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BECOMING BROTHERS

Exploring How Multi-Ethnic Church Planting Partners Pastor
Together

By
Brad Carpenter

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together. A failure to understand and teach the New Testament vision of a multi-ethnic church undergirds the American church's failure to address the issue of racialization and segregation on Sunday mornings. Solo pastoring and church planting have not proven to be an ideal environment for pastoral health and flourishing. Majority culture efforts to church plant in minority communities have suffered due to a lack of local leadership, cultural illiteracy and a failure of gospel contextualization. A small but growing group of pastors and church planters have found that partnering with someone of another ethnicity is a vehicle to address these issues.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with ten pastors from denominations in the greater reformed community who were each a member of a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership. The literature review and analysis of the interviews focused on three key areas to understand how multi-ethnic partners pastor together: a biblical theology of multi-ethnic churches, relational health in leadership theory and practice, and indigenous leadership development.

This study came to three major conclusions: multi-ethnic partners are convinced that a biblical church is a multi-ethnic church; choosing to pastor with a partner of a different ethnicity is a vehicle for pursuing emotional and relational health in ministry that every pastor needs; and multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships are public vehicles to demonstrate gospel reconciliation, mutual submission and celebrate the diversity made possible by the gospel. This is a witness a racialized world desperately needs to see.

To explore these challenges, this study identified the motivations and practices which contributed to fruitful multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships.

To Olivia the original and best co-pastor

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken

— Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

English Standard Version

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On April 17, 1960, Martin Luther King Jr. appeared on the NBC's *Meet the Press* and said: "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday."¹ Sunday mornings have not changed that much in the 61 years since King's interview. Although some indicators are improving, our churches continue to be racially and economically segregated. A 2014 pew study showed that eight out of ten American churchgoers attended a church that was at least 80% one ethnicity.² In 2003, 92.5% of Catholic and Protestant churches in America could be classified as "monoracial (made up of 80% or more of attenders from the same race or ethnicity)."³ Seven major black denominations account for 80% of African American church goers. Black Christians in other denominations typically attend predominantly black congregations according to race and religion scholars Lincoln and Mamiya.⁴ The Presbyterian Church in America, for example, has separate presbyteries for Korean American churches.⁵ Sunday

¹ Jason Tripp, "The Most Segregated Hour in America - Martin Luther King Jr.," 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q881g1L_d8.

² Michael Lipka, "Many U.S. Congregations Are Still Racially Segregated, but Things Are Changing," Pew Research Center, December 8, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/08/many-u-s-congregations-are-still-racially-segregated-but-things-are-changing-2/>.

³ Curtiss DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation As an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁴ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1990) xii.

⁵ "Presbytery List," PCA Administrative Committee, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://www.pcaac.org/resources/presbyteries/presbytery-list/>.

morning worship is still largely a segregated time in America and it is affecting the gospel witness of the church.

The Theological Problem of a Segregated Church

Are these statistics evidence of a theological problem? To many theologians, these divisions are inconsistent with the Bible's vision of God's kingdom, a vision Revelation 7:9 describes as made up of a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. Each local church, according to the apostle Paul, is intended to be an outpost of this kingdom, a reflection of the manifold image of God in the diversity of his people. In his letter to the Ephesians (3:10), Paul says that "through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places."

According to Irwyn Ince, director of Grace DC Institute for Cross-Cultural Mission, the diversity of the church was intended to be a visual representation of this manifold wisdom, a beautiful reflection of God's creative genius and the vast beauty of the image of God.⁶ The peace of Christ, which tears down the dividing walls of hostility (Eph 2:14), could be a shining, clear alternative to the racialization of society which produces hostility, unequal treatment, misunderstanding, conflict and violence. Researchers Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith suggest that the church's segregation conforms to our society rather than being a transforming presence.⁷ Pastor

⁶ Irwyn L. Ince, *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2020), 76.

⁷ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 17.

Mark Deymaz agrees and asks the critical question: “If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”⁸

The Cultural Problem of a Segregated Church

The segregation of the American church presents not only a theological problem, but a cultural problem as well. Churches that are more than 80% monoethnic, with monoethnic leadership, are likely to be churches with blind spots in their preaching and Biblical teaching because of the lack of diversity in those who handle the biblical text. Ince shares this view when he talks about what he calls “ecclesial ghettos:” “...your thoughts are informed by the ghetto that formed you in ways you’re simply not aware of.” Leaders simply do not know the ways they are formed by their context until it is challenged by another. According to Ince, “ we need to be shaped and reshaped by our brothers and sisters in the Lord who come from different ghettos if we’re going to learn to love well and strive for justice and righteousness...”⁹ Far too often, when churches speak of striving for diversity, they lack awareness that culture and perspective within the church need to be influenced by the diversity of those who attend and lead. According to pastor and author Mark DeYmaz , what many churches are saying is effectively: “We welcome anyone to join us as long as they are willing to conform to our ways but won’t

⁸ Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 4.

⁹ Irwyn L. Ince, *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 79.

expect us to conform to theirs.”¹⁰ Many monocultural churches may be saying this without even knowing it.

The Economic Problem of a Segregated Church

Racial segregation in churches may also exacerbate the uneven distribution of resources for ministry. A 2018-19 National Congregations Study showed that predominantly black protestant denominations had more churches with 30% of their congregation below the poverty line than any other surveyed group.¹¹ The financial limitations that accompany church segregation affect access to education and the ability of minority Christians to raise support for missions and ministry. The result is that American ministry and missions systems designed around support raising consistently (although unintentionally) lack diversity¹². While some parachurch organizations are redesigning their approach to funding,¹³ the deeper issue may be that racial segregation separates some believers from resources they need. If DeYmaz is right when he says that being “multi-ethnic” will mean being “economically diverse,”¹⁴ then it is possible that monocultural churches may be hoarding resources needed in other places without even knowing it.

¹⁰ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 109.

¹¹ “At Least 30% of Congregation below Poverty Level?,” Congregational QuickStats, Association of Religion Data Archives, accessed June 2, 2021, https://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_89.asp.

¹² Samuel Perry, “Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage: The Implications of Personal Fundraising for Racial Diversity in Evangelical Outreach Ministries,” *Review of Religious Research* 53 (January 1, 2011): 397–418, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-011-0020-7>.

¹³ “Oneness and Diversity: Our Position,” Cru.org, accessed July 15, 2021, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/oneness-and-diversity.html>.

¹⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* 61.

A Challenge to the Church's Witness

The segregation of the American church may also create a problem for gospel witness to an unbelieving world. This may result because church communities are inconsistent with the biblical vision of the kingdom, and because a lack of diversity is increasingly a stumbling block for a society that already equates Christianity with exclusivity, judgmentalism and prejudice.¹⁵ A 1994 Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod report entitled “Racism and the Church” articulates this sentiment when it says:

If the church is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively to a world...being violently torn apart by racial and ethnic differences, the church itself would do well to heed the counsel of St. James who said: “be doers of the word, and not just hearers only, deceiving yourselves ... (James 1:22).¹⁶

Deymaz frames the same issue like this: “the homogeneous church will grow progressively irrelevant in the years to come, as the message of God’s love for all people is otherwise undermined by its own segregation.”¹⁷ Ince argues that a primary part of our witness to a world full of “fragmentation, division, disharmony and disunity,” is the unity amongst diversity made possible in the church because of the gospel. He says that no one can “fully imagine what unity among diversity looks like apart from a vision for the beautiful life rooted in God’s essence.”¹⁸ The gospel message of reconciliation may fall

¹⁵ Bruce Y. Lee and Andrew B. Newberg, “Religion and Health: A Review and Critical Analysis,” *Zygon* 40, no. 2 (2005): 443–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2005.00674.x>.

¹⁶ The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. “Racism in the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry.” In *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions*, ed. Anthony B. Bradley (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 155.

¹⁷ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* xxix.

¹⁸ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 35.

on deaf ears if people don't see it creating unity and breaking down barriers in the church.

While racial reconciliation is not the primary goal of the church, it can become a most obvious indication that biblical reconciliation is occurring because groups that are separate in every other part of public life can be seen worshiping and serving together because of the gospel. George Yancey, professor of race, ethnicity and religion at Baylor University says "In a post-Christian world, individuals no longer accept Christian ideals based on Christians' cultural power-and that is good. We want people to come to Christ freely rather than out of compulsion. We need to offer them something they cannot find outside of our ideals."¹⁹ It is what David Swanson calls an "embodied solidarity"²⁰ and what Irwin Ince describes as the "proper exercise of power and hospitality" demonstrating the "structural inclusion of people of color into influential positions."²¹

Burden on the Pastor

A significant number of new church plants²² identify diversity as a goal and value. However, church planting in general is highly challenging without the additional challenges that racial issues bring. Church planting can be hard and isolating work for

¹⁹ George A. Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division: A Unifying Alternative to Colorblindness and Antiracism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2022), 149.

²⁰ David W. Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church: From Cheap Diversity to True Solidarity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 168.

²¹ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 138.

²² DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 135.

pastors. Much of the church planting literature suggests it is most often unsuccessful.²³ Evangelical denominations have historically struggled to plant churches in areas of urban diversity, gentrification, urban poverty and racially divided neighborhoods.²⁴ Erring either by sending well-meaning, white church planters in a gesture that comes off as paternalistic or by failing to fund and support indigenous pastors planting in places that are not self-sustaining or financially strategic.²⁵

A previous generation of church-planting literature emphasized an almost heroic role for solo church planters. One book's subtitle captures this ethos: "The Man. The Message. The Mission."²⁶ For many solo church planters this was an unhealthy environment encouraging them to take all of these pressures on their own shoulders at the cost of their own spiritual, financial, and family health. Lance Lewis observes that "The spiritual, emotional, and psychological toll is devastating. Some cannot recover, and they leave the ministry altogether. And their families suffer with them."²⁷

A single pastor leader, by definition, also brings only one perspective and set of experiences to the biblical text and to the task of bridging cultures toward a multi-ethnic congregation. This means not only limited experience from the perspective of other

²³ Edward Stetzer and Warren Bird, "The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Primary Church Planting Entities," n.d., <https://www.christianitytoday.com/assets/10228.pdf>.

²⁴ Lance Lewis, "Black Pastoral Leadership and Church Planting," in *Aliens in the Promised Land*, ed. Anthony Bradley., 29–36.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

²⁷ Lewis, "Black Pastoral Leadership," 42.

ethnicities, but limited exposure to authors, scholars, and biblical commentary by people of an ethnicity but their own.²⁸

Any number of these factors combine to contribute to the significant number of urban church plants that fail to gain traction, burn out their pastors or fall into a cultural niche that contributes to Sunday morning segregation rather than alleviating it.

Purpose Statement

There is a trend toward planting multi-ethnic churches as a response to the above problems and challenges. It is often motivated by the desire to see churches planted with the vision of God's kingdom from every tribe and language and nation.²⁹ Multi-ethnic church planting partnerships are a small but growing trend amongst these multi-ethnic church planting projects. A multi-ethnic church planting partnership is a team of pastors (usually two) that strive towards a model of mutual submission between equals. This model of co-pastoring is made up of individuals who self-identify as being from different race or ethnic backgrounds and seek to share the burden of church-planting and pursuing diversity.

The purpose of this study is to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together.

²⁸ Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church*, 176.

²⁹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 11.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners navigate shared leadership?
2. What do multi-ethnic church planting partners describe as the goal for shared ministry?
3. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners evaluate their ministry effectiveness?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for individuals and organizations interested in planting churches with racially and ethnically diverse congregants. The findings may help all those involved in starting such churches pursue healthy places for pastors to do the difficult work of multi-ethnic ministry and safer environments to pursue biblical racial reconciliation.

The results of this study may also have implications for church planting core teams, denominational officials considering church planting strategy and church planters considering the co-pastoring model for other purposes or in other contexts.

Vision of God's Kingdom

One aspect of the Bible's vision of the kingdom of God is people gathered for eternity from every nation and tribe and language showing forth in their unity the image of beautiful community and diversity of God, the trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. Therefore, "the ministry of reconciliation demonstrated in the local church by the gathering of people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities is the natural

outworking of a rich covenantal theological commitment”³⁰ to this vision. Multi-ethnic church planting partnerships are just one example and component of an intentional, structural pursuit of this vision. By empowering multi-ethnic partnerships in their leadership, they might more easily model the diversity they hope to pursue in their congregants. With the findings from this research, multi-ethnic teams will be better prepared to combine multiple backgrounds, contexts and “ghettos” in their handling of scripture, pursue cross-cultural understanding and navigate challenging social issues and questions in these contexts.

Healthy Places for Pastors

The New Testament establishes a system intended for the health and care of pastor-shepherds and the development of healthy church communities in its design for a plurality of leaders (Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4). According to Dave Harvey, president of the Great Commission Collective church planting ministry a “healthy plurality” would ideally offer a place where pastors can find authentic community characterized by honesty, vulnerability, and support. The unity that these pluralities enjoy can become the microcosm for an entire church to follow.³¹ Findings from healthy multi-ethnic partnerships could aid others seeking to plant multi-ethnic churches with a “healthy plurality” at the core.

³⁰ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*. 12.

³¹ Dave Harvey, *The Plurality Principle: How to Build and Maintain a Thriving Church Leadership Team* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 18.

Multi-ethnic church planting partnerships are just one example and component of an intentional, structural pursuit of this kind of healthy plurality of leaders. Therefore, others might find the research results helpful to other types of multi-ethnic ministry as well.

Definition of Terms

In this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Pastor – A licensed/ordained or otherwise officially recognized individual given the task of the spiritual shepherding and care of a local congregation of Christ followers by way of established relationship with the congregation and/or recognition by a larger denomination or network of Christian churches.

Co-Pastor While the term Co-Pastor refers in some contexts to a husband and wife pastoral team,³² for the purpose of this study, the term will refer to any member of a pastoral partnership that strives towards a model of mutual submission amongst equals. This term may be used interchangeably with Church-planting Partner and/or Pastoral Partnership, with the distinction that some church-planting partnerships may not yet be pastoring an existing church.

Associate Pastor – For the purpose of this study the term “associate” will be used for any person in ministry leadership with a given title of “pastor” serving a local church under the leadership of a senior pastor. While some denominations make a distinction between associate and assistant, this study is concerned only with whether partnerships

³² Jim Hunter, “Dynamics of Co-Pastoring,” Ministry Matters, June 24, 2013, <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3996/dynamics-of-co-pastoring>.

communicate a leadership and submission aspect to their relationship or strive towards a mutual submission amongst co-pastoring partners.³³

Solo Church Planter – An individual starting a new worshiping congregation as the only ordained and sent pastor/minister on record with the sending agency or denomination.

Multi-ethnic Church- Local congregation of believers with no more than 50 % of its worshipers hailing from a single racial or ethnic group.

Multi-ethnic Church Planting Partners – any version of a pastoral partnership that strives towards a model of mutual submission amongst equals (co-pastoring) made of individuals who self-identify as being from different race or ethnic backgrounds.

Biblical Racial Reconciliation – Racial reconciliation is not the primary aim of the gospel, but rather the reconciling of sinners (male and female, Jew and Gentile, black and white, etc.) with God. Therefore, racial reconciliation is not the goal in itself, but rather one outcome of people from diverse backgrounds being reconciled with God through Christ (Eph 2). DeYmaz notes that “when men and women of diverse backgrounds are one with God individually, they can and should walk together as one in and through the local church, all for the sake of the Gospel!”³⁴

Reformed Church – Any Christian church broadly self-identified as Calvinistic in its theology as opposed to Catholic, Arminian or more generally mainline protestant.

³³ Presbyterian Church in America, *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America*, 2021 ed. (Lawrenceville, Ga: The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2018). 22-1 – 22-6. <https://www.pcaac.org/bco/>.

³⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*. xxvii

This study chose church planting partnerships in reformed churches as a way to limit the sample size and variables in the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together.

There were three primary areas of literature surveyed to provide a dialogical foundation³⁵ for the qualitative research.

The literature review begins by looking at the theology of multi-ethnic church planting, explicitly how leading thinkers in the multi-ethnic church planting movement view biblical examples of multi-ethnic churches in Antioch and Ephesus. Then, it continues with an examination of relational health in leadership theory and practice. Finally, the review concludes with an analysis of literature on developing indigenous leadership in missions and Christian community development with an eye towards what might be gleaned for church-planting partnerships that hope to represent the communities they seek to serve.

Theology of Multi-ethnic Church Planting

Ecuadorian missiologist C. Rene Padilla proposes that “all the New Testament evidence points to an apostolic practice consistent with the aim of forming churches in which God’s purpose (reconciliation & unity) would become a concrete reality.”³⁶ For

³⁵ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, Fourth edition, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 91.

³⁶ C. Rene Padilla “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle” In, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, Editors Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig (ORBIS, 2013).

the purpose of this study, key New Testament passages for understanding a New Testament theology of multi-ethnic church planting are drawn from Jesus' statements about the oneness of the church in the gospels and the examples of churches in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30) and Ephesus (Ephesians 2-3).

New Testament Mandate

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

According to church planting practitioner Derwin L. Gray, the gospels are an “announcement that there is a King named Jesus who established a kingdom through a multi-colored, regenerated people called the church.”³⁷ Padilla agrees that when Jesus commanded his disciples to proclaim the gospel to “all nations”³⁸, he had in mind a “Gentile mission” that would welcome people from every ethnicity to “God’s table.” He adds that the Gospel writer Luke “presses home” the “every nation mandate” from the great commission in his Acts 2 account of Pentecost in which “the mighty works of God were proclaimed in the indigenous languages and dialects of many lands.”³⁹

³⁷ Derwin L. Gray, *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multi-ethnic Churches in a Multi-ethnic World* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 8.

³⁸ Matthew 28:19

³⁹ Padilla “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

John 11:20-21

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Multi-ethnic church planting movement leader Mark DeYmaz argues that when Jesus prayed for his disciples that ‘they may be one, even as we (God the Father and God the Son) are one,’⁴⁰ he had in mind a unifying of “people everywhere,” in the belief that Jesus was God’s son, sent to earth to proclaim “in person, word and deed” the message of forgiveness and eternal life.⁴¹ North American church planting leader Irwyn L. Ince connects the mandate for unity in the church to the mandate for humanity to bear the image of God. “If God displays his beauty in his trinitarian life, we should expect that beauty to be reflected in the humanity that images him.”⁴² Theologian Herman Bavinck agrees that “the image of God is much too rich to be fully realized” in any homogeneous human group. Only the church as a representation of “humanity in its entirety...summed up under a single head (Christ)” and “spread over the entire world” begins to be a “telling and striking image of God.”⁴³ This is a “oneness” that can only exist, according to Padilla, if the church is unified “regardless of their racial, cultural or social differences.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ John 17:11

⁴¹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 6.

⁴² Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 55.

⁴³ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Holy Spirit, Church, and New Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 276.

⁴⁴ Padilla “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

Catholic Missiologist Robert J. Schreiter writes that the community that would eventually be called the church was significant explicitly because it was defined not by its connection to race or shared history but because it was a community that connected its identity “with the narrative of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.”⁴⁵ New Testament scholar Scot McKnight says “God’s desire is for us to experience multi-ethnic fellowship now in the local church as it will be for eternity, God’s heart is total reconciliation.”⁴⁶ Padilla agrees that in the church “a new humanity has been created in Jesus Christ and those who are incorporated in him form a unit wherein all the divisions that separate people in the old humanity are done away with.”⁴⁷

The church in Antioch

Diversity in Antioch

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists^a also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

-Acts 11:19-21

By commentator Derek W.H. Thomas’ account, Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman empire with a population of some 500,000 people. Its large Jewish population made it an ideal landing spot for refugees fleeing the persecution of Christians

⁴⁵ Padilla.

⁴⁶ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*.

⁴⁷ Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

in Jerusalem following the death of Stephen (Acts 7).⁴⁸ According to Gangel's commentary, this city melting pot featured Greek, Roman, Arab, Semitic and Persian groups among its inhabitants.⁴⁹ It was into this context that Ince says that men from Cyprus and Cyrene "decided to break out of their cultural container and tell the good news about the Lord Jesus to non-Jews"⁵⁰ thus "signaling a massive change in thinking and perspective," in Thomas' words.⁵¹

Padilla points out that the diversity of the city is reflected in the list of church leaders⁵² in Antioch given in Acts, "Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger,⁵³ Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."⁵⁴ DeYmaz comments that "Simeon was called Niger because he was from Niger...in sub-Saharan west Africa. Lycius was from Cyrene...in what is today the country of Libya...Manaen was from somewhere in Palestine, either Judea, Galilee, or perhaps even from Samaria."⁵⁵ "A more heterogeneous group could hardly be suggested" according to Padilla.⁵⁵ Outside the church, these groups did not mix, but according to Gray, churches like the one in Antioch "shocked and rocked

⁴⁸ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Acts*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, N.J: P & R Publishing, 2011), 317.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, ed. Max Anders, Illustrated edition (Nashville, Tenn: Holman Reference, 1998), 185.

⁵⁰ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 94.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Acts*, 318.

⁵² Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle".

⁵³ Acts 13:1

⁵⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 24.

⁵⁵ Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle".

the harsh, segregated Greco-Roman world.”⁵⁶ Thomas adds that “what showed itself in Antioch was something entirely countercultural. In such an environment, there is no mistaking the true church.”⁵⁷ Gangel agrees saying “the church erupted at Antioch, and a new thing happened...here Jewish Christians aggressively take the gospel to Gentiles.”⁵⁸

Call Them Christians

For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people.
And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

-Acts 11:26b

Acts 11:26b is famously the first-time followers of Jesus are called Christians in scripture. Thomas believes that “the name Christian was initially used to distinguish believers not from non-Christians, but from Jews and Gentiles.” Until that time everyone would have been considered from one group or the other.⁵⁹ Gangel says “Christians are no longer a subset of Judaism but a distinctive identity.”⁶⁰ In Antioch, a “third way” was emerging, a revolutionary “third race of men.”⁶¹

Padilla says that the “abolition of the old separation between Jew and Gentile was undoubtedly one of the most amazing accomplishments of the gospel in the first

⁵⁶ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 15.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Acts*, 324.

⁵⁸ Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, 180.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Acts*, 323.

⁶⁰ Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, 181.

⁶¹ Thomas, *Acts*, 323.

century.”⁶² It certainly would have been a signature aspect of the community. Thinkers like DeYmaz make an explicit connection between the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles with this new identifier, “Christian”. “It is not coincidental that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. For there, Jesus Christ was clearly recognized in the midst of unity, just as he had said that he would be (John 17:23).”⁶³ Gray celebrates how Antioch is an early example of how “the Jesus movement overwhelmed ethnic barriers and God birthed a new multi-colored ethnicity.”⁶⁴ Padilla says that because “the breaking down of barriers that separate people in the world” is an “essential” aspect of the gospel,⁶⁵ it should be no surprise that a new moniker for this “community of reconciliation”, as Schreiter calls it, needed to be coined, hence the name Christians.⁶⁶

The church in Ephesus

Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus

Beginning in chapter 19, the book of Acts recounts the Apostle Paul’s most significant visit to the Asian city of Ephesus. Through the next few chapters, readers are told again and again that “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks,”⁶⁷ and “the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified among both Jews

⁶² Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

⁶³ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 22.

⁶⁴ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 15.

⁶⁵ Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

⁶⁶ Padilla.

⁶⁷ Acts 19:10

and Greeks who lived in Ephesus,”⁶⁸ and “testifying to both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶⁹ DeYmaz argues that Acts’ emphasis on the diversity of the church in Ephesus along with the tone and content of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians help to identify the church at Ephesus as a model of the multi-ethnic church the gospel is supposed to create.⁷⁰ Padilla sees this same emphasis in Ephesus when he points out that the book of “Ephesians opens with a doxology (1:3-14) in which the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church is viewed in the light of God’s eternal purpose, which includes the creation of a new order with Christ as the head”⁷¹

This was no mistake, but rather the intended outcome devised by Paul in his evangelistic efforts. Thomas points out that Paul intentionally rented a public lecture hall (The Hall of Tyrannus)⁷² rather than remaining in the synagogue where only Jews would attend.⁷³ This tactic was accompanied by public demonstrations of power (like the Sceva exorcism)⁷⁴ that Gangel observes, brought a fear of God on both “Jews and Gentiles.”⁷⁵ These are just some of the Ephesian examples of what Gray calls Paul’s vision to build “local churches of reconciliation where ethnocentrism, classism and sexism were

⁶⁸ Acts 19:17

⁶⁹ Acts 20:21

⁷⁰ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 28.

⁷¹ Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle” .

⁷² Acts 19:9

⁷³ Thomas, *Acts*, 543.

⁷⁴ Acts 19:11-20

⁷⁵ Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary - Acts*, 325.

crucified on the bloody cross of Christ.”⁷⁶ DeYmaz insists that when Paul addresses “all the saints” in Ephesians 1:15-16, he is intentionally identifying that the Ephesian church has exemplified his vision of a multi-ethnic church where “all the saints,” both Jew and Gentile converts “worship God together as one.”⁷⁷

The Mystery of the Gospel

...remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

-Ephesians 2:12-13

From the beginning of Ephesians, a central part of the gospel that Paul teaches is how Christ “brings people near.” Commentator Peter T. O’Brien says that when Paul talks about Gentiles being “brought near” not as converts to Judaism but as members of “a newly created community which transcends Israel...where Gentiles along with Jews are on equal footing” with God.⁷⁸ Pastor and scholar Bryan Chapell explains that being brought close to “the covenants of the promise”⁷⁹ means that Gentiles were also being brought together with Jews in the “social glue that united neighbors, worship

⁷⁶ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 12.

⁷⁷ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 29.

⁷⁸ “The Letter to the Ephesians (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)): O’Brien, Peter T page 191.

⁷⁹ Ephesians 1:12

communities and families.”⁸⁰ Early in the book, Padilla says, Ephesians is making the strong case that “conversion (to Christianity) was never a merely religious experience; it was also a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their identity in Christ rather than in their race, social status or sex.”⁸¹

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is⁸² that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

-Ephesians 3:1-6

In Ephesians 3, Paul identifies that he is writing from prison where he is incarcerated for proclaiming the “mystery of the gospel.” “This mystery” he later defines, “is that Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promises of Christ through the gospel.”⁸² Chapell writes that Paul is making the point that “the full mystery of the Messiah cannot be conceived unless we consider that the Messiah comes not only for the personal benefit of the Jews, but also for all nations.”⁸³ “ The mystery, or open secret of Christ is ‘the complete union of Jews and Gentiles with each

⁸⁰ Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, N.J: P & R Publishing, 2009), 97.

⁸¹ Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

⁸² Ephesians 3:6

⁸³ Chapell, *Ephesians*, 140.

other through the union of both with Christ. It is a double union with Christ and with each other which is the substance of the mystery,” according to O’Brien.⁸⁴ “The unity of Jew and Gentile is here said to be the gospel, not simply a result that should take place as the church is perfected,” according to Padilla, “but an essential aspect of the kerygma (proclamation) that the apostle proclaimed on the basis of scripture.”⁸⁵

Summary of the Theology of Multi-ethnic Church Planting

This survey of Jesus’ statements about the oneness of the church in the Gospels and the examples of churches in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30) and Ephesus (Ephesians 2-3) provide a foundation for understanding that building a biblical church almost by definition means building a community of believers from diverse ethnic, economic and cultural backgrounds. Another way to frame the argument is to say that while the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be proclaimed without explaining how Christ’s life, death and resurrection provide sinners with reconciliation to God, it cannot be demonstrated without the reconciliation of people from every nation and tribe and language to one another. Jesus prays that his followers would demonstrate this in their unity with one another and instructs them to pursue it by bringing the gospel into all the world.

Relational Health in Leadership Theory and Practice

The previous section examined a theology of multi-ethnic church planting from three New Testament perspectives: Jesus’ mandate to plant multi-ethnic churches and the

⁸⁴ Peter T O’Brien. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Edited by Carson, D.A. (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999. 236.

⁸⁵ Padilla, “The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Principle”.

example of churches in Antioch and Ephesus. This foundation provides a gospel motive for planting multi-ethnic churches but does not address the inherent cultural, personal, and logistical challenges of bringing together leaders from multiple ethnicities. If multi-ethnic church planting partnerships are to be successful in “busting up” what Irwyn Ince calls “ecclesial ghettos that mimic the world as though we do not have a Christ who calls us to pursue reconciliation,”⁸⁶ they will need to start by overcoming the many relational obstacles that every team faces in combining leadership from diverse backgrounds. This literature review will seek to serve this purpose by next examining the work of leading thinkers and writers on the topic of shared leadership theory and practice in the specific area of relational health.

Relational Health

Patrick Lencioni, the founder of The Table Group management consulting firm, argues in his book *The Advantage* that “organizational health trumps everything else in business.”⁸⁷ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol and Ken McElrath come to a similar conclusion in their book *The Ascent of a Leader*, in which they detail the need to build an organization on what they call a “Character Ladder” rather than a “Capacity Ladder” that emphasizes only accomplishments and production.⁸⁸ Multi-ethnic church planting leader Derwin L. Gray agrees in his book *The High Definition Leader* that outcomes need to

⁸⁶ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 78.

⁸⁷ Patrick M. Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else In Business*, 1st edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012).xvii

⁸⁸ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* 1st ed (San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 13–19.

follow church leadership character which he defines by the Biblical fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24).⁸⁹ Dave Harvey, president of the church planting ministry Great Commission Collective, articulates a similar premise in his book *The Plurality Principle*: “Leaders need gifted people around them, a team that will demonstrate God’s love through care, collaboration and ...mutual accountability.”⁹⁰ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner concur, writing in *The Leadership Challenge* they say “the best leaders want to get closer to others, want to be more intimate with others, than do the poorer performers...all evidence points in the same direction...quality of our relationships has a protective effect.”⁹¹

A survey of leadership literature on building relationally healthy partnerships and leadership teams uncovers various, similar and overlapping illustrations and categories for describing the essentials of building a healthy team. This literature review will loosely use categories devised by Lencioni in *The Advantage* as headings under which many writers have contributed with various labels in their own work. These categories include: building trust, conflict management, commitment, accountability and measuring outcomes.⁹²

⁸⁹ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 186.

⁹⁰ Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 84.

⁹¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 199.

⁹² Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 26.

Building Trust

Church planting partners, or members of any leadership team for that matter, must trust one another if they hope to be effective. Unfortunately, according to Paul Tripp, the executive director of The Center for Pastoral Life and Care, in his book *Dangerous Calling*: “In most leadership communities there is simply no time invested in forging a knowledgeable, mutually ministering leadership community.”⁹³

Building trust in partnerships and teams is a recurring theme in leadership literature. Lencioni identifies the kind of trust that is essential to a great leadership team as “vulnerability-based trust.”⁹⁴ This means creating an atmosphere where team members feel safe enough to be vulnerable and admit faults or doubts. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath call this “creating environments and relationships of grace” where barriers to trust can be removed.⁹⁵ “Getting to the point,” according to Lencioni, “where members are completely comfortable being transparent, honest, and naked with one another, where they say and genuinely mean things like “I screwed up,” “I need your help,” “Your idea is better than mine,” “I wish I could learn to do that as well as you do,” and “I’m sorry.”⁹⁶ In this kind of community team members “no longer fearing the loss of their position, began asking more questions, admitting their mistakes and actually learning ” according to the *Ascent of a Leader*.⁹⁷ Writer and Wheaton College visiting professor Trevin Wax

⁹³ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2012), 211.

⁹⁴ Tripp, 27.

⁹⁵ Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 27–31.

⁹⁶ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 27.

⁹⁷ Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 49.

comments in his book *The Multi-Directional Leader* that “we must learn to recognize and receive whatever is true, even when the truth comes from unexpected directions and sources.”⁹⁸ Derwin L. Gray adds: “If I am the smartest guy and most gifted person in the leadership room, my rooms are too small or I’m too insecure to serve with people who are smarter and more gifted than I am.”⁹⁹

Creating a leadership partnership from several ethnic/cultural backgrounds certainly presents multiple challenges to building trust but it is something that partners must pursue if they hope to lead congregations of reconciliation and integration. Robert J. Schreiter goes as far as to say that this pursuit of reconciliation should be the model for “Christian mission in the 21st century.”¹⁰⁰ It is a model that begins with leaders who trust each other.

Conflict Management

Patrick Lencioni boldly states: “Nowhere does the tendency toward artificial harmony show itself more than in mission-driven nonprofit organizations, most notably churches.”¹⁰¹

While it seems natural to try to avoid conflict, most leadership literature suggests that conflict itself is not a bad thing, in fact, a lack of “good conflict” may be a sign of unhealth on the team. Dave Harvey calls a team that cannot disagree a “counterfeit

⁹⁸ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader: Responding Wisely to Challenges on Every Side* (Austin, TX: The Gospel Coalition, 2021), 33.

⁹⁹ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 183.

¹⁰⁰ Gallagher and Hertig, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*.

¹⁰¹ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 44.

plurality,” giving lip service to partnership while there isn’t collaboration.¹⁰² And “when people on a team are not willing to collaborate, it usually means that underneath this lack of sharing lies insecurity” according to Gray.¹⁰³ Lencioni identifies that “when there is trust, conflict becomes nothing but the pursuit of truth, an attempt to find the best possible answer. It is not only okay but desirable”¹⁰⁴

Building an ethos where constructive disagreement is encouraged requires a “posture of humility” from leadership that believes even the worst critics are actually trying to protect something important from “being lost” or damaged in the decision-making process, according to Trevin Wax. Wax goes on to say that in listening to good criticism, leaders can not only identify their own tunnel vision, but often discover that they too care about those things that critics are “afraid of losing.”¹⁰⁵

Power is often an issue in conflict amongst leaders. Power is “our ability to make something of the world” according to *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*, by Andy Crouch, partner for theology and culture at Praxis, an organization that works as a creative engine for redemptive entrepreneurship.¹⁰⁶ Different cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds create power differential in specific cultural contexts. According to Harvey, the apostle Paul realized this and intentionally “pushed power around” to younger men and indigenous leaders who otherwise would have been at a

¹⁰² Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 69–79.

¹⁰³ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 187.

¹⁰⁴ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader*, 34.

¹⁰⁶ Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 17.

disadvantage.¹⁰⁷ Wise leadership pluralities, Harvey continues, talk about power dynamics in conflict management because “if power isn’t identified by intentional and discernable structures, how can we know when it’s abused?”¹⁰⁸

Good conflict and productive disagreement allow partners to “align with the truth” rather than their own opinion or closed perspective according to Thrall, McNicol and McElrath¹⁰⁹ “Two people who trust and care about one another and are engaged in something important should feel compelled to disagree with one another, sometimes passionately, when they see things differently” according to Lencioni.¹¹⁰

This may be the path for multi-ethnic partners to discover and more deeply appreciate the experience of their co-leader of another ethnicity, not to mention arriving at more comprehensive and functional solutions to ministry challenges.

Commitment

Pastors and church planters are constantly calling people to commitment. First and foremost, a commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord, but secondly, to membership and service within an existing church body, or within the body that a church planting team envisions will someday exist. Leadership teams cannot expect others to commit and sacrifice if they are not mutually committed to the gospel driven purpose of their ministries themselves.

¹⁰⁷ Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 104.

¹⁰⁸ Harvey, 107.

¹⁰⁹ Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 94.

¹¹⁰ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 44.

“People will not actively commit” posits Lencioni “if they have not had the opportunity to provide input, ask questions and understand the rationale” of the direction leaders want them to go.¹¹¹ Reaching a commitment from every member of a team, rather than just a decision or opinion, “creates a soul connection that takes relationships beyond their utilitarian functions” according to *The Ascent of a Leader*.¹¹² This devotion to the team and to the cause runs parallel to devotion to God for gospel leaders. While Derwin Gray says that pastors must never “attach their identity” to their commitment to a ministry role,¹¹³ Paul Tripp argues that having a commitment to ministry and to partners in ministry needs to be “fueled by a personal devotion” to God with “roots in humble, heart-deep confession.”¹¹⁴

It is personal commitment to the gospel and then participation in trust-filled leadership communities that “align with the truth”¹¹⁵ that produces real commitment amongst ministry partners. Lencioni adds “when there has been no conflict, when different opinions have not been aired and debated, it becomes virtually impossible for team members to commit.”¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Lencioni, 48.

¹¹² Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 52.

¹¹³ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 187.

¹¹⁴ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 35.

¹¹⁵ Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 49.

Commitment is something that leaders should pursue after encouraging every team member to “deliberately seek voices from other groups, listen carefully to critics and read books from different perspectives” says Wax.¹¹⁷

When church planting partners don’t take the time to assure that everyone on the team is committed to the mission, they risk communicating a “confusing” and “misaligned”¹¹⁸ message to the community they lead, but multi-ethnic partners open themselves up to assumptions from outsiders and one another that the misalignment is due to race, economic or power issues. Sometimes this is the case, but often it is just a lack of thoroughly assuring commitment.

Accountability

“When team members know that their colleagues are truly committed to something, they can confront one another about issues without fearing defensiveness or backlash,” according to *The Advantage*.¹¹⁹ This means caring enough for each other to say hard things and hold one another to commitments. Thrall, McNicol and McElrath insist that in these situations “teams must go beyond the mechanics of task and function. We each have deeper needs that must be met in relationships.”¹²⁰

Accountability for gospel leaders also means answering to the word of God. Wax says this means asking questions like, “If my ministry were to distort the gospel in some

¹¹⁷ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader*, 34.

¹¹⁸ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 51.

¹¹⁹ Lencioni, 55.

¹²⁰ Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader*, 47.

way, what kind of distortion would it likely be?” and “If I were to drift theologically, in what direction would it happen?”¹²¹

On some level, accountability to the team for pastoral leaders includes accountability to family and believing friends. Paul Tripp asks, “Are we open to the fact that no one has a better window on who we are than the people we live with? Do we see this as a benefit and a blessing and therefore take personal, spiritual advantage of these relationships?”¹²² Trevin Wax suggests that this should include asking loved ones to “consider my strengths and weaknesses as a shepherd” to help identify where a leader and his flock are “most susceptible to danger.”¹²³

Asking for and giving accountability to a ministry partner is a “selfless act” “rooted in love,”¹²⁴ the love of God, the love of those closest to ministry leaders and the love that ministry partners share with one another.

Measuring Outcomes

It is interesting to note that while many organizations put measurable outcomes at the top of the list when evaluating leadership, most of the literature about organizational health places this at the end of the list. It’s the smallest piece at the top of the pyramid according to Lencioni.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader*, 35.

¹²² Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 211.

¹²³ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader*, 35.

¹²⁴ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 57.

¹²⁵ Lencioni, 26.



Figure 1: Building a Cohesive Leadership Team¹²⁶

Lencioni continues: “No matter how good a leadership team feels about itself, and how noble its mission might be, if the organization it leads rarely achieves its goals, then, by definition, it’s simply not a good team.”¹²⁷

On a basic level, multi-ethnic church planting must achieve the goal of building communities of believers from “every tribe and language and people and nation.”¹²⁸ This means putting in writing a vision statement for the partnership, church, or movement.

Mark DeYmaz gives this example from Mosaic church in Little Rock, Arkansas:

Mosaic is a multi-ethnic and economically diverse church founded by men and women seeking to know God and make him known through the pursuit of unity, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus (John 17:20-23)

¹²⁶ “The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team,” *Training Edge* (blog), February 28, 2018, <https://www.trainingedge.com/behaviors-of-a-cohesive-team/>.

¹²⁷ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 65.

¹²⁸ Revelation 5:9

and patterned after the New Testament church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26, 13:1ff.).¹²⁹

Transformation Church in Charlotte articulates their vision like this:

Transformation Church is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, mission shaped community that loves God completely (Upward), ourselves correctly (Inward), and our neighbors compassionately (Outward).¹³⁰

In each case, there are what Lencioni calls “behaviors and measurables” that help ensure that everyone on the team is “focused on the same priorities.”¹³¹ In the case of Mosaic for example, if a Sunday morning is not regularly “multi-ethnic” and “economically diverse” then the team is not achieving its goal. Likewise, if Transformation Church gathers only young professionals, they are failing to achieve their intended outcome of being “multi-generational.”

In a ministry partnership or leadership team, measuring outcomes involves understanding job descriptions and leadership roles. Gray is clear when he says “people get hurt when they are confused about a ministry role and are not equipped to fulfill the task.”¹³²

Harvey agrees saying that “clarifying expectations requires” each leader to “dispense of any faux spirituality that resists clear definition of a role or ministry”¹³³ He looks to the appointing of the first deacons in Acts 6 as a model for creating biblically

¹²⁹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, Introduction.

¹³⁰ Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 45.

¹³¹ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 67.

¹³² Gray, *The High-Definition Leader*, 186.

¹³³ Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 131.

faithful job descriptions. He suggests that each of the “seven men of good repute”¹³⁴ identified in the passage would have been able to answer the following questions:

Do I know my role and what is expected of me?

Do I have a written job description?

Do I know to whom I report?

How should I communicate to my co-laborers and the elder in charge of this area?

Is my commitment to serve the church thorough enough to support a change of roles (Mark 10:45)?¹³⁵

Multi-ethnic church planting partnerships will need to have measurable outcomes if they hope to be successful and healthy. This must include both clear and measurable vision statements and unambiguous job descriptions for each member of the partnership.

Summary of Relational Health in Leadership Theory and Practice

There are inherent cultural, personal, and logistical challenges in bringing together leaders from multiple ethnicities. If multi-ethnic church planting partnerships are to be successful, they will need to start by overcoming the many relational obstacles that every team faces in combining leadership from diverse backgrounds. This literature review examined the work of leading thinkers and writers on the topic of shared leadership theory and practice in the specific area of relational health. Every multi-ethnic

¹³⁴ Acts 6:3

¹³⁵ Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 131.

partnership will inevitably need some strategy and plan for building relational trust between partners, navigating conflict, assuring mutual and equitable commitment to the vision, holding one another accountable and measuring outcomes. If multi-ethnic ministry partners don't give significant attention to the relational health of their partnership, it won't matter how biblical or revolutionary their vision is. Relational health is key to effective ministry together and achievement of their other goals.

Indigenous Leadership Development

In many significant ways, the concept of using multi-ethnic church planting partnerships as a strategy for planting multi-ethnic churches is an extension of the work that international missiologists and practitioners of urban community renewal have done in developing indigenous leadership. This literature review will focus on how a diversity of leadership becomes a vehicle for the proper contextualization of the gospel message, lends credibility to the gospel message of reconciliation and aids in creating ministries that reflect and represent those they hope to reach.

Contextualization

Good news (and challenge) to every culture

Shared leadership teams seem like one obvious way to invite good contextualization for the community a team represents. By including diverse voices, a decision-making team that builds into its DNA, as Treven Wax puts it, "A rigorous commitment to maintaining the church's distinctiveness and relentless reaching across

cultural barriers with the gospel message.”¹³⁶ When this kind of contextualization is necessary for the conversations happening in the boardroom, it will become part of the conversations in the pews.

A contextualized gospel adapts and connects to the culture, yet at the same time challenges and confronts it.¹³⁷

Before understanding cultural contextualization, it is important to grasp all that is included in the idea of culture. Resilient Ministry researchers Tasha Chapman, Bob Burns and Donald Guthrie define culture as the “patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting to various situations and actions and as the programming that shapes who we are and who we are becoming.”¹³⁸ Internationally esteemed British theologian, missiologist, and apologist Leslie Newbigin says culture “includes the whole life of human beings in so far as it is a shared life. It includes the science, art, technology, politics, jurisprudence and religion of a group of people.”¹³⁹

Each person’s “patterned way of thinking, feeling and reacting,” their “patterns of life”¹⁴⁰ are a product of the various social structures that they are a part of including their family of origin, generation, socio-economic status, geography and religious

¹³⁶ Wax, Trevin, *The Multi Directional Leader*, 58.

¹³⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, Illustrated edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 89.

¹³⁸ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013),

¹³⁹ Newbigin, Lesslie, 1983 *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches*. (Geneva, Switzerland: Geneva World Council of Churches, 1983).

¹⁴⁰ Keller, *Center Church*, 90.

background.¹⁴¹ Pastor and theologian Timothy Keller says that faithful contextualization of the gospel is more than practical application of biblical doctrine, it is how believers “faithfully and skillfully show people how the baseline “cultural narrative” of their society and the hopes of their hearts can only find resolution and fulfillment in Jesus.”¹⁴²

Most of the earlier writing on contextualization comes from missiologists who had in mind a concept for distant places where exotic people struggle with “syncretism.” Syncretism is the incorporation into religious faith and practice elements of other religions, resulting in a loss of integrity and assimilation to the surrounding culture. Newbigin, upon returning to England from a missionary assignment in India, led a movement to recognize that western culture was as guilty of syncretism as any foreign mission field and needed believers to faithfully contextualize the gospel in a way that challenged the unbiblical assumptions and hopelessness of the west.¹⁴³ Michael Goheen agrees that the western church is “living in a state of syncretism.”¹⁴⁴ Like Newbigin, he says that from a gospel perspective, every culture needs to have a “missionary encounter” because “all cultures have a religious and comprehensive credo at the center or foundation of their life together that is incompatible with the gospel.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 132.

¹⁴² Keller, *Center Church*, 90.

¹⁴³ “1983 The Other Side of 1984,” 1–2.

¹⁴⁴ Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 165.

¹⁴⁵ Goheen, 142.

Historical Baggage

“Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essences and particulars of the gospel itself.”

- Timothy Keller¹⁴⁶

Lesslie Newbigin recounts the fairly recent etymology of the term “contextualization” in his work *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, missiologists spoke of “indigenization, adaptation and accommodation” when they spoke of bringing the Christian message to unreached groups of people.¹⁴⁷ These terms suggest some of the difficulties and failures of believers' attempts to bring the good news to cultures they did not understand. Many of the efforts that Newbigin observed in what he called the “mission station” philosophy of western missionaries failed to realize what Timothy Keller summarizes in his urban ministry text book Center Church, “There is no culture-less presentation of the gospel (there is no one single way to express the Christian faith that is universal for all cultures) but there is only one true gospel (not a product of any culture and stands in judgment of every culture).”¹⁴⁸ Instead, missionary efforts either explicitly or unintentionally communicated a superiority of western culture and an ignorance of their own syncretism. Harvey Con diagnosed the issue like this in the Westminster Theological Journal: “The conception of theology as a “comprehensively universal science” ...combined with Western

¹⁴⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 89.

¹⁴⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Geneva: W.B. Eerdmans ; WCC Publications, 1989), 142.

¹⁴⁸ Keller, *Center Church*, 93.

ethnocentrism, produced the tacit assumption "that the Christian faith was already fully and properly indigenized in the West."¹⁴⁹

These issues combined with political, emotional and economic “hangovers” from the colonialism of those same periods have made the topic of contextualization a touchy subject.¹⁵⁰

This same perceived arrogance is often at issue when majority culture decision makers pursue planting multi-cultural churches or working in urban community development. Asian American and Fuller Professor of Evangelism Soong-Chan Rah points out that “American Evangelical Christianity often presents only the story of the dominant culture. Often, the stories from the ethnic minority communities are not deemed worthy.”¹⁵¹ Divided by Faith researchers Emerson and Smith echo this sentiment saying sadly that “White Evangelicalism likely does more to perpetuate racialized society than to reduce it”¹⁵² While writing about alleviating poverty, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert agree that American Christianity has often curated an air of paternalism by “doing things for people that they can do for themselves.”¹⁵³ In Elusive Dream, an extensive exploration of interracial churches in America, Dr. Korie Edwards says in many cases

¹⁴⁹ Harvie M Conn, “The Missionary Task of Theology: A Love/Hate Relationship?” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 45, no. 1 (1983): 17.

¹⁵⁰ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 143.

¹⁵¹ Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*, Resonate Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 101.

¹⁵² Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 170.

¹⁵³ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor-- and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 109.

“race remains integral to who holds leadership positions and is central to the processes that dictate how people are selected for these positions.”¹⁵⁴ She identifies that a closer look at the leadership culture of interracial churches often still emphasizes key minority leaders who possess and invest in white cultural capital.¹⁵⁵ What Edwards is arguing is that someone of minority ethnicity often has to accommodate white culture and white comfort to achieve a leadership position, even in an interracial church. True shared leadership that is interested in reaching across cultural boundaries with the gospel will welcome the parts of every leader’s culture that image the beauty of God’s creation and will challenge those parts of every culture that are idolatrous or contradict the gospel.¹⁵⁶ As Scott Williams so deftly puts it in his book Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week: “You can’t stage people like props in your church and alienate them out of your life. You gotta sit down and eat some chicken, find out what collard greens are and potato salad.”¹⁵⁷

Postmodern Caution

Corbett and Fikkert, explicitly highlight a final “cautionary word” in examining some of the motivations for pursuing shared leadership that postmodern western culture provides and identify them as inconsistent with scripture.

¹⁵⁴ Korie L. Edwards, *The Elusive Dream: The Power of Race in Interracial Churches*, 1st edition (Oxford University Press, 2008), 989.

¹⁵⁵ Edwards, 1013.

¹⁵⁶ Keller, *Center Church*, 89.

¹⁵⁷ Scott Williams, *Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*. Green Forest, AZ: New Leaf Publishing Group, Inc., 2011.180.

First, the postmodern commitment to the belief that truth is relative may lead some to “argue that poor people must participate in the process because they need to construct their own reality.” Fikkert and Corbett caution that every shared leadership vision must be tempered with the conviction that “the Bible teaches that there is absolute truth” and it will both encourage and challenge the culture of every leader.¹⁵⁸ Keller says, “If we are allowed the absolute freedom to define and create ourselves, we become untethered from anything bigger or more enduring than ourselves.”¹⁵⁹

Second, the postmodern commitment to the humanist faith in the “inherent goodness of human beings leads some to believe that participation, like democracy, will necessarily produce positive results.”¹⁶⁰ Columbia University scholar Andrew Delbanco rejects this postmodern assertion in his book The Real American Dream: A Mediation on Hope. He says that this misguided belief in human goodness and the pursuit of self-fulfillment has left a “strange melancholy in the midst of abundance.” The postmodern self, while insisting on the inherent goodness of each individual, lives with an “*ache for meaning*” that cannot be filled by the significance that it assigns itself.¹⁶¹ Reflecting on the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, he asserts that to say that self-fulfillment is the meaning of life cannot unite people in a way that provides the necessary resources for

¹⁵⁸ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 138.

¹⁵⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 129.

¹⁶⁰ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 138.

¹⁶¹ Delbanco, Andrew, *The Real American Dream —The William E Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 106–7, <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674003835>.

society to function.¹⁶² Fikkert and Corbett insist that “participation does not have the capacity to overcome the basic corruption of the human condition.” Every member of every community and leadership team is a sinner, rich and poor, male and female, black and white. Diversity does not redeem people, only the gospel can do that.¹⁶³

While the remainder of this review focuses on the way that multi-ethnic shared leadership can lend credibility to the message of reconciliation and aid in the creation of ministries that reflect and represent the community, it attempts to do so in the deep awareness that pursuing multi-ethnic partnerships is itself a catalyst that demands churches address the cultural baggage that has come along with previous efforts of indigenous leadership development and contextualization.

Credibility: Embodying the Gospel Message

“More than anything else, the fact that leadership and the pulpit were “fully integrated” established the credibility of the work in her eyes, Indeed, it was the diversity of leadership, through and through, that made Mosaic a unique story worth telling.”

-Pastor Mark DeYmaz describing Mosaic Church in Little Rock
Arkansas¹⁶⁴

Former director of the School of World Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, David J. Hesselgrave says that “properly conceived, churches modeled on the New Testament will be indigenous (“related to the soil”)¹⁶⁵ This refers to both the

¹⁶² Delbanco, Andrew, 103–4.

¹⁶³ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 138.

¹⁶⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 71.

¹⁶⁵ David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Missions* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Book House, 1980), 366.

leadership and culture of the church emanating from people who make up the body of Christ in that location. This fits into what Hesselgrave calls the “Pauline Cycle” of church planting in the New Testament.¹⁶⁶ Newbigin agrees in acknowledging that while “modern missions” sometimes take decades or even centuries to develop leaders who are qualified by western standards, “Paul could address the church in Philippi “with bishops and deacons” within a very few years of the first conversions.”¹⁶⁷ This seems to have something to do with Paul’s conviction to preach “nothing except Christ and him crucified”¹⁶⁸ and insistence that importing circumcision and other practices that made converts “Jewish” before they could be Christians¹⁶⁹ were not consistent with a faithful contextualization of the gospel.

According to Newbigin scholar Michael Goheen, “If the telling is the announcing of a gospel of the kingdom that calls all areas of human life to submit to Christ the Lord, then the embodiment (the church) must correspond to the message.”¹⁷⁰ It follows that a church that tells a story of reconciliation should be a place where reconciliation between various groups of estranged people is visibly recognizable. DeYmaz insists that a diverse team is the best fit for leadership of what Jesus calls a “house of prayer for all people.”¹⁷¹ He goes on to argue that diversity in leadership adds credibility to the message that Christ

¹⁶⁶ Hesselgrave, 366.

¹⁶⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, Rev. ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 130.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:2

¹⁶⁹ Galatians 3:28

¹⁷⁰ Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 192.

¹⁷¹ Matthew 21:13

died for “every tribe and language and people and nation”¹⁷² It gives a visible testimony to the message that Christ’s death has “broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility”¹⁷³ between different groups of people.¹⁷⁴ Scott Williams believes that if a church has the gospel at the heart of its work and at the heart of its leaders then “the church will break down diversity barriers. If the church has a heart for diversity, people will drive many miles, across the train tracks and in and out of “the city” and “the community” to be a part of it.”¹⁷⁵

A commitment to diversity in congregation and leadership not only adds credibility to the claims of the gospel, but it provides a venue for gospel discipleship.

“Those who join a diverse congregation have in effect, both willed and declared themselves to be people intent on developing cross cultural relationships so that “being rooted and grounded in love they may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, in order to be filled up to all the fullness of God”

-Mark DeYmaz¹⁷⁶

Diversity is not often perceived as the obvious application of Paul’s teaching on freedom in Christ, but Williams sees it that way. He says that the church must unapologetically embrace a theology of discomfort that encourages people that in coming

¹⁷² Revelation 5:9

¹⁷³ Ephesians 2:14

¹⁷⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 72.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, *Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 69.

¹⁷⁶ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 86.

to Christ “one must lay down one’s rights.”¹⁷⁷ Rah says this aspect of discipleship is “built in” to a commitment to diversity in the church “What we surround ourselves with, in our everyday communal Christian life, should reflect the commitment to hear the multitude of voices.”¹⁷⁸ “Interactions with different cultures” according to Keller, “help us to lose our blinders and slowly but surely move to a more rounded biblical Christianity.”¹⁷⁹

In some ways this means that the pursuit of a multi-ethnic church is a catalyst or even “discipleship practice” that can then be applied in various areas of church culture that need to come under the Lordship of Christ.

In *When Helping Hurts*, Corbett and Fikkert laud shared leadership and decision making as the venue that creates personal investment and ownership in the community where ministry is being done. This is what they call a “learning process” approach to development or church planting. Rather than starting with a church planter or aid worker who is prepared to import a plan of action from outside the community, this approach aims to facilitate community members participation in “proposing the best course of action, implementing the chosen strategy and evaluating how well things are working”¹⁸⁰

One obvious application of shared church leadership is in the larger realm of racial reconciliation. George Yancey applies a notion similar to Corbett and Fikkert’s “learning process” to racial reconciliation in his concept of “collaborative conversations.”

¹⁷⁷ Williams, *Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 126.

¹⁷⁸ Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, 103–4.

¹⁷⁹ Keller, *Center Church*, 103.

¹⁸⁰ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 135.

He says that “building community where all have input in the direction we take ...can help us see where we may have, even unintentionally, embraced perspectives that do not take into consideration the interest of others.”¹⁸¹

Rah recognizes that this community should be more than just joint worship, but the explicit joining together in communion demonstrates our commitment to apply the gospel to this area of our lives. “The difficult topic of racial reconciliation requires the intersection of celebration and suffering. The Lord’s Table provides the opportunity for the church to operate at the intersection of celebration and suffering.”¹⁸²

David Campbell, political scientist at Notre Dame sees similar ramifications for evangelism. “If tens of millions of Americans start sharing faith across racial boundaries, it could be one of the final steps transcending race as our great divider.”¹⁸³

Korie Edwards thinks these practices are vehicles for creating a new collective identity: “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from knowledge of membership in a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”¹⁸⁴ Her study of interracial churches showed that while black Americans derived more of their identity from their awareness of race, white Americans primarily looked to other identifiers. However, she suggests that “people attend interracial churches because identities other than race are more important to them, to how they think of who they are, trumping their racial identities and creating a bridge between

¹⁸¹ Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 142–43.

¹⁸² Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, 106.

¹⁸³ Williams, *Church Diversity : Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 122.

¹⁸⁴ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1036.

them and people of different racial groups.” By “intentionally emphasizing congregants’ identities as ‘followers of Jesus Christ’” Edwards says interracial churches deemphasize racial differences and push them out of the center of how people understand their own collective identity.¹⁸⁵ This is a sociological application of Paul’s words in Ephesians; “now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”¹⁸⁶

A commitment to multi-ethnic leadership gives a symbolic demonstration of the credibility of the gospel, but the everyday struggles of making multi-ethnic leadership function become the catalyst to see the gospel bear fruit in the community.

Continuity: Reflecting and Representing the Community

In his work *Church Diversity*, Scott Williams shares this simple equation:

“No diversity on the staff
+ no diversity on the platform
= no diversity in the church”¹⁸⁷

Missiologist Leslie Newbigin noted that “the most important contribution which the church can make to a new social order is to be itself a new social order.”¹⁸⁸ This is a

¹⁸⁵ Edwards, 1241.

¹⁸⁶ Ephesians 2:13

¹⁸⁷ Williams, *Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 65.

¹⁸⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Geneva: W.B. Eerdmans ; WCC Publications, 1991), 85.

reminder that desired social changes and the message of the gospel are intertwined and that the church is the laboratory where this new kingdom order is tested.

Visitors, seekers, and skeptics in every church are asking some of the same questions as they enter worship for the first time. “Do I feel welcome here?” “Is there someone I can relate to here?” “Is everyone welcome here?” Williams says when people “look through the spectrum and don’t see themselves represented” they are far less likely to pursue the deeper reasons why they arrived in the first place.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, churches that culturally reflect the neighborhoods in which they minister are more natural partners in the community and have proven to be more sustainable. Donald McGaven of the” Institute of Church Growth of the School of World Missions, advocated a “people’s movement” strategy for cross cultural missions. In it, leaders “become Christians without social dislocation so that the resulting churches have leaders and loyalties intact. Churches are therefore likely to be more stable and self-supporting and bear up better under persecution”¹⁹⁰

Fikkert and Corbett even go so far as to connect slow progress or lack of growth in ministries to “inadequate participation” of the people from the community being pursued in the process of leadership and ministry.¹⁹¹ Conversely, Hesselgrave argues that decisions that are made that represent the “best wisdom of the entire body.. promote the achievement of the goals of the organization and help assure group harmony in pursuing

¹⁸⁹ Williams, *Church Diversity : Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 66.

¹⁹⁰ Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, and John Goodwin, *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, World Christian Books (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 479.

¹⁹¹ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 134.

them.”¹⁹² Participation is not just a means to an end, but rather a legitimate end in its own right¹⁹³

Williams advocates for church planters to “pray and fast for a leadership team that reflects the multi-ethnic diversity of the community in which God has placed you to be a missionary outpost.”¹⁹⁴ Hasselgrave adds group discernment to the pursuit of leaders who are chosen from the community by the community. These leaders fit into his category of “representative leaders” as opposed to being selected in more traditional ways based on charisma, or family position. He sees the New Testament description of elders¹⁹⁵ most reflected in this kind of leadership.

“The spiritual leader is most like the “representative leader” in that the basis of his authority does not lie in natural qualities of leadership (even though he may possess them) but in the fact that he is equipped by God and chosen by Holy Spirit-directed churches.”¹⁹⁶

Williams is convinced that ethnically shared leadership is a key ingredient for the church to become Newbigin’s “new social order”¹⁹⁷ specifically when it comes to the way the church addresses racial inequity. He challenges every church to ask the tough question: Is ethnic diversity represented at the highest level of the leadership of our

¹⁹² Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 365.

¹⁹³ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 136.

¹⁹⁴ Williams, *Church Diversity: Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*, 130.

¹⁹⁵ 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1

¹⁹⁶ Hasselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 356.

¹⁹⁷ Newbigin, *Truth to Tell*, 85.

church? Of our denomination? Rah agrees: “The twenty-first century western church could broaden the voices that are heard in our Christian expression. Christian conferences in the United States could certainly benefit from a greater diversity of voices.”¹⁹⁸

Diversity is necessary to “foster the right conversations at the highest level,” communicate the church’s commitment to reconciliation and encourage the hiring and promotion of more qualified indigenous and minority team members.¹⁹⁹ What is the highest level? DeYmaz, Williams, Hesselgrave, Fikkert, Corbett and Keller all agree that this should include the pulpit and teaching responsibilities, elder or board membership and the management of finances.²⁰⁰

“It is only when you allow us to share your pulpit, to serve with you on the elder board or alongside you in apportioning the money that we will be truly one with you in the church.”²⁰¹

Utilitarian group dynamic research shows that diversity is a more productive model than homogeneous leadership groups. Economist Scott Page notes, in his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies*, diverse leadership groups, with diverse backgrounds, tools and approaches, consistently outperformed teams selected because they were the best and the brightest in any particular field.²⁰² His research shows that diversifying groups increases the

¹⁹⁸ Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, 103.

¹⁹⁹ Delbanco, Andrew, *The Real American Dream —The William E Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization*, 173.

²⁰⁰ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 74; Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*; Williams, *Church Diversity : Sunday The Most Segregated Day of the Week*; Keller, *Center Church*; Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*.

²⁰¹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 74.

²⁰² Scott E. Page, *Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, 1st edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Prologue.

perspectives and interpretations on any problem and yields better predictions of outcomes and analysis of results.²⁰³

Diane Ashley, chair of the board at New York Theological Seminary, says that creating a diverse leadership team helps the institution ask: “Who are going to be your constituencies, your stakeholders... going forward? The clear business value of taking diversity and inclusion seriously is coupled with the requirement of the Great Commission to reach all people.”²⁰⁴

Diversity in church leadership can also help churches become better at caring for the material and felt needs of everyone they represent. Fikkert and Corbett studied poverty alleviation at the critical level of relief and identify that “researchers and practitioners have found meaningful inclusion of poor people in the selection, design, implementation and evaluation of an intervention increases the likelihood of that intervention’s success.”²⁰⁵ Korie Edwards studied the integration of urban and middle class churches and notes that “interracial churches can provide access to and knowledge of opportunities, professional socialization, and important social networks to combat social inequality.”²⁰⁶

Churches that are meaningful contributors to their community identify with the community’s concerns. Churches that mirror and represent their communities are more likely to have the ear of community leaders. Churches in diverse neighborhoods, with

²⁰³ Jon Hooten, “Is Board Diversity Important?: A Variety of Perspectives Means More Options on the Table, and That Can Lead to Better Solutions,” *In Trust* 21, no. 2 (2010): 11.

²⁰⁴ Hooten, 12.

²⁰⁵ Corbett and Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 134.

²⁰⁶ Edwards, *The Elusive Dream*, 1185.

diverse leadership are better positioned, in this regard, than homogeneous churches. Leadership that represents the community is both symbolic of the church's willingness to listen and pragmatically more effective in understanding and caring for the spiritual and felt needs of the community.

Summary of Indigenous Leadership Development

Using multi-ethnic church planting partnerships as a strategy for planting multi-ethnic churches is an extension of the work done in developing indigenous leadership by international missiologists and practitioners of urban community renewal. While diversity of leadership can become a vehicle for the proper contextualization of the gospel message, dispelling and debunking failed efforts in the past that have assumed that majority culture needed to be imported along with the gospel. Shared leadership, done right, lends credibility to the gospel message of reconciliation and aids in creating ministries that reflect and represent the people they intend to reach.

Summary of Literature Review

This literature review began by looking at the theology of multi-ethnic church planting, explicitly how leading thinkers in the multi-ethnic church planting movement view Jesus' vision for a multi-ethnic church and biblical examples of multi-ethnic churches in Antioch and Ephesus. It continued with an examination of relational health in leadership theory and practice. The review concluded with an analysis of literature on developing indigenous leadership in missions and Christian community development in an effort to make applications for church-planting partnerships hoping to better represent the communities they seek to serve.

Does the strategy of planting and revitalizing churches through multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships lead to biblically multi-ethnic churches? Does partnering with a pastor of another ethnicity set the stage for pursuing relational health on ministry leadership teams? Do multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships help in the development of local, indigenous church leaders that take ownership of the churches that are birthed in their communities? These questions help form the purpose for the following study to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together. The assumption of this study was that church planters who form multi-ethnic partnerships do so with theological, personal, and strategic intentionality. To address this purpose, the research identified three main areas of focus. These areas include the vision multi-ethnic church planting partners have for their collaboration as well as execution and evaluation of the partnership. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners navigate shared leadership?
2. What do multi-ethnic church planting partners describe as the goal for shared ministry?
3. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners evaluate their ministry effectiveness?

Design of the Study

This research followed a basic qualitative research method. Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, states that qualitative researchers are “interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences”²⁰⁷ According to Merriam’s description of qualitative research, the

²⁰⁷ Andy Crouch, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 17.

“researcher is the primary source of data collection and analysis” with a focus on “process, understanding and meaning.”²⁰⁸ While quantitative research focuses on the use of “numbers as data and analyzes them using statistical techniques,”²⁰⁹ qualitative research is interested in “understanding how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning making,” and in describing “how people interpret what they experience.”²¹⁰

This qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to encounter wide-ranging and descriptive data from participant perspectives on the narrow experiences of church-planters who choose to do their work as a member of a multi-ethnic partnership.²¹¹

Participant Sample Selection

This study required participants who were able to communicate extensively about significant experience in church planting with a partner of another ethnicity. Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of a selection of people from the population of reformed church planting teams of two individuals from different ethnicities.

For this study the researcher interviewed five pairs of multi-ethnic church planting and church renewal partners who have worked together to plant or renew reformed churches in the United States in the last 10 years. 10 years refers to how recently the partners worked together and not necessarily when church plants began.

²⁰⁸ Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

²⁰⁹ Merriam and Tisdell, 6.

²¹⁰ Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

²¹¹ Merriam and Tisdell, 107–9.

Several of the projects originated earlier. Several of these partnerships have planted churches that have particularized and become self-sustaining congregations. Several are still in the process and several partnerships have disbanded for various reasons. This research assumed that both positive and negative experiences can be productive for learning. While every partnership stated that growing a multi-ethnic church was an objective, size of membership, style of worship, location, and other church characteristics were not taken into consideration. The focus of the research was on how multi-cultural church planting partners navigated pastoring together.

Each of these planting teams have worked together to plant reformed churches in the United States in the last 10 years. By selecting only reformed church planting partnerships, the study minimized theological belief variables that might vary between protestant traditions and are not the focus of the analysis. The proximity of the last 10 years allows for a sample that relays data from relatively recent experience while allowing a large enough time period to find qualified participants.

Unique participants were chosen for a purposeful sample type in order to limit peripheral variables in the data collected. According to Merriam, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned”²¹² The use of a multi-ethnic partnership is atypical in church planting and was used as the criterion for selecting individuals for this study to examine it as a phenomenon.²¹³

²¹² Merriam and Tisdell, 96.

²¹³ Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with five teams of multi-ethnic church planting partners. A single interview was conducted with each team of two pastors for a total of five interviews. A total of 10 individuals participated.

Prior to the interview, each church planting team received a letter explaining the purpose of the research, relaying the protocol questions to be asked and containing a “Research Participant Consent Form”. A personal phone call follow-up was used to confirm their participation and arrange the specific details of an interview appointment. Every church planting team cited in this study expressed interest, gave written informed consent to participate and signed the “Research Participant Consent Form” like the sample included below. This form was designed to respect and to protect the human rights of interviewees, affirming they have the ability and right to decline or accept the invitation to participate in the research and understand any potential risks to themselves and others that this might include.

**RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Brad Carpenter to investigate *How Multi-ethnic Partners Pastor Together* for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- 1) The purpose of the research is to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together.
- 2) Potential benefits of the research may include discovering and developing resources for future multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships. Though there are no direct benefits for participants, I hope they will be encouraged by the experience of sharing their experiences with an eager listener and learner.
- 3) The research process will include interviews with a purposeful sample of five pairs of multi-ethnic pastoral partners. Participant partners will be interviewed together either in person or via video conference for approximately 90 minutes. Interviews will be digitally recorded transcribed, compiled with other interviews and quoted in the final dissertation project
- 4) Participants in this research will not be required to do any intentional preparation before sitting for a 90-minute interview with the researcher.
- 5) Potential discomforts or stresses: Only those associated with self- disclosure.
- 6) Potential risks: Minimal- Participants are asked to reveal personal information regarding individual viewpoints, background, experiences, behaviors, attitudes or beliefs.
- 7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes or videotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.
- 8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.
- 9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher Date

Printed Name and Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one. Return one to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

Data Collection

In this study, the researcher was the primary source of data collection utilizing semi-structured interviews as the primary source of information gathering. These interviews allowed the researcher to engage participants in conversations focused on specific questions related to the purpose of the study.

The open-ended nature of interview questions facilitates the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly.²¹⁴ Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants.²¹⁵

The study began with a pilot test of the interview protocol, performed to help evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting pertinent data. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but open to change as the explanations and descriptions emerging from the interviews were compared during the interview process.

The researcher interviewed five teams of two church planters. Each interview lasted one hour. Prior to the interview, the participants were encouraged to revisit any pertinent vision or ministry philosophy materials they had produced in the church planting process in preparation, but no written material was collected or used in the data analysis. To accommodate participant schedules, and various health protocols still in place following the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, a majority of the interviews were

²¹⁴ Merriam and Tisdell, 110.

²¹⁵ Merriam and Tisdell, 201–4.

conducted over internet video conference. In-person interviews were utilized whenever feasible.

The researcher recorded video conferences and audiotaped in person interviews with a digital recorder. The researcher wrote field notes with descriptive and reflective observations on the interview time directly after each interview. Audio and video files were then transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts used for data analysis.

The interview protocol contained the following questions.

1. Tell me about how the two of you met for the first time.
2. Tell me about how you began to talk about partnering together.
3. Is there a particular passage of scripture that captures your hearts for leading a multi-ethnic church?
4. At that time, how would you have described the purpose for choosing to partner together? Has that changed; would you communicate the purpose for a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership the same today?
5. What did your process look like for figuring out job descriptions, titles and responsibilities?
6. Can you share about a time when a ministry situation challenged your partnership or caused you to revisit how you share leadership?
7. How important is shared theology to your partnership?
8. How important is the way that you publicly present your partnership?
9. Is there a regular schedule, routine, or protocol that you follow to evaluate the health of your personal relationship?

10. What fruit in ministry indicates to you that you are accomplishing your vision for a multi-ethnic partnership?
11. Have you been surprised by unanticipated positive results of your partnership?
12. What would you tell yourselves now if you could speak to yourself back at the beginning?

Data Analysis

The researcher had each interview transcribed as soon as possible after each interview. Each digital recording was played on computer software and typed out into a separate transcript. This study utilized the constant comparison method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process.²¹⁶ This method provided for data to be coded and categorized after each interview which allowed ongoing revision, clarification, and evaluation of the resultant data categories.²¹⁷

The completed and transcribed interviews were collated into a computer file that was then color coded by key terms of interest, repeating themes and other areas of pertinence and categorized in relationship to how they addressed each research question. This allowed analysis to be focused on discovering and identifying common themes, patterns, and similarities across the variety of participants, and congruence or discrepancy between the different church planting partnerships.

²¹⁶ Merriam and Tisdell, 201–2.

²¹⁷ Merriam and Tisdell, 208.

Researcher Position

There are several areas of biases that may affect the researcher's analysis. First, the researcher himself is a pastor participating in the multi-ethnic church planting partnership of a reformed church. The study is, thus, written from the perspective of an insider-outsider.²¹⁸ While each context and partnership is unique, the researcher's deep experiential (emic) knowledge of the challenges of church planting and co-pastoring allows him an inside perspective in the development of interview protocol and preparation of interviewees. The researcher also has personal experience in the relational failure of a church planting partnership. This could bring in an element of cynicism, but certainly will provide an emphasis on the critical nature of relational health in any partnership. In addition, being from a reformed tradition allowed for a closer relationship between the researcher and the participants, a somewhat shared language for the discussion of theology and church polity and a more familiar context for the interviews.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to those serving in multi-ethnic reformed church planting partnerships in the United States of America. Some of the study's findings may be generalized to other similar co-pastoring arrangements in other contexts or theological traditions. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on the effectiveness of multi-ethnic church planting partnerships should test those aspects in their particular context and tradition. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the

²¹⁸ Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their situation. “The burden of proof lies less with the original investigator” according to the concept of transferability, “than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought.”²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together. This chapter provides the findings from interviews of ten individuals along with their pastoral partners of a different ethnicity and reports on themes and insights pertaining to the research questions.

The study's interviews were either in-person or on recorded video calls. The researcher took general notes during the interviews and analyzed recording transcripts after each interview, looking for themes and patterns related to the study's three research questions:

1. What do multi-ethnic church planting partners describe as the goal for shared ministry?
2. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners navigate shared leadership?
3. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners evaluate their ministry effectiveness?

Introductions to Participants and Context

The researcher selected five pastoral partnerships (ten individuals) to participate in this study. All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect identity. The researcher used purposeful sampling to select participants with

strong insight into the research questions while pursuing variation²²⁰ with regards to ethnicity, geography, and experience of pastoral partnerships.

Pastoral Team #1 – Winchester and Remington

Winchester is an African American and lifelong resident of West Coast City. He comes from a tradition of city preachers and was the heir apparent to his father's ministry. He is affiliated with a Baptist church planting network and is a new grandfather. Remington is a Caucasian Midwest transplant who came to West Coast City to plant a church with a Reformed denomination. He is highly educated, including a church planting residency program, but had no formal experience in full time ministry before this church plant. He is married and has a newborn. Together they pastor an urban church in West Coast City which will be referred to in this research as Mosaic Church.

Pastoral Team #2 – Michael and Scotty

Michael is a Caucasian church planter with a Reformed denomination who “parachuted” into an economically challenged neighborhood in a northeastern city in the 1980s. Scotty is an African American and former campus minister in the same city who joined Michael as a pastoral partner after more than a decade of working for different organizations. Together they pastored an urban church which will be referred to in this research as Antioch Church.

Pastoral Team #3 – Juan and Griffin

Juan is a second-generation Puerto Rican American who began the process of replanting/revitalizing a predominantly white East Coast church with a vision to become multi-cultural. Griffin is an African American who trained for ministry in a network of

²²⁰ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 97.

Southeastern Reformed churches focused on justice and reconciliation. He turned down other opportunities and instead joined Juan to transform Colonial Church and reach its neighborhood, which was significantly African American.

Pastoral Team #4 – David and Devontae

Devontae is an African American who was a longtime resident of Center City, a public-school employee, and a committed member of a local Pentecostal church when he met David. David is a Caucasian community activist and Reformed church planter who moved his young family into the heart of Center City. They are now on the staff of a large, regional multi-site church that is helping them prepare to launch a new site in the heart of Center City. They have not yet held a public worship service.

Pastoral Team # 5- Harry and Ron

Harry, a white academic, left the academy to join his childhood friend Ron, an African American, planting a church in a southeastern U.S. city with a history of racism. Both are currently relocating for new opportunities. Ron and Harry left behind three generations of churches and church plants with a commitment to multi-ethnic partnerships.

The Goal of Shared Ministry

The first research question sought to determine “What multi-ethnic church planting partners describe as the goal for shared ministry?” The researcher found that understanding the origin story of each partnership was critical to the perspective of each partnership when answering the primary protocol question for this RQ, which was, “How would you describe the purpose for choosing to partner together?” This background also provided the opportunity to ask, “How did you begin to talk about the concept of

partnering together” and “What passages of scripture have you used to capture and communicate your heart for leading a multi-ethnic church?”

Origin Stories

When asked about the origin of their partnerships, participants’ experiences varied greatly. While there were some general similarities among similar generations, the histories varied as much in intentionality and duration as they did in theological variation and geography.

Participants of an older generation were more likely to be studied, structured, and pragmatic in their pursuit of multi-ethnic partnerships and often placed a higher value on shared theology and participation in the same denominational tradition. Juan said, “We had made the decision that we were going to be intentional about hiring an African American. We did a one mile and a two mile demographic of the area, and it was 38 % African American.” His pursuit took him to his denominational national meeting where he hoped to find an African American ordained in his tradition. At the time, there were less than ten, and Griffin was recommended by a leader in the reconciliation movement in their denomination. Michael’s motivation was similar. “For me, I always knew from the beginning that I needed partnership. Carrying the realities of our racial history, it just weighs on you...I tried four times to try to find the right kind of partner I could team up with.” Michael attempted to woo a prominent African American pastor, hired an assistant who left after a moral failure, approached a black Baptist church about a merge, and mentored a young African American through seminary only to see him leave to lead another church. After decades of friendship and partnership in ministry in the same city, Scotty said, “I called Michael. I told him I had been looking for a church that was multi-

racial, for a lot of reasons, and the idea came to my mind that I could be with Michael.” They have worked together for the last twenty years.

For partners of a younger generation, activism was a driving factor. Remington and Winchester “met in a clergy cohort, mostly pastors in West Coast City, but from all over. They were running a clergy cohort for pastors to learn how to be more involved productively in issues of racial and social justice.” David and Devontae met at an inner-city school where David was organizing a community garden and Devontae worked with troubled families. Devontae said, “I was working for the school system in a community engagement role, and part of my responsibilities was to get partners...we are in a food desert, and David had an established relationship/partnership with the school because of the gardening work that he did and is doing in the community.”

Ron and Harry were family friends before either of them was a pastor. “We went to the same high school,” Harry said, “and he and my brother played middle school basketball together. I knew of his family, but we didn’t know each other well until he and (his wife) moved back to where I was pastoring, and they started attending our church. That’s when we really became close.”

Initial conversations about partnering together varied widely as well. For the older generation, these conversations looked more like job interviews. “We just simply, as an elder board, decided: we’re going to look for an African American to join the pastoral team.” Scotty remembers, “I was an InterVarsity leader, (and we did our) summer project (at the church Michael was launching) ... At the end of the summer, Michael approached me about joining him... (he offered me a job) ...I said no.”

Younger partnerships more often started with relationships and were fueled by missional concerns and cultural momentum. Harry and Ron said that it was all their wives' idea. "I think it was my wife who said, 'We actually would just like to be somewhere where you all are,'" remembers Harry. "I think that was the original spark of comment that then generated: maybe we should talk about that."

David remembers meeting Devontae in a public-school gym and shared, "I don't say this that often, I felt the Spirit in him. I didn't know if he was a Christian; I just knew he was this guy that worked at the school. There was just something about it where I immediately recognized something in him that I needed to pursue." Devontae recounted "the day that David came into my principal's office and was like, 'Hey, let me tell y'all what we're going to do. We're going to start a church.' I remember sitting there like, 'Yeah man, let's do it.' Again, because of our connection (I said), 'Alright, I want to hear more about this kind of deal.'" According to Winchester, their conversation began at a march against gun violence. "Remington and I talked, and we started recognizing that we had some of the same passion, some of the same aspirations, some of the same goals for ministry and community. Then we were like, 'Why are we doing this alone? We could make a much better impact for the kingdom if we were to do this together.'" Remington remembers that the plan solidified in the summer of 2017 after race violence in Charlottesville. "Winchester said, 'We need a response to this. The church needs to respond to this in a way that's more than just a Twitter post or a Facebook post. We need a sustained, communal response to this. We need to really ramp up our plans to be one church.'"

Compelled by the Word

Every participant was deeply conversant in the biblical case for the multi-ethnic church. Each shared a vision for reaching the community, bringing people together across the lines of race and class to demonstrate the power of the gospel. These values “leap off the pages” of the letters of Paul, according to Griffin. Michael agreed: “Ephesians, which is about the mystery of God, the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile -- when he opens this passage of Ephesians 4, he’s really talking about the application of the gospel in the body, across these divides.” Juan immediately referenced Ephesians 6:19:²²¹ “The mystery of the gospel is that the Gentiles are heirs together with the Jews, right? Paul was in prison for proclaiming the mystery of the gospel, and it’s the mystery of the gospel that is the driving force for me and became (that) for our church.”

Michael noted that one “strength and benefit” of doing church across the divides of race, class, and ethnicity is that it “ramps up the sanctification of its people.” He added, “The witness of the gospel is intensified when brothers and sisters gather across these divides, and there’s no (other) worldly reason why they are together.”

“Leslie Newbigin talks about the church as a sign and a foretaste to the kingdom of God,” says Remington. “We often talk about our church as imagining what the kingdom of God would look like if it were established here... So, we use that language and that passage in Revelation 5 a lot.”

²²¹ Ephesians 6:19 – Pray-“ also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel”

Purpose for Partnering

Scotty's words capture the passion of the participants when asked to explain the main purpose for partnering with someone of another ethnicity. "I began to understand that the multi-racial church has got to be the church of the future. The African American church, that model doesn't work, and the white church, the church in America has got to be thinking multi-racial." Remington mentioned his own context: "In West Coast City, everybody knows people from all kinds of different backgrounds. There are very few people who live in silos here, racially, culturally, whatever. We realized that if the church doesn't look like that, feel like that, act like that, we can't in good faith invite our friends." Once you have become convinced that a multi-cultural church is a "biblical imperative" according to Juan, then there is no other option but to find a vehicle to pursue that reality. For the participants, a multi-ethnic partnership was the clear vehicle to carry out a conviction "driven by the scriptures," a conviction that "this is the truth, this is at the heart of the gospel."

For Michael, previous work by thinkers like John Perkins and Carl Ellis on Christian community development laid the groundwork for his own work in healing the wounds of racial division. "Nobody was thinking about doing church as a reconciling community, except for very marginal groups. But I knew pretty much that we needed a leadership team that was more diverse."

"We use that language intentionally: intercultural." Harry said, "The idea was always that it would be not just multi, different people gathering together, but genuinely, 'Let's learn from one another, let's rub shoulders with one another, let's try to celebrate

the beauty of each other genuinely being intercultural, not just like a melting pot or a dumping together;’ an actual give and take.”

David said, “If we are seeking to bridge cultural divides or racial divides, and the work itself is a work of reconciling across those divides, then us doing it in a pretty intense way first, in some ways before we ask anyone else to do it, and practicing it as we’re asking other folks to do it, all of that is, (then) I would use the word ‘authentic.’”

Summary of the Goal of Shared Leadership

When it came to the choice to partner together with someone of another ethnicity for pastoral ministry, no two origin stories were the same. Generation and era played a strong role in whether the origin of a partnership followed denominational tradition or developed more organically.

Participating in a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership is far too countercultural in America to happen without clear purpose and conviction. Participants saw a compelling biblical case for leading multi-ethnic churches in the high priestly prayer of Jesus, the account of churches in Antioch and Ephesus, and the Apostle John’s vision of the kingdom of God in Revelation 21, among others, as evidence of the theme of reconciliation in the scriptures.²²²

Circumstances, shared passion, and the conviction of scripture led every duo to clearly and specifically articulate that their personal partnership in ministry was how God was calling them to pursue planting or leading churches that more clearly reflected the heart of the gospel because they were pursuing reconciliation, justice, and diversity as a

²²² John 17, Acts 11, Ephesians, Revelation 21

witness to Jesus' ministry of reconciliation, a heart for justice, and a desire for people from every nation and tongue to worship their creator in the kingdom of God.

Navigating Shared Leadership

The second research question asked, "How do multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships navigate shared leadership?" The first primary protocol question inquired about the "process of determining job descriptions, titles, and responsibilities." Additional questions sought to understand the role of shared theology and denominational tradition in ministry partnerships. The researcher also asked participants to comment on the relationship between the public presentation of their partnership and how they were perceived by the community and congregants.

Job Descriptions, Titles, and Responsibilities

Titles

Participants from an older generation were more committed to working within their denominational traditions when it came to titles and responsibilities, while more contemporary partnerships expected church structures to flex for creative leadership configurations.

When asked about the title he received when he started at Colonial Church, Griffin, an African American, used the terminology of his denomination: assistant pastor for community outreach. "Community outreach was a natural way to go. Particularly as we thought about reaching across class; the community neighborhood that's right near us

is a mixture of middle class and lower middle-class folks (and is 37 % African American).”

Michael used similar denominational terminology but pushed for new categories. “We weren't both co-pastors even though we functioned in a co-pastor relationship. I was pastor; he was co-pastor. I can tell you where that for me became very clear. It was going to Atlanta, and Ebenezer Baptist Church. If you go into the foyer, you'll see a plaque, and it says that Dr. Martin Luther King was co-pastor.”

Ron and Harry were “always co” (co-pastors). Trying their best to demonstrate equality in their leadership, they sometimes dropped the “co” in familiar company and were just “pastors” together.

David and Devontae, still in the development stages of a church plant, explained that the only formal structure in their relationship was what their larger, multi-site church required. They described “lots of calling, texting, and doing everything together until we figure things out.” David described an evolving conversation about roles saying, “We started like, ‘Let’s do everything together because we don’t really know, and we’re doing this for the first time, and it’s probably slower.’ We’ve kind of been able to form out what the different things are that we each should do,”

Center City had missional presentation in the front of their minds when discussing titles. Winchester says, “I was thinking that we would do a shared leadership model,” but Remington didn’t agree. “This doesn’t work for me,” Remington responded, “because I believe what people need to see, what West Coast City needs to see, what America needs to see, is somebody white submitting to the authority of somebody black.”

Gifts

While witness and perception were strong considerations for how partners communicated ministry roles and titles, giftedness and calling were essential underpinnings. “The reality is,” Michael quipped, if the way leadership is shared isn’t “true to our gift sets and our callings, that would be negative as well. People would recognize that this was a false unity. It’s a false paradigm. You’re trying to force something that isn’t there.” Scotty agreed, saying, “Race isn’t everything. Race is a factor, but if you have a person who’s a strong leader and a person who is not a strong leader, the way their gifts and personalities blend is just as important as the color of their skin.”

Winchester added, “I’m clearly a big picture guy. And Remington, he pays attention to details. (So, I said), ‘You’re doing the job of an executive pastor. Maybe you should start wearing that title.’” Michael added, “As a norm, without having some person providing a more visional leadership role, just economically, it doesn’t work.”

On gifting Harry said, “It really does matter: experience really matters. You can’t call something that’s not actually an equal partnership and equal partnership...especially you can’t reverse something (you’ve already labeled with a title).”

Scotty, an African American, recounted when they let quota thinking (“We need more African American elders”) drive a leadership decision, rather than giftedness and calling. “It was a bad decision, and it was a decision that played out horribly for him and his family, for the church.”

Preaching

Interestingly, shared preaching occurred in most of the pastoral partnerships. While job titles and ministry responsibilities varied, shared preaching emerged as a public demonstration of reconciliation and shared leadership.

Mosaic's website lists Winchester as the lead pastor and Remington as the executive pastor but according to him, "It just so happens that I'm an executive pastor who preaches half the time." It is "very important," according to Winchester, that "both of us are up front."

Ron and Harry rotated preaching "almost always every other week" and alternated leading their elder/board meetings. "He would lead one, and I would take notes; the next meeting I would lead, and he would take notes. We would just rotate moderator and clerk."

Juan said that early on he realized that the best way for the congregation to get to know Griffin was to have him preach. "We didn't actually call him to preach. But I sat there and listened to him and thought to myself, 'What better way to really cast this vision?' Once he started, as he said, right from the very beginning, we just decided, 'We're going to go half and half.'"

Michael and Scotty were similar. "Initially it was 50/50," and then Michael said 'Look, why don't I preach a little bit more, and you address worship more.' Even though in terms of ministry we shared equal partnership, in terms of presence in the pulpit, we agreed that it would be good for him to do that more." Ultimately, they settled into a routine in which they shared the pulpit about 60/40, which is still significant in a culture that builds ministry empires around pulpit presence. Juan said that initially people started calling the office to see who was preaching the coming Sunday. "The answer was,

‘You’ll find out Sunday,’ to squelch the party idea: I’m of Peter, I’m of Paul, I’m of Juan, I’m of Griffin.” The “secret sauce” according to Remington, “is not my dynamic preaching” but the relationship on display between talented leaders of different ethnicities humbly sharing leadership in a shared community.

David and Devontae were the outliers. David (white) said, “I’ve never heard from him, and we’ve talked about this ... I’ve not heard from him, “I feel a calling to be the one regular preaching pastor at a church.” Devontae agreed, saying, “God bless you.” While David will be their regular preacher, both agreed that “there’s a lot of cultural reasons why” having a black man in the pulpit would be advantageous. Devontae says he is “not that guy.”

Harry says rotating preachers “was not only about ethnicity, but it was also about office. We really wanted to emphasize: the role is not about the person but actually the office and the Word.”

While every participating partnership came from strong preaching traditions, the glue of these communities was not the pulpit but the shared table. “We almost always officiate the table together,” the pastors of Mosaic shared. “That image of these two types of people celebrating the Lord’s table together is central to what we do. Literally central in our worship service, and also central in the way that we think about how we do ministry together.”

Theology

Differences in theology were not conversation stoppers for more contemporary pastoral partnerships, while they were almost non-existent in the partnerships of older participants.

During one attempt to become more multi-ethnic, Michael pursued a black Baptist church for a possible merge but ultimately decided that while “my conviction was that theology of unity was a bigger theology than your view of baptism,” it was too much of a stretch to merge Baptists and Presbyterians. “We processed that, and there was a conviction that this wasn’t what God wanted us to do.”

Younger partners assumed that bringing believers of different ethnicities together would involve navigating different theological backgrounds and denominational traditions.

David said, “Devontae and I came from two different theological traditions... at least others would consider them very different theological traditions. I actually don’t think they’re nearly as different as people say.” David and Devontae bristled at the idea that conforming to a denominational expectation should trump the relationship they were building at the center of their church plant in Center City. It seemed obvious to them that a white community activist and a black neighborhood leader would most likely come from different denominational traditions and that part of the task of shared urban leadership would be to celebrate the best of both histories. Devontae said, “Theology-wise, that hasn’t been a super-duper red flag. We both value our traditions, because both of them have helped mold us into the men that we are.” David agreed, arguing that the chances of finding a person who was ordained in his theological tradition that brought the kind of gifts, cultural knowledge, and credibility were “very small.”

Remington recounted asking, “Would I join (his Baptist church planting network)? Would he join (my Reformed denomination)?” When they discovered that neither was a “good fit for either of us,” they determined to forge a new path. Remington

remains ordained in his Reformed tradition, and Winchester continues to lead in the church planting network, but they lead an officially “non-denominational” church together.

Unconventional Strategy

Contemporary pastoral partners are working in an environment shaped by church growth strategy and mega-multi-site church franchises. A generation ago the trend was dominated by the homogeneous principal targeting and catering to one socio-ethnic demographic. Both generations of participants communicated that a commitment to a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership was counter to the conventional wisdom of the times.

“A lot of times churches are looking for a recipe,” Griffin said, “if I do A, B, C, D, E then I’m going to get this type of result. That’s not going to take place (in a multi-ethnic partnership). You should know that when you go into this, you’re going to meet resistance.”

Remington describes it as “100 % different” than the way he was prepared to plant churches by his seminary and denomination. “It was very much not a church growth strategy, from the standpoint of systems and efficiency; we have far too many conversations about ordinary things in the church that in a large mono-ethnic church, (where) one person would just make decisions.” Michael continued, “In 1980 it was the homogeneous unit principle like gangbusters... Nobody was thinking about doing church as a reconciling community...but I knew pretty much that we needed a leadership team that was more diverse.” Griffin commented, “There’s patience that’s involved, and it is that emotional, self-investment that’s going to reap the benefits in the end.”

Recommending *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* by Alan Kreider²²³ as a handbook for patient partnerships, Griffin pointed to the “value of the patience that it took in the early church to win Rome. To do something that the *Pax Romana* couldn't do.” Church growth strategy, conversely, is not known for its patience but for crowning the “fastest growing” churches in the land.

Summary of Navigating Shared Leadership

The decision to do ministry together with a partner of another ethnicity added complexity to conversations that every ministry team has, particularly, how to share the work and how to communicate to the community how pastoring relationships work to accomplish the mission? Multi-ethnic partners particularly had to navigate the tension between their personal gifts and calling and how their titles, responsibilities and mutual submission challenged the expectations of their congregations and communities. Essentially, they were embodying the gospel relationship they called others to join.

Partnerships assigned ministry titles in different ways, but all acknowledged that titles affected the public perception of their partnership. Without exception, personal giftedness and calling were essential ingredients to figuring out how to share ministry. Perfect titles and wonderful presentation did not overcome mismatched gifts in any ministry situation.

Shared theology was an essential ingredient to every partnership, although the definition varied between participants. This mode of ministry did not fit the popular

²²³ Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016.

strategies of the day. It was inefficient, slow, and cumbersome compared to strategies for faster growth and larger churches, but participants agreed that the character, depth, and durability of the relationships and communities created were worth the trouble.

Evaluating Effectiveness

The third research question asked, “How do multi-ethnic pastoral partners evaluate their ministry effectiveness?” The first primary protocol question asked about evaluating the “personal relationship” between ministry partners and allowed the researcher to explore routines and protocols ministry partnerships used to evaluate relational health. The researcher also asked participants to comment on how their personal relationship affected their ministry together. The section concludes by asking participants to identify fruit in their ministry that indicated that they are accomplishing their vision for a multi-ethnic partnership and allowed for some more unstructured personal reflections on personal health and relationship.

Routines and Protocols

Many participant partnerships described an “evolution” of their care for personal relationships that began in an organic and relational way and progressed into a more structured, traditional routine between staff members. The more seasoned partnerships described structures and personal relationships in place to support their partnership.

Devontae and David have established an annual retreat in their young partnership to create time for relational conversations and to ensure that they have the space to “say the things that need to be said.” They have installed a weekly “start/stop continuum” for evaluating their relationship. A tool used in previous ministry situations, they ask one

another for specific examples of things that they need to “stop,” things that need to “continue,” and ideas for interpersonal practices that they might “start” to improve their relationship.

Winchester and Remington described a routine at staff meetings of their four-year-old project that was highly focused on relational health. Every Monday meeting includes time for “tough stuff.” Winchester explained, “...And tough stuff is anybody that may have crossed a boundary, anybody that may have said something hard that you didn’t understand, anybody that has upset you. We make room for that.” They also make room to formally “celebrate beauty” and “keep short accounts” at every meeting.

Like Winchester and Remington, Michael and Scotty, as well as Griffin and Juan, all had a non-negotiable, one-on-one meeting every week, in addition to less formal communication and meetings that they co-led or attended together. Michael and Scotty practice shared leadership and shared submission by dividing the six core ministries at Antioch Church between them. When the conversation is about worship, Christian education or community groups, Scotty leads. When the issue is reconciliation and unity, or outreach and justice, Michael facilitates, and Scotty supports.

Relational Effect on Shared Ministry

Every partnership with significant experience together described circumstances and situations in which their shared leadership “saved” them from personal burnout or other kinds of ministry failure.

“I hadn’t taken a vacation in years, probably over ten,” Winchester confessed as Remington told how he first mandated that Winchester schedule time for a vacation and then got the church to pay for a trip to Hawaii for him and his wife. “I just literally broke

down,” said Winchester. “It was the most awesome trip. The thought behind it, and him recognizing that this guy needs a break, was huge.”

Scotty listed one of the primary reasons he entered the partnership as personal care. “I had five kids, I loved to preach, but every week wasn’t good for my family. If I could get to a church where I could share with somebody, (I needed to do it).”

Michael mentioned the pressure of doing the hard work of community development and reconciliation alone as his motivation to share the load. “...living in the middle of all this, not knowing jack, never being trained, there was no theological seminary that was equipping us. I knew in year 10, I was burning out.” Year 10 was the year Scotty joined him as partner. David and Devontae saw these dangers at the onset, stating that they began their partnership before starting to build a core group David said they did it “to collaborate and to join forces, those forces being cultural competency, different skill sets... sharing the load physically, emotionally, spiritually; not being alone in the work.” Devontae added, “We fuel each other...we hold each other up in it.”

Ron and Harry, having recently moved on to new callings, looked back and wondered if better relational care for one another might have allowed them to remain longer. While the end of their partnership was unrelated, Harry wondered if they would have had staying power during the tumultuous 2020-2021. “I do think we would have needed some regular process by which we really talked through what might be differences, and I also think that we both now have more awareness of the psychological models of ethnic self-awareness... I think we just lived on relational capital.”

David summed it up, saying, “As goes our relationship, so goes our ministry.” Most echoed this sentiment. Devontae lauded the pursuit of “relational maturity” and

“emotional maturity” as central to the success of their ministry. Remington said that “emotional, physical, relational health is something we work really hard at.”

Fruit in Ministry

Multi-ethnic pastoral partners shared stories of formal and informal confirmation that their commitment to sharing leadership was bearing fruit. Juan shared that during a capital campaign, they had a fundraising consultant comment that “he had never been in a church where so many people in the congregation knew what the vision of the church was.” Every person he talked to could answer the question, “Why a multi-ethnic church?”

Michael and Scotty’s church, Antioch Church, was the subject of a recent PhD candidate’s study on church health. After the application of formal evaluation, “frameworks,” and “various values,” he confirmed what Michael “always knew; I always sensed.” Antioch Church was a healthy and biblically driven place, according to his “extensive research, interviews, quantifying the reality of the health of a church that’s functioning as a reconciling community.”

Some participants pointed to ministry programs as significant fruit. Michael describes Antioch Church’s Advent musical as an embodiment of Revelation 21, “bringing the very best from our various cultural expressions into the worship of God. Over time, that service just became an unbelievable expression of the strength of culturally diverse music, but all united.” At Colonial Church, Griffin and Juan noted all the ways that the poor and marginalized were utilizing “Jobs for Life, Faith and Finances,” as well as ministries for families with special needs kids. David and Devontae also mentioned formal ministries that put their reconciling partnership on display. Their community garage provides neighbors with essentials like detergent and toiletries and has

become a place where people see the two of them working together. “They’re hungry,” Devontae said. “People are like, ‘We want more of what y’all doing.’ ... You can get yourself in a situation when you’re looking for the big stories. But small things like this are like ‘Lord kissed (me) on the face.’”

Informally, pastors pointed to relational and personal indicators that God was blessing their commitment to a shared multi-ethnic ministry. Harry relishes “a vibrant, intercultural congregation of people who love each other, and they have no reason to hang out with each other, except for the fact that they believe that the gospel calls them to, and they’ve grown to love each other.” Remington pointed to the “percentage of people who come to our church who are on their last try... I’m almost done with church, but I saw this existed, and I thought, ‘Maybe this will be different.’” Griffin said, “The most obvious thing is just seeing the diversity in the congregation. I counted twenty-seven different ethnicities at the last count, being present.” Michael recounted story after story of what he called “the heroic nature of the everyday Christian in this body,” crossing racial and economic barriers to serve brothers and sisters in the church. Winchester calls it “people getting involved in the lives of people who don’t look like them.” A bit tongue-and-cheek, Remington (white) looked at Winchester (black) and said that one indication that “it’s working” is that “there’s still white people in our church, and we have a black lead pastor, who some would say is the blackest person they know.” Griffin said, “I can see a guy who’s the president of the local Merrill Lynch investment firm here, sitting in the congregation and right behind him is a family that had been homeless, and they know each other.”

Unanticipated Results

The researcher asked participants to share unanticipated results from the articulated goals for their multi-ethnic partnership. David reflected on gratitude, which others mentioned, for the personal development he experienced through the partnership. “Me growing, me deepening my understanding of Devontae’s culture, and therefore in many ways the culture of the people that we’re called to serve” is a result.

Some responses mentioned sustained impact in the cities where churches were planted, like the Antioch Christian School that serves every socio-economic class and the Metro Antioch Seminary that allows students to earn a Master of Divinity for \$2000. Both spun out of the work that Michael and Scotty did together at Antioch Church.

Griffin and Juan have led nationwide conversations in their denomination on race and reconciliation and served as board members in independent organizations dedicated to planting multi-ethnic churches.

Some of the unanticipated results resulted from unanticipated circumstances. Remington pointed to polarizing events like the elections of 2016 and 2020, Black Lives Matter protests, and the restrictions of the pandemic in 2020-21 and said, “We have never to this day had factions develop in any of those things, at all. Not even remotely close...people love each other, and they do exactly what the church leadership tells them to do, because they recognize it as an opportunity to love each other against their preferences.” This radical commitment to unity was a common theme. Churches that were already becoming reconciling communities through the leadership of multi-ethnic partnerships found less difficulty and saw less division during polarizing cultural events.

In light of these kinds of revelations, Scotty commented, “It surprised us that there's so many people who see it as important now and are trying to do it.”

Reflections and Retrospect

The researcher concluded by asking participants to reflect on lessons learned and advice or wisdom for those beginning a partnership with someone of a different ethnicity. Here are some of those responses in no particular order.

Harry: "I still feel very committed to intercultural ministry...I think ten years ago that would have been taken for granted more than right now. I think denominationally we are going to have to wrestle through some of these things, the polarization and the sorting that's happening right now."

Scotty: "One of the important tensions and balancing acts you have to make is to be intentional about ethnic issues and ethnic diversity but not make it your prime purpose. The Great Commission is your purpose, and you do it as a multi-racial team."

Griffin: "Take your time. Value the relationships with the people that you have in front of you. It's more about them than it is about what you think you're accomplishing."

Michael: "A lot of junk is going to happen in the course of ministry, and it's not just about growing and achieving your goals of growing this thing. It's about the character formation of what Jesus is doing in your life and those that are with you."

Juan reflected on Ephesians 3:20, which says: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us to him be glory in the church..." He concluded, "He is able to make his church become this beautiful bride made up from people of all nations. That's what he's talking about there. That passage gets ripped out of context all the time. The proper context is, this is God's will. God is really in this, and he will do more than you imagine."

Remington mentioned an epiphany, when he realized there are two kinds of multi-ethnic churches. The first is the "International Church," a coming together of ethnic and

national backgrounds for a “cultural celebration” and the appreciation of the “beauty” of every tribe and language and nation. The second is what he called the “domestic, multi-ethnic church” in which “we got shit to deal with between us!” Both are important, but Remington shared the hope of every participant that God raise up a movement of biblically faithful, gospel-centered “domestic, multi-ethnic churches.”

Summary of Evaluating Effectiveness

The maturity and structure of each partnership’s intentional care for relational health affected the duration and maturity of the partnerships. Succeeding multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships were intentional about the emotional health of their personal relationship, in that care of relationship was the front line of defense, not only against a culture that divides and racializes groups, but also against pastoral burnout, moral failure, and the pressure of pastoring and church planting. David summarized by saying, “There’s just my own health, personally as a man, spiritually, emotionally, but then there’s us together, and then there’s the work that we do.”

Every partnership pointed to many “kisses on the face,” as Devontae put it, the multiple, small, everyday relational evidences that the model of multi-ethnic pastoral partnership was accomplishing their vision. The more established partnerships had produced concrete ministries and programs that will continue past the partnership that birthed them.

Given the chance, every partner mentioned personal growth and sanctification as one of the richest promises of embarking on ministry with a partner of a different ethnicity. A pact to “be better brothers than we were pastors,” as Remington said, was a

recipe for personal health, an antidote to loneliness, a witness to the gospel, and a road to realizing many of the hopes they had for ministry when they began.

Summary of Findings

This chapter explored how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together. Participants described the tension between a public presentation of unity and the relational and programmatic details of truly pastoring together, the need to share ministry appropriately according to giftedness and experience, and how critical sharing preaching and sacramental responsibilities was to a multi-ethnic, intercultural gospel vision.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together. In chapter two, the review of literature shed insight on the challenges encountered in developing a theology for multi-ethnic church planting, relational health in leadership theory and practice and the development of ingenious leadership development.

The following questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners navigate shared leadership?
2. What do multi-ethnic church planting partners describe as the goal for shared ministry?
3. How do multi-ethnic church planting partners evaluate their ministry effectiveness?

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study reviewed relevant literature in three areas and analyzed interview data from ten individuals who participated in a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership.

The literature identified Jesus' statements about the diversity and the unity of the church as the bedrock of a theology of a multi-ethnic church. Jesus envisioned a church made up of people from “all nations.”²²⁴ Anyone who received that Great Commission would be hearing the “announcement that there is a King named Jesus who established a

²²⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

kingdom through a multi-colored, regenerated people called the church,” according to Derwin Gray.²²⁵ Jesus’ prayer for that multi-colored, regenerate people was that they would experience the same unity that he experiences with the Father and the Holy Spirit. “That they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”²²⁶ Irwyn Ince wrote, “If God displays his beauty in his trinitarian life, we should expect that beauty to be reflected in the humanity that images him.”²²⁷

The writers agreed that, according to scripture, Jesus' vision and prayer was first embodied in Antioch. “It is not coincidental that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” DeYmaz summarizes, “For there, Jesus Christ was clearly recognized in the midst of their unity, just as he had said that he would be.”²²⁸

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul calls the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles through a mutual faith in Jesus Christ the “mystery of the gospel”²²⁹ because as Padilla says, “the breaking down of barriers that separate people in the world” is an “essential” aspect of the gospel.²³⁰

The review of leadership literature on building relationally healthy partnerships and leadership teams loosely followed categories devised by Patrick Lencioni in *The*

²²⁵ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 8.

²²⁶ John 17:22-23

²²⁷ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 55.

²²⁸ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*, 22.

²²⁹ Ephesians 3

²³⁰ Gallagher and Hertig, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*.

Advantage. Various writers contributed similar or overlapping illustrations and categories for describing the essentials of building a healthy team using his headings. These categories included: building trust, conflict management, commitment, accountability and measuring outcomes.²³¹

The final focus of the literature review considered indigenous leadership material from missiologists and urban community developers, considering how a diversity of leadership becomes a vehicle for the contextualization of the gospel message, lends credibility to the message of reconciliation, and aids in creating ministries that reflect and represent those a ministry hopes to reach and minister to. The review found that forming leadership teams with people indigenous to the ministry context is critical to “sound contextualization,” which “means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essences and particulars of the gospel itself.”²³² This contextualization, however, needs to be done in the context of humble relationships, given the history of colonial mission movements that decimated indigenous cultures both intentionally and ignorantly through a system unaware of its own syncretism.²³³

²³¹ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 26.

²³² Keller, *Center Church*, 89.

²³³ Newbigin, “1983 The Other Side of 1984,” 1–2.

Discussion of Findings

Compelled by the Word

It was compelling to see that again and again participants grounded their convictions about planting multi-ethnic churches and participating in multi-ethnic partnerships in Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28, Jesus' high priestly prayer for the church in John 17, and the Apostle John's vision of the church in glory from Revelation 7 and 21.

The churches in Antioch and Ephesus fired the imaginations of church planters interviewed as they led these biblically faithful communities. Scotty and Michael went so far as to use Antioch as the namesake for their ministry (although the actual name has been changed in this study for confidentiality).

While Winchester and Remington, along with Juan and Griffin, mentioned inaugurating their fellowships with preaching series on the "mystery of the gospel" in Ephesians, several of the other partnerships included a biblical rationale for pursuing a multi-ethnic congregation in their founding documents and literature available at their welcome centers and on their websites (referencing Matt 28, John 17, Revelation 4:21, Antioch, and Ephesus among other passages).

The experience of pastoring with a partner from another ethnicity has become a driving force in my own life and a catalyst not only for the gospel community forming in our own church congregation but also for this doctoral project. The church can learn much from individuals who have passed up less challenging leadership arrangements and more infamously productive church planting strategies. Building a personal ministry relationship with a partner of another ethnicity is not an efficient church planting strategy,

but it is biblical. Each of these partnerships model the “ministry of reconciliation”²³⁴ to their own churches, their denominations, and the watching world.

Several of the participants also made this the topic of doctoral work or have volunteered or been invited by their denominations/traditions to lead study commissions and give recommendations towards more comprehensive ministries of reconciliation and unity. That gospel-minded traditions are watching and taking note of the fruit of this ministry is hopeful to me. My own denomination (PCA) has several regional examples in which presbyteries established a “Reconciliation Task Force” or similar committee to produce documents like a “Unity Declaration”²³⁵ that each participating church might sign on to. That many would undertake the difficult task of friendship and partnership across ethnic lines remains to be seen.

The Secret Sauce

Relational health was on the forefront for every one of the partner participants. Some gave it a greater priority as they began, and some lamented not doing more as they looked back. As Remington so eloquently put it, “We know that the secret sauce, so to speak, is our relationship.” When asked about emotional and relational health, every partnership responded that it was either something that “we work really hard at” or as Harry said after he and Ron ended their partnership for other opportunities: “We did not (work as hard as) I think we should have.”

²³⁴ 2 Corinthians 5

²³⁵ Faith Christian Fellowship, “Unity Declaration,” Faith Christian Fellowship: Baltimore, MD, 2022, <https://www.fcfchurch.org/unity-declaration>.

Harry and Ron’s partnership came to an end because of circumstances in their context and families not directly related to their relationship or partnership, but I can’t help but wonder if they might have been able to better care for one another and outlast the extenuating circumstances if they had been more intentional about their relational health rather than just “living on relational capital” from a childhood friendship.

There were also many specific stories of ministry challenges that fit into Lencioni’s framework for relational health.²³⁶

Building Trust

David and Devontae have not yet held a public worship service together and that shows a certain amount of maturity in their parenthood, or perhaps they are aware of how immature their partnership still is. As they spend intentional time together and work out the details of their vision, they are working on what Tripp called “vulnerability-based trust.”²³⁷ When my co-pastor and I were developing our plans to merge churches, we sought out other partnerships similar to the one we hoped to form. The best advice we received was, “You guys need to drink a lot of beer together!” The tongue-and-cheek remark endorsed not alcohol consumption but “unstructured time together” to learn to trust each other. Time for friendship, time for family connection, and time in unanticipated hardship supports the intentional structures of a professional relationship for building vulnerability-based trust. Michael and Scotty built a friendship and trust over a ten-year period, leading separate ministries in the same city. Winchester and Remington

²³⁶ Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 26.

²³⁷ Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 27.

forged a friendship around their shared passion for justice in their community for several years before seriously taking on the task of partnering together.

In our partnership, my co-pastor and I used engagement and marriage language to describe for our congregations the process of discernment as we considered partnering with another pastor and as we assessed what it would look like to bring together two congregations of different ethnicities into a new church plant. This language of covenant, rather than that of a business contract, was a common way other partners talked about the magnitude and importance of the partnership they entered into together.

Conflict Management

When assessing a good marriage, the comment “We’ve never had a fight,” is not necessarily an indication of health. Dave Harvey calls a team that cannot disagree a “counterfeit plurality,” giving lip service to partnership while there isn’t collaboration.²³⁸

My favorite conflict story was from Remington and Winchester. Remington (white) heard from Winchester (black) in a rather nonchalant way that his wife had put an offer on a house in a suburb of West Coast City. They were moving farther away than Remington thought was appropriate. “All kinds of red flags were going up. If I did something like that it would mean a whole bunch of different things.... I was also frustrated that we didn’t have a conversation about it before it happened.” There were lots of wires crossed as they attempted to sort out all the reasons for Remington’s reaction (and Winchester’s nonchalance). Remington needed to understand that a black leader buying a house in the suburbs was a victory in Winchester’s understanding: “The dream

²³⁸ Harvey, *The Plurality Principle*, 69–79.

(in the black community) is to get out (of the city) and to do better.” Winchester needed to understand that Remington felt like he was “losing a partner” and to reaffirm his commitment to the church and the vision. At one point, Winchester suggested he withdraw his offer on the house, but instead they did the hard work of navigating the conflict to understand what this move communicated to their congregation and what it did not. “A white guy living in the suburbs and commuting to do ministry in the city (looks like) they have a messiah complex...you’re colonizing,” according to Remington. A black pastor buying a house someplace he can afford is “accomplishing goals that everybody in my community has...it’s an encouragement,” said Winchester. Harry called such insight, “self-awareness of racial identity,” something that couldn’t be programmed into the relationship; it was only discovered through conflict.

Many other anecdotes highlighted the need for every partnership to navigate conflict with relational trust and showed the many ways that a multi-ethnic partnership unearthed the assumptions, cultural tunnel vision, and naivety of every participant. Multi-ethnic partnerships, done well, provided a laboratory for doing the kind of conflict resolution that every leadership partnership needs.

Accountability & Outcomes

On a basic level, multi-ethnic church planting must achieve the goal of building communities of believers from “every tribe and language and people and nation.”²³⁹ Pastors must therefore articulate how leadership roles will serve this vision and put in writing a vision statement for the partnership, church, or movement.

²³⁹ Revelation 5:9

Healthy churches do not place building a multi-ethnic congregation or accomplishing racial reconciliation as the central goal of their mission. Biblical churches understand that when the gospel is central and accomplishing Christ's great commission for his church is the goal, reconciliation, and unity across boundaries like race are part of the outcome that should be expected.

In our ministry, we articulate this outcome as one of our values:

We value the inter-generational and multi-cultural family of God. We are committed to celebrating the diversity of our community and the awesome opportunity to witness by our words and actions to be the reconciling love of God for all peoples.²⁴⁰

Several of the participating partnerships articulated their hoped-for outcome as part of the vision to form biblical, multi-ethnic churches in the spirit of the church in Antioch.²⁴¹

Winchester and Remington write:

We are people of many cultures woven together into the fabric of (West Coast City) to display the beauty of God's story.

It can be hard to find a place to belong. Together we can create a community where everyone, regardless of background or culture, knows they are part of the family.

Juan and Griffin's website says:

We want to love and serve our community and world with the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe that the power of that good news is seen by bringing people together across the lines of race and class to worship and follow Jesus. The love of Christ brings healing in our relationship with God and with one another, and it unifies us to worship Him together. In this worship, our lives are enriched through the diversity of races, cultures and backgrounds. But it goes beyond worship: we also learn and grow together; we share our everyday lives together; and then we go back out to love and serve our community with the Gospel.

²⁴⁰ Grace Sacramento Presbyterian Church, "Our Values," Grace Sacramento Presbyterian Church: Sacramento, CA, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.wearegracesac.org/our-values>.

²⁴¹ Acts 11

Embedded

“Properly conceived, churches modeled on the New Testament will be indigenous (‘related to the soil’).²⁴² David J. Hesselgrave writes that the leadership and culture of the church emanates from its people.

Developing indigenous leadership is a challenge for every church plant but is particularly highlighted when partners come together from different ethnicities.

Sometimes one of the partners is indigenous to the community, reflecting its dominant race and speaking its cultural language having grown up as a local.

David was clear about why finding an indigenous partner was more important than finding someone who was “ordainable” in his theological tradition. “Knowing the chances of this person being ordained in (my denomination) were very small...because the kind of person that would probably give me might lack a lot of the things Devontae brings.” Devontae brought a lifetime in the community, a cultural intelligence that cannot be taught, and credibility that would take years for an outsider to develop. The same was true for Winchester and Remington as well.

Sometimes a multi-ethnic church planting partnership reflects the ethnic makeup of the community, but neither partner grew up in the area, as was the case for most of the participants. Juan and Griffin are an example. Griffin, an African American, filled out a partnership to plant a church in an area that was 38 % black, but he relocated from a different part of the country to participate.

In this kind of situation, earlier thinkers like John Perkins of the Christian Community Development Association have laid the groundwork for embedding in a

²⁴² Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*, 366.

community. Regardless of race or ethnicity, church planters need to relocate themselves into the communities they serve and do the hard work of reconciliation.²⁴³

When Remington, a Midwestern, white church planter, articulated his fear of being seen by the black community in West Coast City as “a colonizer,” he identified the baggage of many missional and ministry failures. The spotty history of world missions and urban church planting includes not only the failure of ministry leaders to properly relocate into the communities they serve but also the failure to properly contextualize the gospel. “There is no culture-less presentation of the gospel,” according to Timothy Keller, “(there is no one single way to express the Christian faith that is universal for all cultures), but there is only one true gospel, (not a product of any culture and stands in judgement of every culture).”²⁴⁴

Partnering with someone of a different ethnicity means constantly assessing motivations because someone from a different cultural background will ask, “Why did you do it that way?” “Why did you say it that way?” Harry, a white guy, relayed the uncomfortable realization of how culturally tone deaf his denomination was after he began doing ministry in partnership with Ron, who is African American. “At our last presbytery meeting, someone asked what I thought was a very inappropriate question of a candidate (for ordination), that assumed a white center and marginalized anything else. I don’t think it was through bad intention; I think this brother loves the Lord, would genuinely say he hates racism, but I just don’t think people understand how things come

²⁴³ “CCD Philosophy » Christian Community Development Association,” *Christian Community Development Association* (blog), accessed March 14, 2022, <https://ccda.org/about/philosophy/>.

²⁴⁴ Keller, *Center Church*, 93.

across.” How can we understand how the things that we say and do come across to another culture if we have no genuine relationships with people from that culture? Entering a multi-ethnic pastoral partnership ensures that pastors are constantly in some form of a reconciling relationship.

Pastoral ministry in America, and particularly in the greater Reformed community, has a built-in public place to communicate verbally and non-verbally what a community values: it’s called the pulpit. Pastor Mark DeYmaz articulated a value that 80 % of this study’s participants embody. “More than anything else, the fact that leadership and the pulpit were ‘fully integrated’ established the credibility of the (message) ... Indeed, it was the diversity of leadership, through and through, that made Mosaic (multi-ethnic church in Little Rock, Arkansas) a unique story worth telling.”²⁴⁵

When my co-pastor and I replanted together as a single multi-ethnic church, we preached together on the first Sunday we gathered. Placing a stool next to the pulpit, one pastor sat while the other preached a point and then stood to illustrate or move on to the next verse in the passage while the first preacher took the stool. It was awkward and wooden, but it embodied the awkward, wooden, difficult, and eternally worthwhile endeavor we were beginning. Since that Sunday six years ago we have, like so many of the participants interviewed, shared the preaching duty almost evenly.

This track record emphasizes “the office and the Word,” as Harry said, as the authority in our community, rather than the giftedness or charisma of one particular personality. It also provides a public presentation of our mutual submission to one another in love. It provides a public model for differing groups of people, differing

²⁴⁵ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church*. 71.

ethnicities to submit to and serve one another in love. It demonstrates the “mystery of the gospel” in that through the blood of Christ, the walls that have divided us, the unbiblical reasons that have segregated us on Sunday mornings, those things have been torn down to bring us near to God and to one another as brothers.²⁴⁶

Recommendations for Practice

The literature review and study strongly suggest that embracing the practice of planting and revitalizing churches with multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships testifies to the reconciling power of the gospel, cares well for the health of pastors, and creates multi-ethnic churches that reflect the communities they serve and speak the language and celebrate the culture of their neighborhoods and cities. What follows are three broad applications for shaping the practice of church planting and preparation of pastors in light of these findings.

Develop a Biblical Vision for the Multi-ethnic Church

Teach the Mystery of the Gospel

Evangelical theology has largely presented an individualized view of the gospel: good news about what Jesus has done for each person’s salvation, with an under-emphasis on the implications it has on the new community, which is the church. Paul emphasizes the gospel’s far reaching ethnic and cultural implications in Ephesians when

²⁴⁶ Ephesians 2

he speaks of the mystery of the gospel: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”²⁴⁷

If, as Padilla says, Ephesians teaches that “conversion (to Christianity) was never a merely religious experience; it was also a way of becoming a member of a community where people would find their identity in Christ rather than in their race, social status or sex,”²⁴⁸ why then is this not a central aspect of our preaching and application of the gospel? There has never been a more critical time to revisit this aspect of how the gospel impacts community, particularly considering the polarization and sorting happening in the church around political divides and issues like Critical Race Theory and Black Lives Matter.

The pulpit is the preeminent context for reorienting the church towards multi-ethnic unity, which is an “essential” outcome of the gospel.

Integrate a Theology of Reconciliation

Denominations often feel the urgency to rush for an answer to the cultural crisis of the moment. “What does X denomination say about Black Lives Matter?” “What is Y denomination’s statement on Critical Race Theory?” “Has denomination Z responded to the civil unrest around police shootings of black men and women?”

As evangelical denominations realize that they need a “theology of the body” like their Catholic counterparts, rather a one-note message on sex and marriage, they can also wake up to the reality that they need a rich commitment to a biblical theology of

²⁴⁷ Ephesians 3:6

²⁴⁸ Gallagher and Hertig, *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*.

reconciliation. By adopting documents like the Unity Declaration included in Appendix 2, churches and denominations could grow churches with a deep commitment to biblical reconciliation and a better understanding of its practical applications. Foundational documents about biblical unity and the ministry of reconciliation could resolve the tyranny of the urgent in our racially charged cultural moment.

Historically majority culture denominations, like many Reformed traditions, improve their ability to recruit minority candidates for the ministry by demonstrating a deep thoughtfulness about the issue of racial unity and reconciliation. Not only would this go a long way to protect against hiring token minorities who feel no institutional support, but it would also challenge some of the “tone deaf” conversations in denominational meetings and decisions carried out by majority culture participants.²⁴⁹ Instead of “repackaging our Christian faith” in categories defined by the culture like being “colorblind” or “antiracist,” developing a commitment to a theology of reconciliation will allow us to have a biblical vocabulary about reconciling work and gospel centered discourse or what George Yancey calls “mutual accountability” in the ways that we approach racialization in our churches and in our country.²⁵⁰

Build in Relational Health

Seminary Soft Skills

While pastors are often trained in the vitally important biblical and theological constructs, there is little (seminary) engagement in the soft skills needed for ministry. Emotional and cultural intelligence, spiritual

²⁴⁹ Rudy Rubio, “D.I.Y. Table Making,” *Church Planting In The Hood* (blog), March 30, 2022, <https://urbanchurchplanting.blog/2022/03/30/d-i-y-table-making/>.

²⁵⁰ Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 127–30.

formation and soul-care, oversight of the home and church require mentoring that a classroom setting cannot apply.²⁵¹

Seminaries like Reformed Theological Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary, Blue Ridge Institute, and Columbia International University²⁵² are recognizing that their traditional theological education has not prepared pastors and church planters for long term resilience in ministry.²⁵³ They are partnering with organizations like NextGen Pastors to give seminary credit and/or financial assistance to students participating in the development of soft skills and ministry cohorts and partnership.

Institutions like these need to take the next step and require soft skills training for graduation rather than just incentivizing those who participate. We do a disservice to pastors and church planters when we award them a seminary degree and give them a green light to church plant without any formal training for the long-term pursuit of relational, emotional, and spiritual health.

No More Cowboys

On May 8, 2020, Seacoast Church in Charleston, S.C. announced the death of teaching pastor Darrin Patrick. Patrick took his own life.²⁵⁴ While a critic of celebrity pastor culture later in his life, Patrick was ultimately a victim of the unbalanced and unhealthy church planting culture he helped create with his book *Church Planter: The*

²⁵¹ “NextGen Pastors | ABOUT,” accessed March 15, 2022, <https://ngpastors.com/about/>.

²⁵² “NextGen Pastors | Partners,” accessed March 15, 2022, <https://ngpastors.com/partners/>.

²⁵³ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 16.

²⁵⁴ Bob Smietana-Religion News Service, “Died: Darrin Patrick, Who Used His Fall and Restoration to Help Struggling Pastors,” News & Reporting, accessed March 14, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/may/darrin-patrick-died-seacoast-journey-st-louis-acts-29.html>.

*Man, the Message, the Mission*²⁵⁵ and his leadership in church planting networks that celebrated superhero, mega-church success. Patrick is just one high profile example of the damage a Lone Ranger mentality in church planting can do.

Every denomination and network should be compelled by stories like this to implement systems and expectations to protect the relational and emotional health of the pastors they send out into the harvest. Church planting and revitalizing churches in ethnically diverse, economically challenged contexts should draw extra attention from organizations responsible for the care and vitality of pastors and the churches they lead.

Adopting a strategy of multi-ethnic church planting partnerships is just one idea for engaging this issue. It assures that pastors are not pastoring alone. Done well, it provides a built-in relationship for prayer, care, and relational health assessment and accountability. Regardless of the approach a given organization chooses, the celebration of “cowboy” church planting needs to end.

²⁵⁵ Patrick, *Church Planter*.

Facilitate Multi-ethnic Partnerships

Create Assessment Tools

Church Planting Assessment

Reformed denominations²⁵⁶ and church planting networks²⁵⁷ have led the way in creating assessment tools and training for church planting. Not every pastor has all the gifts and constitution for successful church planting. Through an extended process of references, gift assessment, and week-long workshops, these programs help prospective planters assess everything from spiritual and family health to the fundamental ministry and entrepreneurial skills necessary to begin a new work.

Not every church planter or renewal pastor is a good candidate for a multi-ethnic partnership. While much of the sanctifying work of the Spirit can take place during the process of partnering, it would be helpful to assess some basic postures toward reconciliation and multi-ethnic ministry, as well as self-assessment of the importance of racial identity.

An assessment program modeled after church planter evaluation structures could assess progress in some of these basic prerequisites to reconciliation ministry. A second stage of assessment could utilize soft skills training tools like those mentioned above,²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ “Church Planter Assessment Center,” MNA Resources, accessed March 15, 2022, https://resources.pcamna.org/resource/church-planting_assessmentcenter/.

²⁵⁷ J. Tyler Deaton, “Assessment Overview | US Southeast Network,” *Acts 29* (blog), February 15, 2017, <https://www.acts29.com/a29se-assessment/>.

²⁵⁸ “Dashboard – NXTGEN Pastors,” accessed March 15, 2022, <https://ngpastorsapp.com/dashboard/>.

along with shared leadership development and team assessment tools²⁵⁹ to locate the maturity and preparation status of the partnership for shared ministry.

A final stage of a multi-ethnic partnership assessment might help partnerships articulate a theology of reconciliation as part of their foundational vision documents.²⁶⁰ This stage might also be an appropriate time to utilize training creating “mutual accountability”²⁶¹ and tools offered by organizations like the Christian Community Development Association²⁶² and Faith in Action²⁶³ to assess and communicate the role they expect advocacy and activism to play in their project together.

Church Renewal Assessment

Dr. Philip Douglass, author of *What Is Your Church’s Personality*,²⁶⁴ offers a diagnostic through his organization Douglass and Associates²⁶⁵ designed to help church leaders understand and develop the ministry style of their church. A similar tool should be developed to help renewal pastors assess their congregation’s posture and personality

²⁵⁹ “Teamwork 5 Dysfunctions | The Table Group,” accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.tablegroup.com/topics-and-resources/teamwork-5-dysfunctions/>.

²⁶⁰ Fellowship, “Unity Declaration.”

²⁶¹ Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*.

²⁶² Christian Community Development Association, “Leadership Cohort » Christian Community Development Association,” Christian Community Development Association, 2022, <https://ccda.org/train-connect/emerging-leaders/>.

²⁶³ Faith in Action, “Our Mission,” Faith in Action Bay Area, 2021, <https://faithinactionba.org/who-we-are/our-mission/>.

²⁶⁴ Philip D. Douglass, *What Is Your Church’s Personality? Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 2008).

²⁶⁵ “Douglass and Associates | Home of the Church Personality Diagnostic,” accessed March 15, 2022, <https://www.douglassandassociates.com/>.

towards multi-ethnicity and reconciliation ministry. Such a diagnostic could help pastors assess the playing field they find themselves in and help congregations see the gap between what they say they believe about reconciliation and how their ministries really operate. Diagnosing the unity/reconciliation posture of a church or church-planting core group might help assess the impact of bringing on a pastoral partner from a different ethnicity.

Rethink Titles

Many historic Reformed denominations have rigid parameters for pastoral titles. The Presbyterian Church in America offers three options: pastor, associate pastor, and assistant pastor (BCO 20-23).²⁶⁶ Almost every pastor partnership in the study decided they needed titles that better communicated their partnership and their role to their community. Some partnerships used different titles on the ground and traditional titles in denominational documents. Older pastoral partners were more likely to submit to denominational titles that didn't quite fit how their partnership operated. Younger teams were more likely to inform their traditions of the titles they were using, even if they didn't fit the denominational standards.

By rethinking titles, church planting efforts can encourage partnerships to communicate roles and gifts in ways that also communicate unity and mutual submission. A broader range of titles (executive pastor and lead pastor, pastor and co-pastor, co-pastors) will allow partnerships to identify gifts and roles while still being mindful of the

²⁶⁶ Presbyterian Church in America, *The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America* =20-23.

optics of communicating how pastors of different ethnicities can work in an equal and mutually submissive partnership. Traditions that stick to rigid titles may lose out on dynamic partnerships interested in planting and leading multi-ethnic churches.

Feature Multi-Ethnic Partnerships

Publicly highlighting multi-ethnic partnerships that are planting/leading healthy, reconciling congregations will help denominations bring needed emphasis and attention to church-centered work that embodies a gospel response to the crisis of racial issues in our culture. Featuring multi-ethnic partnerships also facilitates their support and multiplication. Every church plant needs to raise money to support its work, and planting in economically challenged areas or leading as a minority make this a particularly difficult challenge. Multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships can be an economic solution to the problem of developing minority leadership in reformed denominations famous for expensive seminary training and large church planting budgets. This is a great way to connect minority talent and gifts to majority money. Multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships need more than encouragement from their denominations, they need real American dollars.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on exploring how multi-ethnic church planting partners pastor together in the greater Reformed church planting community. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the research can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable for the benefit of the church in the United States and around the world.

Longitudinal Study of Health and Church Vitality in Multi-ethnic Partnerships

In 2013 IVP published *Resilient Ministry*, the result of a seven-year study of the personal lives, marriages, families, and ministries of pastors from different generations and stages of ministry.²⁶⁷ In addition to the book, the project has spun off several initiatives, including the NextGen pastors project mentioned above, that have focused on equipping pastors in the five identified areas of ministry resilience: spiritual formation, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, marriage/family, and leadership/management. A similar longitudinal study that compared the health and development of these “soft skills” for ministry in multi-ethnic pastoral partnership with a control group of pastors ministering in more traditional solo or senior/assistant roles could help assess the usefulness of multi-ethnic partnerships for developing relational health and ministry resilience.

Larger Multi-Denominational Research

Participants of this study were purposely sampled, and therefore the results are not formally generalizable.²⁶⁸ This study chose church planting partnerships in Reformed churches to limit the sample size and variables in the study. While there was some diversity in the denomination and theological background of participants, participants identified with churches that self-identified as Calvinistic in theology, as opposed to

²⁶⁷ Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry*, 16.

²⁶⁸ Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 96.

Catholic, Arminian, or more generally mainline Protestant. Those who desire to appropriate the findings should test those findings in their particular contexts.

Several of the participants questioned this purposeful sample and suggested, along with other advisors, that a broader sample would yield more significant results. As with all qualitative research of this kind, the reader is responsible to determine what findings can appropriately be applied in their own ecclesial contexts.²⁶⁹ A similar study that included interviews with multi-ethnic pastoral partnerships from a larger variety of Christian traditions and denominations would be an even greater service to the church.

²⁶⁹ Merriam and Tisdell, 256.

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