated neither took away from nor added to their level of received cultivated mentorship.

Research Question 2

 Research question two was posed to determine if participants in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism received informal education throughout their careers which aided in cultivated mentorship. Based on individual responses, participants confirmed receipt of informal education through on-the-job training, internships, and self-taught forms of training. As previously referenced in the background summary, participants within this research category were from Generations X,Y, and Z. These three categories of mentees further confirmed receipt of mentorship through readily available technological advances which included distance learning, social media platforms, and various communities of practice. The ages of participants within this qualitative ethnographic study were under the age of 46. Author Maureen Towns (2013) reconfirms the theory which claims, "millennials, however, are so large in number and believe so strongly in their own values and truths, they are demanding that the norms be adjusted to suit them. Still, generational values and norms are built on collective life experiences" (p. 33).

The determination of concluded results suggests informal training with the utilization of technologically available platforms aided in the delivery and receipt of cultivated informal

training. For instance, at least three participants stated they had a variety of mentors: spiritual, financial, fitness-driven, etc. Research presented found that African American male youth ministers who spent at least five years in ministry and non-denominationalism simultaneously obtained and sustained consistent mentorship throughout their careers. The consistency of their mentorship was based on a work/life balance in which mentees selected mentors based on the overall goals they wished to accomplish at a set time.

Research Question 3

Research question three was posed to determine how African American male youth ministers in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism determined if there is a need for mentorship beyond ordination. Based on individual responses, participants were evaluated through the utilization of a numeric scale in which their responses captured the following: `0-4 (average) and 5-10 (above average). The scale represented mentorship received throughout their careers versus mentorship given. Participants were not asked if their responses were based on mentorship received while actively involved in non-denominationalism. The responses were based on their time spent in ministry and outcome of mentorship obtained to date. Each participant's numbered value suggested the mentorship they'd received was average to above average, numbering between 4 and 10.

The determination suggests mentorship beyond ordination is a significant need which should be continuing and frequently reoccurring. The overall quality of mentorship towards participants suggested mentorship once every three months was too infrequent. The determination also suggests physical access, mentor networking and availability, time management, prioritization, and financial stability played a significant role in determining if mentorship received beyond ordination was average or above average.

Research Question 4

Research question four was posed to determine how African American male youth ministers in current ministry roles within non-denominationalism determined if their success or failures in mentorship were attributed to leadership effectiveness or leadership ineffectiveness. To determine leadership effectiveness and leadership ineffectiveness, participants were asked if they believed their careers were successful or unsuccessful based on the receipt of or neglect of quality or substandard mentorship standards throughout their careers in non-denominationalism. Six participants agreed that their success as ministers was based on leadership effectiveness, whereas two participants stated neither leadership effectiveness nor leadership ineffectiveness contributed to their success or failure as mentors.

The determination suggests mentorship success was mostly attributed to leadership effectiveness. Three participants agreed their success within leadership effectiveness was based on formal education. Six participants agreed their success within leadership effectiveness was based on on-the-job training. All participants agreed that informal education aided in their individual leadership effectiveness. To further evaluate the results of the study, research implications and research applications are also explored.

Research Implications

In 2016, Dr. Bernadette Sanchez once stated Black boys benefit from formal and informal mentoring through academics, mental health services, and through their overall social and emotional well-being. The qualitative ethnographic study presented in this report confirmed Dr. Bernadette's claims. In her words, "Black men are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors based on their shared experiences, which are impacted by cultural mistrust" (Sanchez, 2016, p. 1) The level of mistrust "significantly influences Black boys' perceptions of

their white mentors and alters the quality of their relationships with them and others" (Sanchez, 2016, p. 1). The exploration of career mentorship in A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church corroborated previous research based on the Four Drives Theory, Parsons Leadership Model, and Theory of Behaviorism.

Research Implications

The Four Drives Theory

The researched topic connected to the Four Drives Theory based on previous researched conditions found through the drive to acquire. The drive to acquire concludes with having connections that aide in the enhancement, perfecting, learning, and empowering of a community of relationships where individual growth flourishes. Research participants' responses complimented the theory, as their responses reflected a desire for forming and maintaining a strong connection between themselves and their senior ministerial leaders through structured mentorship. The study sheds new light on the Four Drives Theory through the drive to bond. Within the drive to bond, participants within this study were asked what ministry experiences they possessed which they considered special gifts or skills. One theme identified based on participant responses was the drive to bond through deliverance, healing, discernment, and spiritual sight. The Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model produced the second implication.

Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model

The research study confirmed the ineffectiveness of the Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model for A.A.M.Y.M. The model utilized research which suggested up-and-coming ministers would first attend college and then immediately go into seminary without having mentorship between their residency or in the transition to the churches where they would be pastors (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). This implication proved true within this group of participants. Though it

was found their mentor and mentee relationships were consistent, two participants went through a trial by fire learning technique on their first assignment as youth pastors. The Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model further corroborated previous research in that the model proved ineffective for the researched population. A research question asked within this population asked if formal education was lacking for youth ministers within the non-denominational church.

A larger number of participants stated that formal education for youth ministers was lacking simply because the educational mentorship they received was not specifically geared toward youth ministers' long-term or short-term goals. Nevertheless, a third of participants claimed to have received extensive mentorship and training in other areas, which adequately prepared them to lead as A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. Participants found they were frequently utilized for educational, consulting, spiritual, and more recently mental health counseling, and services in the community, without having adequate training. The theory sheds new light on the topic of mentorship in A.A.M.Y.M. in non-denominationalism, as the participants reported they did not have a break in mentorship between seminary and church leadership in their current operating capacities. As previously recorded, author John Tomlinson (2007) confirmed, "the parson model depends upon a relationship with the whole community, not just those who attend the local church" (pp. 220-221). This theory sheds new light on the subject, an exploration of lifespan mentorship among African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, as confirmation identified mentorship was needed at every stage of the A.A.M.Y.M's career. The Theory of Behaviorism is relevant for the third research implication.

Theory of Behaviorism

The study confirmed previous research on the Theory of Behaviorism through identification of the Black Church as a system of social balance within the A.A. community. Participants acknowledged mentors to be individuals in positions of continual progression, integral authority, and a protégé likeness. This likeness was congruent to methodological behaviorisms because A.A. male youth ministers relate to one another through measurable and observable standards. As previously established, the Black Church created a stimulus of social, political, and economic refuge for Blacks during significant periods of racism, which unfortunately still exists (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). One significant pattern within this population was related to accountability in mentorship. The level of accountability in mentorship was necessary because young A.A.M.Y.Ms are humans and struggle with the weakness of the flesh. The study extended on the Theory of Behaviorism by overstating the position of behaviorism through classical and operant conditioning within the Black Church, as classical conditioning occurs over the course of time and is linked to one common theme: symbolism and reward (Clark, 2018). In summation, participants confirmed operating from traditional biblical teachings and maneuvering to modern biblical teachings is an ongoing job while attempting to maintain integrity within the community. The Theory of Behaviorism completes theoretical implications of research within the observed population. Researched applications are now discussed.

Research Applications

Research applications uncovered by research conclusions and implications are as follows: digital media, social science initiatives, performance appraisals, leadership effectiveness training, community relations, and Communities of Practice (CoPs).

Digital Media

While presenting congregant mentorship in the Black Church, author Ed Stetzer (2017) stated the number one reason for being in a denomination of churches is the networking opportunities it presents for mentoring relationships (Stetzer, 2017). While each participant confirmed receipt of pertinent and ongoing mentorship relationships, not every participant was limited to a single mentor covering all areas of their life. The most significant limitation of participants was accessibility based on location. Participants confirmed receipt of congregant mentorship through forms of digital media in podcasts on the subjects of leadership, youth ministry, spiritual growth, and discipleship. The practical application within this group of participants further contributed to their individual mentorship journeys through plural mentorship bonds, as participants chose mentors based on seasonal shifts (life, trauma, success, failures, etc.,). The practical application sanctions the idea that congregant mentorship in the Black Church, especially mentorship through digital platforms, should be a permanent staple for continuing mentorship within A.A. male youth ministers in non-denominationalism. The research application found within digital media is the implementation of professional social science initiatives.

Social Science Initiatives

When introducing the theory of evolutionary leadership, research presented corroborated previous research through the claim the Black Church was the "steeple" of the African American Community. The identification led to discussion around the implementation of social science initiatives. Within this study it was determined there was not a push for A.A.M.Y.M. in non-denominationalism to pursue formal education within the non-denominational church. Present research confirmed the awareness that there were growing concerns between a lack of professional school counseling and educators who have frequent interactions with African

American pastors (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). While nearly nine out of ten people considered the Black Church a positive symbol in their lives, there was a gap between perceived ignorance of spiritual issues and evolutionary changes in leadership (Clemons & Johnson, 2020). Social science initiatives for A.A.M.Y.M. through the theory of evolution open the door to counseling services and formal education.

Although participants sought professional counseling, they were frequently approached by individuals who wanted to mentor them or be mentored by them who were not aligned with their denomination or with their spiritual/educational growth pattern. As important as the church is to the A.A. community, the research application of evolutionary leadership and science aids in the knowledge and understanding of social realities and injustices that exist in gender, race, poverty, and sexual orientation (Jones, 2019). In this study, African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church presented themselves as self-aware concerning the need for lifespan career mentorship. For instance, the Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model made a claim that lifespan training was irrelevant in training up-and-coming ministers. Yet the finding of this model proved the model flawed for this research population. To maintain awareness on social realities affecting the A.A. community, education in the form of social science is a sought-out relevant application. The Models of Christian Leadership produced the relevant research application of performance appraisals.

Performance Appraisals

While being introduced to Models of Christian Leadership, informed readers learn, "Christian youth ministers are advised to adhere to 10 characteristics of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community" (Canales, 2014, p. 27). The

application of performance appraisals through Models of Christian Leadership presented relevant applications of growth between mentee and mentor. Research participants were questioned early in the research process, rating in their receipt of mentorship in their careers. Each participant listed their level of mentorship as above average. As previously noted, this rating was based on mentorship received as opposed to mentorship given. Participants could have elected to rate their level of mentorship received as below average. The identification of this flow leaves room for questions to be asked surrounding the need for things like annual performance appraisals for senior pastors and mentors within leadership roles. Additionally, the opposite rating would have likely introduced subjects of racial discrimination, inequality in the workplace based on race and gender, progression, or a lack of progression in ministry and mentorship without appropriate role models. Leadership effectiveness training through servant leadership also presents relevant research applications produced through this study.

Leadership Effectiveness Training

While being presented with Models of Servant Leadership in youth ministry, readers are introduced to a set foundation for discipleship between youth ministers and youth. The research application presented stated, without servant leadership, mentorship was a foundation for growth in discipleship for ministers, causing spiritual unaccountability when not practiced. As such, the implementation of leadership effectiveness training was a resolution.

> Leader identity is defined as the sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader, The strength of one's self-perception as a leader depends on the perceived alignment between the leadership role and one's identity. That is, individuals assess the extent to which their leader identity aligns with the expectations associated with the leadership role – greater alignment strengthens self-perception as a leader (Kragt & Gunter, 2018, p. 409).

The Word of God states:

Jesus called them together and said, "you now that those who ae regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave to all (*English Standard Version Bible,* 2001, Mark 10:42-44).

In 2014 David Canales confirmed, "servant leadership provides a great lens by which youth are able to understand and interpret leadership. It is a model for doing youth ministry and it is legitimate, necessary, and attainable" (pp. 46-47). In his findings, information gathered substantiated the fact there are two significant actions which occur when a youth minister shifts their mindset to the mindset of a servant leader:

(1) the people involved within the youth ministry are slowly but surely being transformed into servant-leaders who lead by and through service, permeating through the youth ministry into the larger parish-community and (2) the adolescents themselves begin to emphasize the needs of others above themselves (Canales, 2014, p. 56).

In conclusion concerning leadership effectiveness training, community relations presents an additional research application.

Community Relations

Much like leadership effectiveness training, community relations are significant for inclusion as without it, unpreparedness is present. Previous research observations sustained the belief, "unprepared young adults that are disconnected from support structures, might be unable to find themselves despite their consumeristic behaviors, growing online social network, vast travel experiences and unlimited access to information" (Brailey & Parker, 2020, p. 114). The consequence presented for A.A. male youth ministers, simply stated, is that this absence causes negative experiences in the workplace or church and is a leading factor in young adults struggling to find their identity (Papppas et al., 2015).

Research applications presented within this study highlighted three significant categories for the application of community relations: Black Christianity, Early Life Mentoring, and

Mentoring in a Community of Practice. Exploring career mentorship in A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church highlighted the significance of Black Christianity. For instance, research participants were asked what level of formal and informal education they had obtained over the course of their careers in ministry and non-denominationalism. More significantly, participants were asked what level of education they deemed appropriate for mentors with mentees within the observed research population. The application of community relations recommends formal education and informal education as necessary for success among A.A. male youth ministers in Black Christianity. The institution of the church in itself represents a relevant research application.

The application of Early Life mentoring produced the following analogy: "It is essential for the mentor and mentee to have similar values and beliefs, as the African American higher education system of mentees may focuses more on racial and cultural issues" (Freeman & Kochan, 2019, p. 4). Research participants' responses agreed with this application based on the drive to attain. Each participant found that early life mentorship, although important, did not take away from their individual mentorship journeys. Instead, they sought mentors which had achieved pedigrees higher than what they themselves individually obtained. In summary, the application of fostering community relations successfully applies within this population. To conclude a discussion of research applications, mentoring in a Community of Practice (CoP) is needed for career mentorship in A.A.M.Y.M. in the non-denominational church. The final research application revealed within this research study focuses on Communities of Practice (CoP).

Community of Practice (CoP)

Previous research conducted found mentoring in a Community of Practice aided communities' focus on everyday needs of the people. This was achieved through the following: Best Practice Communities—develop and disseminate information within their respective communities; Knowledge Stewarding Communities—organize and manage constant influx of information; and Innovation Communities—initiate groundbreaking new ideas and practices (Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium, 2021). Everyday needs of the Black Church are no longer limited to pastoral care. In fact, the needs of the Black Church are apparent by examining fair and poor health standards in the A.A. community, delayed use of health care, unmet health needs, lack of resources to address chronic diseases, and lack of resources which extend beyond standard pastoral counseling that include trauma and mental health care (Su et al., 2021).

Authors Igor Pyrko, Viktor Dorfler, and Colin Eden (2017) confirm CoPs refer to "groups of people who genuinely care about the same real-life problems or hot topics, and who on that basis interact regularly to learn together and from each other. However, operationalization of CoPs in organizational settings has proved challenging" (p. 390). Ethical leadership in the professional arena must deal ideally with enduring scandals (Sama, 2007). Like mentorship, "questions concerning the lack of growth or influence in the church include program focus, governance and structure, relevancy to the community that the church exists, or the role of the leader (lead minister) has in influencing the direction of the church" (Calaway, 2015, p. 16). Research was confirmed by each participant having active mentors, which enforces accountability. The novel contribution this study added to the field of ethical leadership was reconfirmation of the Black Church and its influence within the A.A. community.

Communities of Practice present relevant research applications for the Black Church to not only discuss its relevance within the A.A. community for growth of its participants, but also

the reality that specific hard topics should be discussed and researched. Those topics include same sex marriage, gender identity, the LGBTQ+ community, adulty, and church hurt, to name a few. In order for A.A. male youth ministers within the non-denominational church to continue to operate with integrity in the community, there has to be levels of transparency afforded to all ages, and exposure on how to deal with difficult issues as a youth.

Research Limitations

At the conclusion of this qualitative ethnographic research study, research limitations were identified as follows: gatekeeper access, the research population, and geographic design. Regarding gatekeeper access, the researcher found that responses were not immediately received by gatekeepers. The researcher submitted written letters to gatekeepers during the first week of initiation of research, with a follow-up email submitted to gatekeepers in the second week. By not receiving responses back, the researcher was led to assume attempts to contact participants within the research population were simply ignored. Perhaps letters and emails were dismissed. In addition, gatekeepers were too busy and had not yet had the adequate time to respond. In relation to the research population, the researcher was unaware of how few participants would be found while conducting the research study. In researching this community, the researcher found that the true lifespan of many youth ministers, regardless of denomination, is less than three years. Furthermore, gaining access to the research population was met with delay or non-responses. Perhaps being a current PhD candidate swayed responses.

Again, as previous research has indicated, the non-denominational church is not a part of a larger organization. As such, there are not standard formal requirements in place to become ordained or licensed. Finally, the final research limitation was the geographic design. After conducting much research on the city of Atlanta, Georgia, the city was selected based on the

significant role it played for African Americans currently and in the past during the Civil Rights Movement. The researcher should have increased the research area from Atlanta, Georgia to include surrounding counties up to a forty-mile radius outside of Atlanta, Georgia. The identification of conducting researching within the surrounding counties could have produced an equal balance of negative and positive participant responses. The identification could have further resulted in more interviews.

Further Research

The exploration of career mentorship in African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church concluded with answered applied questions. Of the four research questions asked to participants, the researcher was confident in conducting research in the area. Further research parameters within the study found to be of significance in the area of transformational leadership were a descriptive analysis of mentors for mentees in the Black Church and ongoing formal training for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. Participants did not comment on the race, age, gender, success, failures, or educational backgrounds of their mentors. The identification of these demographics could have aided in understanding why participants selected their mentors for career and seasonal mentorship.

Summary

The qualitative ethnographic study on an exploration of career mentorship for African American male youth ministers in Non-denominationalism was initiated based on the notion that mentorship was substandard, lacking, or obsolete among African American male youth ministers. The research study was conducted on A.A.M.Y.M. actively serving as youth ministers in the non-denominational church in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. Research participants were over the age of 18 but younger than 46. In gaining access to the research population, the

researcher utilized gatekeepers with the utilization of the snowball sampling technique. Early findings suggested the goal of mentorship was to provide guidance to individuals with the overall purpose of aiding in their personal development, spiritual growth, and uncultured skillset (University of Washington, 2022). Additionally, mentorship should continue long after individuals advance in their professional careers, as a great deal of learning occurs outside of the classroom (Smith, 2014).

To determine if there was a need for career mentorship in A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church, the researcher presented an opening statement on the background to the problem, which claimed nearly 6 in 10 youth who grow up in the church leave as adults to join other religious organizations which identify as non-religious or non-denominational (Brumley, 2016). This study was chosen because it was significant based on the limitless boundaries of ministers, training, and selection the non-denominational church presents, specifically for young adults. Theological framework for the study was demonstrated through the utilization of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (MTLT) or (TLT). Subcategories included (a) Christian leadership and education, approached through the identification of structured mentorship between instructors to learners; (b) Christian Value, approached through peer relationships; (c) Christian Stewardship, approached through succession planning; and (d) human conviction, approached through successful mentorship. Theoretical Framework for the study was illustrated through Evolutionary Leadership, the Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model, the Four Drives Theory, Congregant Mentorship in the Black Church, the Theory of Behaviorism, Methodological Behaviorisms, Radical Behaviorism, the Theory of Utilitarianism, Ethical Leadership, and Transformational and Transactional Leadership.

Related literature was conducted on Black Christianity, Early Life Mentoring, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Mentoring in a Community of Practice, Leadership Development, Mentors versus Protégés, Models of Christian Leadership, the Servant Leader, and Mentoring Young Adults. The rationale for conducting this study was based on the analogy which claimed as non-denominational churches grow, there is apprehension that younger, less seasoned African American male youth ministers will become senior pastors without having proper mentorship and training. Also, "religious behavior is beneficial for adolescents by decreasing participation in deviance through social control, providing a conventional socialization environment, and increasing access to social support" (Erickson & Phillips, 2012, p. 568). Research conclusions drawn answered four research questions. Conclusion One found advanced mentorship, given, and received, does not always go hand-in-hand with education obtained in high school, graduate, and postgraduate. Conclusion Two found informal training with the utilization of technologically available platforms aided in the delivery and receipt of cultivated informal training. Conclusion Three found mentorship beyond ordination is a significant need which should be continuing and frequently reoccurring. Conclusion Four found mentorship success was attributed to leadership effectiveness. Research implications highlighted within this study focused on the Four Drives Theory, Parsons Ministerial Leadership Model, and the Theory of Behaviorism. Research applications produced from the three areas of implication were digital media, social science initiatives, performance appraisals, leadership effectiveness training, community relations, and Communities of Practice (CoPs). Research limitations were gatekeeper access, the research population, and geographic design. Further key research parameters found emphasized transformational leadership, a descriptive analysis of mentors for mentees in the Black Church, and ongoing formal training for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. In

conclusion, the research study yielded eight participants which found the researched gap which existed, was not able to be determined based on any studies that directly explored the effects of mentorship in African American male youth ministers within the non-denominational church.

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APPENDIX A

Institution Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 3, 2023

Christina Crayton
Jerry Hall

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY22-23-717 AN EXPLORATION OF CAREER MENTORSHIP AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE YOUTH MINISTERS WITHIN THE NONDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH

Dear Christina Crayton, Jerry Hall,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: March 3, 2023. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

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.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

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

APPENDIX B

Request for Information Related to Potential Participant

5/12/2023

[Gatekeeper]
[Administrative Assistant]
[Non-Denominational Church in Atlanta Georgia]
[Determined after IRB approval]

Dear [Recipient],

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy PhD degree in Christian Leadership with a concentration in Ministry Leadership. The title of my research project is An Exploration of Career Mentorship Among African American Male Youth Ministers Within the Non-Denominational church. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research proposal is to explore if there is a need for lifespan career mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study. The participants requested, are limited to African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey and contact me to schedule an interview. The data collected will be used to determine if there is a need to create or continue mentorship programs for African American male youth ministers the non-denominational church past ordination Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to ████████████████. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Christina Crayton
PhD candidate

APPENDIX C

Letter of Recruitment for Potential Participant

5/12/2023

[Participant Name]
[Ministry affiliated title]
[Non-Denominational Church in Atlanta Georgia]

Dear Participant,

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy PhD degree in Christian Leadership with a concentration in Ministry Leadership. The title of my research project is An Exploration of Career Mentorship Among African American Male Youth Ministers Within the Non-Denominational church. The purpose of this qualitative ethnographic research proposal is to explore if there is a need for lifespan career mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study

Participants must be African American male youth ministers who are 18 years of age but less than forty-six. Participants must be active members of the non-Denominational church. Participants must be youth ministers actively involved within ministry in the non-denominational church and attend church at least 3 times a month virtually or in person. If willing, participants will be asked to complete a survey and partake in a recorded video interview. The recorded interview will consist of questions attached to this document. It should take approximately two weeks or less to complete the survey questions and interview process. The survey and interview will be completed within the first week. The second week is offered to participants as a grace period, in the event scheduling conflicts arise. The interview will be scheduled to last on more than thirty to forty-five minutes. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

A consent document will be provided as the first page of the survey 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 to me prior to the scheduled time of the interview. After you have read the consent form, please proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the research.

To participate, please contact me at ███████████████. Once contact has been obtained, a consent form will be signed, and the initial survey will be initiated. The survey will also include preferred interview dates and times. Please contact me at █████████ or via the email address provided for questions.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT

Title of the Research: An Exploration of Career Mentorship in African American Male Youth Ministers in the Non-Denominational Church

Principal Investigator: Christina Crayton, Doctor of Philosophy PhD candidate in Christian Leadership with a concentration in Ministry Leadership, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Co-investigator(s): Dr. Jerry D. Hall, Adjunct Professor John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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 male youth minister actively serving in ministry in the non-denominational church. You must be no younger than 18 years of age and no older than forty-six years of age. Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

What is this study about and why is it being done?
This study is about career mentorship in African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church. This study is being conducted to determine if there is a need to establish or continue career mentorship beyond ordination.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Participants will complete a multiple choice and open-ended question survey of five questions.
2. Participants will participate in a one-on one interview via Google Duo, Microsoft Teams, or a participant preferred video conferencing platform. Each interview will be recorded.

What risks might you experience from the study?
The risks involved within this study will be minimal.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:
1. Upon agreement of participant in the study, you will be contacted and scheduled for a one-on-one interview. The interview will be recorded via an online video platform.
2. The interview will be scheduled to last no longer than 45 minutes and will consist of open and closed ended structured questions. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant will be given a questionnaire. The questionnaire is to be filled out by the participant and returned to the investigator via email, within 72 hours.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include beneficial information for youth ministers actively involved in non-denominationalism, as well

as those who wish to gain positions of leadership in non-denominationalism. Benefits to society include youth ministers actively serving in denominations outside this research population. The focus of this proposed research paradigm is aimed towards youth ministers. This population may have greater insight on how research participants within this study were affected through on the job training and mentorship within this community. In retrospect, this research study may not transfer to ministers actively serving or seeking leadership positions within the proposed researched community. The rationale guiding this decision is transparency and autonomy.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?
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 (s) will have access to the records.

1. Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
2. Interviews with participants will be face to face and recorded via audio and or through a web-based video platform. Transcription of the interviews will be placed in a word document, which will also be password protected. This document will also be maintained for two years.
3. The data gathered will be protected through a standard filing system on an external hard drive. Only the researcher will have access to the external hard drive, and the files will be maintained for a period of two years.
4. Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
5. At any point during the interview, a participant can withdraw from the study.
6. In additional efforts to maintain confidentiality between the researcher and participants, the researcher will conduct interviews in a general location of the participants choosing.
7. If at any time during the interview process the participant feels uncomfortable with the current settings, the interview will be delayed or restarted later.

Is study participation voluntary?
Participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participant will not affect your current of future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher (s) 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.

Whom do you contact if you have concerns about the study?
The researcher conducting this study is Christina Crayton. You may ask questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at ███████████████. You may also contact the researcher's facility sponsor, Dr. Jerry D. Hall 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.

Your Consent
By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will also keep a copy with the study records.

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/video record me as part of my participation in this study.**

_____   _____
Print Subject Name   **Signature & Date**

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

1. **Understanding Mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church**
   a. What does mentorship mean to you?
   b. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of mentorship past ordination?
      i. 1-5 (average)
      ii. 5-10 (above average)
   c. If you received mentorship beyond ordination, how did you receive it?
      iii. Through online computer-based training
      iv. Through face-to-face training
      v. Through self-directed training (define self-training)
   d. What qualifications do you consider appropriate for becoming a mentor for mentees within the non-denominational church?
      vi. Education past high school
      vii. Education past graduate school
      viii. Education past graduate school to include ordination
      ix. Education as a requirement to maintain ordination
   e. How has mentorship shaped your career in ministry?
   f. How has a lack of mentorship shaped your career in ministry?

2. **Formal Education and its relationship to mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church**
   a. Do you agree or disagree with formal education being a requirement for mentorship between mentor and mentee?
   b. Do you think formal education is lacking in youth ministers within the non-denominational church?
   c. How has formal education aided in your understanding of mentorship?
   d. How has formal education taken away from your understanding of mentorship?
   e. Do you think formal education is a necessity for career mentorship?

3. **Informal education and its relationship to mentorship for African American male youth ministers in the non-denominational church.**
   a. What does informal education mean to you?
   b. What areas of informal education have you received in your career past ordination?
   c. Do you agree or disagree with informal education as a requirement for training ministers past ordination?
   d. Do you feel informal education is needed in the non-denominational church?
   e. If presented with an opportunity, how would you incorporate informal education for African American youth male ministers in the non-denominational church?

APPENDIX F

Exit Interview Questionnaire

(1) Education History

    a. Did you attend a formal educational institution?

        i. If you attended a formal educational institution, in what year did you undergo initial, graduate, or post graduate education?

    b. What educational institution did you attend?

        i. If you attended an educational institution after high school, do you feel as if you received adequate formal training to prepare you for ministry or ministry within the non-denominational church?

    c. Did you attain, a certificate or degree?

        i. If you attained a certificate what was your certificate in?

        ii. If you attained a degree, what was your degree in?

        iii. As an A.A. male youth minister actively serving in the non-denominational church, do you agree or disagree that your certificate or degree equipped you for ministerial leadership?

(2) Ministry classification

    a. Are you an ordained or licensed minister?

        i. Do you agree or disagree that being licensed or ordained is necessary to become an A.A. male youth minister in the non-denominational church?

    b. What was the date of your ordination?

       i. Do you agree or disagree that your date of ordination is relative to current leadership training for A.A. male youth ministers in the non-denominational church?

   c. What is the length of your service?

       i. Have you served as an A.A. male youth minister within the non-denominational church for more than 3 years? More than 5 years? More than 10 + years?

(3) Describe the quality of your experience in serving with a team of ministers.

(4) Describe other specialized ministry experiences for which you possess special gifts or skills.

(5) Describe other secular work or experience that have helped you in preparation for ministry.

APPENDIX G

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APPENDIX H

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APPENDIX I

Sage Journals (Figure 4)

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