a model for active participation in mission service for the african american church: a phenomenological case study

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor

of Philosophy

Omega Graduate School

Graduation Date

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ABSTRACT

The abstract appears at the front of the report, but it is written after all else has been completed. An abstract is a short unbiased summary (no more than 350 words) of the main elements of the completed research, so it is never part of a proposal. An abstract includes: introduction to the subject, description of what was done, results, and the meaning of it all. It captures the content of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in extremely condensed form; this may be the most difficult part of the dissertation to write because it must clearly describe the whole in a few words.

Decide what will be of most value to your reader. If it were a sports story, you’d tell who won (the result), what sport it was (procedure), who played (context), and why it was important (significance). Same thing here. Make sure that it is clear to someone who knows nothing about the topic of your research. It is brief—just an overview to show that it was a carefully executed study. (A report of an NFL game doesn’t recite the rule book.) State each hypothesis and whether it was supported or not supported. Brag objectively about the significance if you wish. You may use energetic language even though it is written in formal style (APA 6th, 2.04, p. 25). The page is counted, but no page number is shown.

DEDICATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS [Optional]

Acknowledgments are short and vivid like thank you’s at the Academy Awards but more sincere. Mention only the most meaningful helpers. Place on its page, centered three inches from the top of the page.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Missionary service has long been a vital component of the international Church. The Great Commission instructions in the Bible were meant to be followed by the whole Christian Church and all future generations. A church with a passion for missions would consistently push its members to see themselves as servant leaders and educate them on how to do so. A church on mission with God equips its members with the means to become disciples of Jesus Christ and integrate their faith into every aspect of their lives. Numerous researchers continue to be intrigued by the issue of the underrepresentation of African Americans in global missionary activity. African Americans have made significant contributions to the dissemination of the Gospel that Jesus Christ proclaimed in distant places of the globe throughout history (2009). Stevens and Walston, as reported by Throughout history, the African American community and the African American church encountered several obstacles that prohibited them from engaging fully in worldwide missions. Many African Americans and the African American church have shied away from the call to serve God on the mission field because of our tangled history of both good and evil in missions. Consequently, the ongoing lack of African Americans in worldwide missions directly affects historical obstacles (Stevens and Walston 2009).

The researcher, a minister of the Gospel and a missionary, is aware of the urgent need for a solution to an issue that has existed for many years inside the African American church. Nonetheless, global mission work is not the only area of mission where the African American church lacks a substantial presence or commitment. “Every congregation member should have the objective of actively participating in the church’s mission” (Logan, 2016). Each partner at Ebenezer Baptist Church is recognized as a missionary, and the Church’s five-fold mission plan involves not just worldwide mission activity but also domestic mission work, national mission work, and disaster assistance. The Ebenezer Baptist Church is conscious that the traditional weekly services are just as vital to the Church’s functioning as the Church’s various outreach activities. The connection with the local community is vital to Ebenezer Baptist Church’s five-fold mission model. To support the many outreach services provided daily, weekly, and monthly to individuals in need, the Church has created relationships with more than ninety different organizations in and around the Charlotte, North Carolina, metropolitan area.

The Ebenezer Baptist Church and its missionaries succeed in their endeavors to preach the Gospel and fulfill the Great Commission to the ends of the earth. Consequently, the Church can offer chances for its congregation to follow Christ’s commission to preach the Gospel in the United States and other nations. The researcher’s missionary experience has taught me that the five-fold mission model used by the predominantly African American congregation of Ebenezer Baptist Church is a unique paradigm for missions in the more remarkable African American Church. The initial objective of this project was to investigate the ongoing underrepresentation of African Americans in the worldwide mission sector. However, when the researcher saw Ebenezer Baptist Church, he was instantly captivated by their missionary team’s dedication and servant leadership degree. As a result, the researcher focused their attention on the underrepresentation of African Americans in the worldwide mission sector, a phenomenon that the researcher had never seen in all his years working in missions inside an African American church.

Through semi-structured interviews with Ebenezer Baptist Church pastors, mission team leaders, and lay missionaries, this research aims to get a deeper understanding of the five-fold mission model used by the Ebenezer Baptist Church. At the commencement of our investigation, we will prioritize the creation of a template that may serve as a model for other African American churches. If effective, this might be a start toward finding a solution to the underrepresentation of African Americans and the African American church in various mission service positions.

Problem Statement

It is unknown what is necessary for the African American Church to build a comprehensive mission service that spans the five-fold areas of mission endeavors (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) and a transformative Mission Movement. These are the areas of mission work: the United States, the nation, the world, and disaster relief. In the discussion of the topic, it is explored how the Mission services of African American Churches should promote relevant biblical and theological content for an active participation paradigm. As a result, the study analyzes the mission service of the African American Church by employing a phenomenological case study and attempting to demonstrate that the necessary development for a full mission service that encompasses the five-fold areas of mission efforts (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) and creates a transformational Mission Movement within the African American Church remains unknown. Theology recognizes that pedagogy is concerned with the concepts of teaching and learning geared for the education of all age groups, while andragogy is primarily concerned with the training of adult learners. However, literature in the social sciences may suggest that adult education must move from pedagogy to andragogy. Since the research focuses on adult learners and not children, and since adults and children do not learn in the same way, adult learners may choose to apply what they have learned to real-world situations. Therefore, the problem statement advises that adult education should use transformational learning and mentoring to bridge the gap between the classroom and real-world experience. The researcher would therefore seek to communicate the findings of this study in such a way as to suggest mission service education and a model for participation as a strategic course that should promote the successful integration of a full mission service model into theological education—for instance, ensuring that members and leaders of Ebenezer Baptist Church are well-sensitized on the need to promote mission service in the African American Church and African American church practice.

Purpose

This phenomenological case study analyzes and understands the Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries' active five-fold mission endeavors; this researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Missionaries serving in Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief capacities will be interviewed. This researcher understands the significance of constructing a contextualized strategic plan and model for active involvement in transformational mission work on behalf of the African American Church.

This literature review's principal purpose is to understand the topic under inquiry comprehensively. The secondary purpose of this examination of the relevant literature is the identification of potential gaps in the academic work that has previously been conducted on this topic. In establishing a knowledge gap for this strong mission involvement from an African American church, the concept of a five-fold mission service model necessitates more study to enable future studies on this neglected style of mission service. In other words, the phenomenological case study aims to analyze and understand Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries' rigorous five-fold mission activities; this researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. These meetings will occur at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The outcomes of this study have improved the researcher’s knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan for the African American Church’s active participation in transformational mission activity.

Background of the Problem

Numerous academic research studies have focused on the underrepresentation of the African American church in overseas missions. It is a long-standing problem that extends to African Americans' lack of participation in mission work; this lack of engagement in global missions is a component of this broader issue. In the organization of the African-American Church during the last century, this topic of mission activity has deep roots and is plagued with hurdles; this is a challenging dilemma that requires more than just a chat to resolve to return the African American society and Church to their deep roots in missions, a great deal of effort is required. According to Stevens and Walston, the history of African American missions from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century is filled with tales of formerly enslaved people who departed the United States to share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From the late eighteenth century through the early twentieth century (Stevens & Walston, 2009), African Americans left the United States without fear, hesitation, or unwillingness to convey the Gospel to their place of origin or other countries beyond the United States. The establishment of Jim Crow laws in the United States marked the beginning of the process, culminating in the African American Church going inward. Many circumstances, including those stated above, have caused the African American Church to withdraw from active engagement in international mission activity during the last decades (Stevens & Walston, 2009).

The setting of this Research

This research will investigate the five-fold ministry mission model used by Ebenezer Baptist Church in detail. The Ebenezer Baptist congregation is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina. In addition, as part of this study, a representative sample of the missionary team from Ebenezer Baptist Church will be sought out and questioned. The Ebenezer Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, maintains an extraordinary missional presence in the city despite its continually growing membership. The five-pronged strategy to mission work used by Ebenezer Baptist Church and the results of this research may be of tremendous help to other African American churches.

Thesis Statement

This study aims to analyze African American missionaries' experiences actively engaged in all five aspects of mission work within the framework of Ebenezer Baptist Church’s vibrant and life-altering Mission Movement, including Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief.

Research Questions

The research question is a crucial component of any research venture you may do. Qualitative and quantitative researchers place equal weight on the research question. To gather data that will help the researcher answer their questions, the qualitative researcher must explicitly address issues about how and why the data will be collected. “There is one golden rule for phenomenological research subject selection. The research must always center on the lived experience. In addition to experience, phenomenological research is concerned with perception. (Populations, 2021).

When this researcher began the research a few years ago, this researcher had an initial research question in mind; nevertheless, this subject has developed dramatically over the years. This researcher is doing a phenomenological study using a case study technique and has revised the original perspective and vision of the research topic relevant to this body of work. This researcher was unaware that her association with Ebenezer Baptist church would ultimately lead to a nearly five-year study in which the researcher would participate as an unofficial and then official participant observer and that this project would become the subject of this Ph.D. dissertation.

My initial curiosity about the scope of mission work in this African American congregation piqued my interest in the Mission Ministry at Ebenezer Church of Christ. The researcher has several worries regarding the extent of missionary activities there. As I spent more time with missionaries, I became more interested in understanding the amount of commitment by persons working in various areas of mission activity. In addition to assisting, I became more interested in the model of missionary activity followed by the congregation. My single query after my first opportunity to serve with this mission team grew into a series of queries when the opportunity ended. At this point, the thought of doing a case study on the phenomenon of African Americans serving in various distinct mission service fields became the central focus of my research.

As an involved missionary participant at Ebenezer Baptist Church there came a point where I felt compelled to leave the church, I was attending for the last seventeen years to work with Ebenezer Baptist church missionaries. After examining numerous research methodologies, it was found that a phenomenological technique was the best way to capture the lived experiences of the missionaries who serve so actively at Ebenezer Baptist Church; this conclusion was obtained after researching several options. This researcher wished to comprehend the five-fold model of mission work implemented at Ebenezer Baptist Church and investigate if other African American churches might reproduce this model; this clarified my study topic. As I sought to comprehend Ebenezer Baptist church’s five-fold paradigm of mission service, my study topic became apparent.

Since a substantial number of years ago, the African American Church has been noticeably missing from international mission activities. Based on previous societal injustices and oppression, there has been a predominant inward focus, which has led to decades and generations passing with little active involvement in international missions. Social science research has examined the African American church as the missing link in foreign or global missions. On the other hand, little or no study has been conducted to determine the many areas of mission activity and the engagement of the African American church in disaster relief missions at the national, stateside, or local level.

This observation led me to conclude that there is still much work to be done and that the African American church is competent and eager to participate in this work if provided with the proper resources, knowledge, and leadership. The significance of representation cannot be emphasized for either the persons providing or receiving the service. Partnerships and participation from the local community are essential components of Ebenezer Baptist Church’s approach to service. Due to this expansion and my active participation with Ebenezer’s mission teams over the last five years, my social science viewpoint has been more concentrated. Consequently, my queries have gotten more nuanced. Is it feasible for the African American Church to successfully mimic the Ebenezer Baptist Church’s (EBC) five-fold model of mission service to increase participation in mission work? Throughout my whole inquiry, this researcher shall be focused on addressing this question.

Research Approach

This phenomenological case study investigates the lived experiences of missionaries actively participating in the five-fold mission ministry at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The objective of this research is to provide insight into the actual experiences of missionaries. The overall theoretical framework for phenomenological research is phenomenology. Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology are the primary schools of thought one may choose from when using a phenomenological method (Peoples, 2021); this specific research attempt employs Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutic approach as its underlying theoretical foundation.

Anticipated Outcomes

The basis for a documented, coordinated, five-fold outreach ministry service model that other congregations might employ is anticipated to be one of the outcomes; this study provides a foundation for understanding servant leaders' physiological and psychological impacts on the individuals they serve a missionary position. These findings can guide future research into why a substantial portion of the African American church does not engage in missionary activity.

This phenomenological case study will shed light on a paradigm currently in use within the congregation of Ebenezer Baptist Church. The study will specifically examine how the approach has benefited the church congregation. It is essential to conduct extensive research on the five-fold mission service model. The anticipated outcome of this project is establishing a formalized procedure for organized mission service that other churches can adopt for their congregations. The primary objective of a community mission church alliance (CMCA) will be the unification of African American churches. These churches will collaborate to establish community partnerships to receive instruction and training on implementing a five-fold mission model in their various ministry rotations; this research project’s primary objective is to determine whether it is possible to develop a formal model for the delivery of mission service that emphasizes equipping the African American church of this generation to participate in all aspects of such service.

Research Assumptions

Compared to other churches of its size and type, it is believed that a more significant proportion of Ebenezer Baptist church’s African American congregants are actively engaged in mission service. It is assumed that the pastor and leadership of Ebenezer Baptist Church have an enlightened understanding that Jesus’ Great Commission was not merely a suggestion but rather a command for all Christians; this conclusion is based on the assumption that they appear to have this understanding. The primary factors contributing to underrepresentation in many African American churches do not appear to dampen the congregation’s desire to participate in mission work at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

As a participant observer, this researcher hypothesizes that the successful engagement of Ebenezer Baptist church congregants results from intentional pastoral leadership and appointed church leaders who maintain a servant leadership posture that serves as a model for the congregation to emulate. These church leaders are also assumed to be why Ebenezer Baptist Church members have consistently engaged over time.

Significance of the Research

The value of this research as a future blueprint and strategic plan for African American pastors to establish their exciting, revolutionary mission activity is its significance; this research can influence how the African American Church and community incorporate the vision of the Great Commission into the fabric of the Church by applying the five-fold mission service model of Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief to encourage the African American church to forego historical limitations and homebound sentimentality.

# **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

This chapter’s overview will address the literature on the African American church, the historical backdrop of African American missionaries, pastoral leadership in the African American church, servant leadership, partnerships, mission service, and missional movements that multiply disciples. A review of the relevant literature reveals that the current research study contributes to an essential academic conversation on missions and the African American church; this study seeks to fill a gap in past academic research on African Americans in mission service by concentrating on a neglected area of mission activity.

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center in 2017, there were around 2,3 billion Christians worldwide in 2015. These experts predicted that the numbers would continue to climb, making Christianity the world’s largest religion (Conrad & David., 2017). At first glance, 2,300,000,000 Christians may represent a large portion of the global population. Nonetheless, the present global population is estimated to be 7.8 billion (Current World Population., 2020), which indicates that 5.6 billion people have not yet been exposed to the gospel message. It is reasonable to say that the rising number of Christians worldwide may be linked to the mobilization of the Church, which comprises men and women spreading the Gospel to unreached and unevangelized regions of the globe. Although evangelizing the unreachable is a daunting endeavor, progress is being made. Despite the enormity of the undertaking, progress is being made (Barber, 2020).

Recent surveys indicate that the United States today has more missionaries serving overseas than the other top 10 sending countries combined. While this may be true, it is crucial to note that the number of black Americans serving as missionaries is disproportionate to that of other racial groups. As of July 2019, there were around 43 million African Americans residing in the United States, according to Quick Facts United States (2019). Unfortunately, only a tiny percentage of African Americans engage in missionary activity. In a recent edition of Christianity Today, an article titled “Southern Baptists Have Only Thirteen African-American Career Missionaries” was published (Telford, 2001). What Specifically Is Required to Rally More Support? The Southern Baptist International Missions Board has claimed that just 0.3% of its 3,700 staff are African Americans operating on the mission field, according to the facts supplied in the article (Cole, 2009).

## **The African American Church’s Legacy**

According to historical accounts, the first American missionary was an enslaved African American named George Liele, born in Virginia around 1750 (E.A. Holmes., 2021). Liele, Henry Shopp’s servant, became a devout Christian after accompanying Shopp to church meetings. Liele was tasked with interpreting the Bible for the other enslaved persons of Henry Shopp.

**Liele wrote,**

“To demonstrate that I was conscious of the responsibility I owed to God, I made it my goal to teach the Scriptures to people of my race” (Paul Easterling., 2017).

Henry Shopp released Liele as a direct result of Liele’s growth as a Bible teacher. Liele was consecrated as a pastor by the local Church in Shopp, and he later founded what is usually recognized as the first congregation of people of color in the United States of America (Paul Easterling., 2017). Liele valued his position as the Church’s pastor. Despite this, he traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, in 1782 to fear being sold back into slavery (Paul Easterling., 2017). Liele proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the sugar estates to the enslaved persons. As a consequence of his efforts in the ministry, a large number of individuals were baptized, and various churches were founded. Additionally, he constructed a public school to educate the children of enslaved persons who worked on the plantations (Students et al., 2010).

Due to Liele’s efforts to construct many churches and the mass conversion of enslaved persons to Christianity, many white enslavers began to feel insecure. They began tormenting the black Christians out of concern that Liele and the slave Christians who followed him may incite a revolution. Many of Liele’s leaders were severely punished, including beatings, incarceration, and even execution (Liele & Holmes 1964). The first time Liele was incarcerated, he served three years. By the time he died in 1828, over 20,000 Jamaicans had become Christians, and various churches had been constructed around the island (Liele & Holmes 1964). Liele was the first person to go on a mission from the United States. He traveled to Jamaica’s mission territories ten years before William Carey traveled to India (Smith, 2011), and he traveled to India and Burma thirty years before Adoniram Judson did (Jason Deusing., 2012).

## **History of the African American Church**

The African American Church has experienced many of the same occurrences as African American communities, including change, growth, difficulties, struggle, and perseverance (DuBois 2011). Counselors must comprehend the historical significance the African American Church has had in African American communities and its current importance now, to comprehend African American mental health help-seeking behaviors; this section will discuss the origins of the African American Church during slavery, its participation throughout the Civil Rights Movement, and its current relevance in the lives of many African Americans in the twenty-first century (Mcewan & Schoorman, 2019). The importance of the Church in the lives of many devout African American clients seeking therapy may be better appreciated after reading this history by those educated to deliver it.

As African Americans started to establish their congregations, which was later followed by the design and construction of their church structures, it is possible to question whether they were constructing an African-centered holy place for themselves (DuBois 2011). In traditional African religion, sacred space was defined by an appreciation of the relationship between humans and the natural world, natural settings, and cosmology that placed humanity at the center of its attention. The first scholarly assessment of the status of the African American Church at the beginning of the 20th century was published in 1903 under the title “The People of Color Church” by Dubois (2011). DuBois next changes his attention to the situation of the newly constituted institution of the African American Church in the United States. He accomplishes this goal by documenting the historical narrative of African religious activities and the impact of the Middle Passage and slavery in the Americas on these spiritual traditions (DuBois 2011).

The book also gives evidence of the many African American Churches arranged by state and opens a discussion regarding the social status of black America at the time, the issues faced by black people, and the Church’s possible role in finding answers to these problems. The state-by-state technique used by DuBois to organize the facts in the book enables us to comprehend the scope of African American Church's establishment and development in both the North and South (DuBois 2011); this technique also emphasizes urban and rural examples of African American church architecture and regional and vernacular influences on building form. Concerning the customary traditions followed in West Africa, DuBois examined information and concluded that African religion has an intense and profound origin in both the cosmos and nature (Farrell, 2022): In addition to a strong belief in magic, reverence for Nature is a defining characteristic of the earliest religions followed by people of color. As indicated by the following remark, there is a tendency toward theism (DuBois 2011). Almost all tribes believe in some ultimate deity, although they do not always worship him; typically, a heaven and rain god; sometimes, as among the Cameroons and in Dahomey, a sun god. The most famous religious practice among the People of color and Begroids, from the west to the northwest and south to Loango, is the worship of the moon combined with a considerable reverence for the cow (Jorgensen, 2012). Due to the four-hundred-year slave trade, it is impossible to uncover the final remnants of any extensive religious system on the west coast of Africa today (DuBois 2011, p. 1); this arose because of the extensive mixing and demoralization caused by the slave trade.

DuBois concludes that the belief in the presence of a Supreme Being, frequently referred to as God, is universal and transcends cultural boundaries. In addition, this deity’s influence extends to the natural surroundings of the various African peoples (DuBois 2011, p. 12); this is an extract from the book “African-Caribbean Religions” by Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, a philosophy and religion professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. In this extract, he explains the roots of several African religious traditions. According to John Mbiti, the origins of several ideas about God and the universe may be traced back thousands of years to African philosophy. They are transmitted via the telling of sacred stories, legends, myths, proverbs, symbols, rituals, and the words of knowledgeable individuals. When these notions are combined, a picture emerges that illustrates a deep understanding of the cosmos (Murrell 2010, p. 29); this elaborate architecture of the cosmos is symbolic of the many belief systems maintained by diverse humans. However, the notion of an inaccessible universal structure continues to be accepted; this global framework is beginning to affect the lives of those who created it (Murrell 2010, p. 29).

When Christianity was brought to these people, it challenged various African religious rites and ceremonies, most of which were constructed from a polytheistic perspective. In his work “Slave Religion: The ‘Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South,” Albert J. Raboteau, a former religion professor at Princeton, discusses the transfer of enslaved people from traditional African faiths to Christianity (Raymo, 2014). The transition from traditional African faiths to Christianity was his main emphasis. According to him, “belief in a High God or Supreme Creator of the cosmos was prevalent in several African tribes.” This High God seems relatively detached from the events occurring in the world of humanity

Henry Mitchell, a professor of History and African American Church Studies, has written the following on the importance of a person’s religious views on the need to survive slavery: The belief systems and theological theories of traditional African religions are maybe the most influential African remnants. These ideas and doctrines are intertwined with the orthodox Christian religion and have merged with it (Mitchell 2004, p. 16). Occasionally, the parallels are striking, such as when comparing God’s omnipotence, justice, omniscience, and providence to human attributes. No one was compelled to learn any of these attributes of God throughout their time as enslaved persons. Furthermore, these African cross-cultural notions were so effective in aiding African Americans to retain their psychological health in the face of persecution that they fared very well in America (Mitchell 2004, p. 16). Mitchell asserts that the will to live motivated Africans brought to America and that this motivation caused them to discover ways to merge their ancient religious beliefs with Christian teaching or syncretize; this freshly developed syncretic worldview has been transmitted from one generation to the next. April 1861 signified the start of the American Civil War. Most enslaved individuals were born in the United States at this time in history. Traditional difficulties, such as “cultural and linguistic barriers that had delayed the evangelization of prior generations of African-born enslaved persons were essentially no longer a problem,” have largely been abolished as a barrier to the spread of Christianity (Raboteau 2004, p. 212).

Enslaved persons born in Africa posed a continuing obstacle regarding their capacity to convert to Christianity; this was because they could not know sufficient English to grasp the principles of Christianity. Born in the United States, enslaved Africans could comprehend white culture and language, making them more appropriate candidates for Christian conversion (Raboteau 2004, p. 214). Enslaved persons, compelled to resist the desire to survive, engaged in acts of defiance directed against the sermons given by white southern clergy. White clergy endeavored to make enslaved people more submissive while simultaneously attempting to temper the cruelty of their masters (Mitchell 2004, p. 20).

Dr. Noel Leo Erskine, a professor of Theology and Ethics at the Candler School of Theology at Emory, authored the book “Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery.” In the book, it is noted that “several African Americans reported that white clergy, committed to preserving slavery, attempted to encourage good conduct, contentment, labor, and humility in the quarters and to discourage theft, lying, and rebellion” (Erskine 2014, p. 115).

This argument addresses the dichotomy presented by the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening to African Americans. Between 1740 and 1780, there were several religious revolutions across the United States, including the North and South. In his article titled “I Saw the Book Talk: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening,” author Frank Lambert said that the Great Awakening “was as much a movement of the written word as it was of the spoken word.” Lambert said this expression aptly characterizes the Great Awakening (Lambert 1992, p. 186). George Whitefield, a vital member of the Revival movement, intended to “proclaim the gospel of the new birth to African-Americans,” saying that its significance was the same for all people regardless of race. Slaveholders resisted revivalist efforts to teach African Americans to read and become lay preachers out of concern that such activities would sow the seeds of discord among enslaved persons (Lambert 1992, p. 188).

The ecclesiastical debate over whether enslaved people had souls that needed to be saved, and even more significantly, the potential danger to enslavers of exposing their enslaved persons to Christian teachings of spiritual equality among all men and women, would become a threat to the institution of slavery, thereby fueling uprisings (Urbaniak, 2018). There was also the issue of whether or not enslaved individuals had souls to rescue. As a direct result, slaveholders began encouraging their enslaved persons to convert to Christianity, but only provided they were permitted to do so under their absolute control. However, there was fear that the expansion of Christianity among enslaved persons may lead to arguments against the institution of slavery because it conflicted with Christian values (Smith, 2019). As stated before, the conversion exercise hindered revivalists’ attempts to convert enslaved people to Christianity. Raboteau observes that “the conversion experience, rather than the process of religious instruction, made Christianity more accessible to illiterate enslaved persons and slaveholders alike” (Raboteau 2004, p. 132).

Revivalists like Whitefield, who was hesitant to attack the system of slavery itself, did not trust enslaved persons and sought to influence their understanding of the new birth. They emphasized the biblical command for enslaved persons to submit to their enslavers. Revivalists lacked confidence in enslaved persons because they hesitated to oppose slavery as an institution. In addition, enslaved persons were not permitted to disparage their owners (Lambert 1992, p. 189).

Despite this, there was a movement toward prolonging the conversion experience. Raboteau further evaluated efforts to increase the overall conversions: Several factors contributed to the increase in the number of people of color who converted to Christianity under the influence of revivalism (Reboteau 2004). Revivalist preachers awoke a latent religious consciousness, resulting at the beginning of a religious renaissance in the South, which was headed by the evangelical religion that the revivalists espoused. The revival acted as a vehicle for the growth of the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches (Newsome-Camara, 2012). At the time, both the mobility of the Methodist circuit rider and the liberty of the Baptist preacher were suited to the needs and conditions of the rural South. Amid a religious fervor, landowners were less indifferent towards their religious commitment and maybe that of their enslaved persons; this was true for both plantation owners and their enslaved persons (Raboteau 2004, p. 132).

The enslaved persons devised an understanding of Christianity vastly distinct from their owners and the chosen preachers; this resulted in considerable religious conflicts (Moore & Collins, 2002). Erskine made the following proclamation: The affinity of enslaved people for church and religious ceremonies stemmed from their fondness for singing, dancing, praying, and spirit possession. Later, when they established their Church, they included drumming and preaching in their religious ceremonies. White clergy stressed memorizing the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and other scriptures emphasizing submission and obedience. Numerous objectives were pursued, and most of the time, the white preachers had no idea what was going on (Erskine 2014, p. 117). Hidden from slaveholders and white preachers, the enslaved people maintained a vibrant religious life. The enslaved persons devised various tactics to conceal their religious meetings and rites so their owners would not find them. The term “quiet or brush harbors” was used to describe their meetings in concealed regions such as impenetrable woodlands, gullies, ravines, and thickets (Raboteau 2004, p. 215).

In the following excerpt, the author Alonzo Johnson, a theologian, and assistant professor of religious studies at the University of South Carolina explores the significance of the tranquil harbor. Out of the furnace of their African experience and the terrors of their captivity, enslaved persons started to build a distinct image of Christianity in the framework of their brush arbor gatherings on plantations. These gatherings were held on plantations and beneath brush arbors (Johnson and Jersild 2014, p. 10).

Because they developed in the presence of white people, the religious traditions, and practices of people of color in the United States led to their eventual separation from Anglo religious traditions and practices (Avent & Cashwell, 2015). These customs and behaviors would be considered an “invisible institution” since they persisted in the United States despite the presence of white people; as a direct result, enslaved individuals developed a desire for a worship space of their own (Mcewan & Schoorman, 2019).

The separation from Anglo influence required a complete separation from the necessity to manage the Christian narrative and its interpretation of enslaved people; this obligation existed in several pre-Civil War localities and was engrained in Southern customs and law. Since the United States was in the middle of the Civil War at the time, the only option for people of color to practice their faith without interruption was to fight for freedom (DuBois 2011). African Americans began organizing their congregations in the late 18th century, ultimately leading to the construction of church buildings; this was done to separate black parishioners attending white churches from those who visited their congregations. DuBois documented the inevitable separation of churches visited by people of color and whites (DuBois 2011).

DuBois provided the following justifications for the establishment of congregations of people of color and the construction of church buildings for people of color: African American Churches were not the result of a missionary effort on the side of whites; instead, their founding was a direct result of discrimination against African Americans by whites when they participated in religious services (DuBois 2011). Due to a rise in membership, it became essential for congregations to split, and these divisions were the inevitable consequence. Eventually, African Americans established separate churches but remained under the supervision, if not exclusive authority, of whites; this marked the beginning of church segregation (DuBois 2011, p. 41). Due to the “invisible institution,” black congregations and denominations emerged simultaneously in the North and South; this remained true even if the “invisible institution” was not visible. Control of the Church was at risk in this endeavor, and many men of color, literate and illiterate, seized the chance to convert and minister to the people of the colored population (DuBois 2011, p. 1); this attempt gained control of the Church. The primary goal was to achieve the right to self-determination, notably concerning creating and administering a religious service style meant for and performed by people of color.

Raboteau noticed that “little congregations of persons of color, headed by preachers of color, sprang wherever they were accepted.” Individuals of color headed these churches. They were often discouraged in public but often encouraged in private (Raboteau 2004). Frequently, they did so behind closed doors. In African culture, forests, rivers, and mountains were regarded as natural holy sites because they represented an authentic relationship with nature (Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88). According to one relevant description, “holy groves” are places of maintained flora owing to local taboos and restrictions that convey ecological and spiritual values. Sacred groves serve as sacred sites that are simultaneously temples, destinations for spiritual retreat and meditation, wildlife sanctuaries, and places where medicinal plants may thrive safely. Regarding their function, sacred groves are fundamentally sacred spaces; this highlights the social and spiritual significance of sacred woodlands (Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88). When establishing sacred space in nature, it is vital to include human experience.

Understanding how an African-centric, nature-based worldview can substantiate the legitimacy of an African-centric spiritual experience requires recounting the African experience and, eventually, the African American experience. These experiences are essential to this comprehension (Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88). Sibanda continues by arguing that a grassroots strategy was necessary because it allowed access to the voices of indigenous people who served as guardians of sacred trees (Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88). According to Leavitt, the grassroots are “people living at the base,” sometimes referred to disadvantaged rural or urban populations. Colonialism and missionary Christianity contributed to the demonization and vilification of African forests, mountain culture, and beliefs (cited in Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88). The “grassroots approach” to this study has the benefit of effectively collecting the “ground-level” viewpoints of the indigenous people of the Nadu area since it is a “bottom-up” research technique and process; this establishes the community as a reputable source of knowledge and study on the issue. Therefore, we should regard individuals as “agents of their knowledge” instead of “things to be probed, prodded, or researched.” This allows one to understand better the ecological job performed by the Ndau (Sibanda 2019, pp. 187–88).

Campbell highlighted that the following components are essential to establishing a sacred space in terms of the building’s architecture: A location conducive to transcendence is referred to as a sacred space, and everything contained within such a space serves as the basis for meditative practice. He said that once a person entered the area, everything became symbolic, and the entire world became a mythologized version of itself (Campbell 1994, p. 144). Living in a sacred area entail residing in a symbolic environment that promotes the possibility of leading a spiritual life and where one’s surroundings are saturated with language that praises the ascent of the spirit. One may intuitively see and reveal what individuals are and what they want to be in this environment; this is the site of creative incubation, where initially nothing may occur, but with the use of a sacred place, eventually, something will occur, and where one finds who they are (Campbell 1994, p. 145).

The presence of the divine must be assured in a holy site that results from a meticulous architectural design by giving a setting where the sun may shine, and the trees, clouds, and sky can be seen with reverence (Johnson and Jersild 2014). When there is a minimal indication of divine creation in the human-made surroundings, the spiritual experience may be lessened. The divine may be discovered in nature, also the site of traditional African religious practice. Early African American churches had windows that allowed light due to their simple construction (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). Typically, these churches featured a window behind the choir stand, which in turn was behind the preacher, enabling light to penetrate the whole structure and allowing parishioners to feel closer to God. Religions, and the opportunity for the parishioner to interact with the divine (Johnson and Jersild 2014, p. 11).

Since many contemporary constructions lack windows for light and vision inside the worship space, it is plausible to assert that modern architectural church design has hindered the ability of worshippers to encounter the divine in nature; this is Since many modern buildings lack windows (Campbell 1994, p. 145). The ability to interact with nature is ingrained in the cultures of many African nations and should be incorporated into the design of our contemporary houses of worship. Contemporary challenges in the African American community include the need to reestablish an African-centered relationship congruent with cultural spiritual worship; this must be accomplished without the perception or belief that Christianity is compromised or questioned due to the incorporation of traditional African values (Campbell 1994, p. 145). The deliberate construction of a “praise home” is an early instance of an African-centered sacred site. Typically, a praise home consisted of a one-room, totally wooden structure with a single entrance. There were wooden seats around the sides, in the middle of the room, and a platform at the front of the space. During the antebellum era, the first praise homes were constructed on Saint Helena farms (Campbell 1994, p. 145); during this period, enslaved people on plantations gathered for worship in modest frame homes or other structures like meeting houses in northern Colonial America.

Johnson highlights the plantation missionaries, which were a further factor influencing the enslaved: The construction of the Plantation Mission System, which was the institutional manifestation of white evangelical efforts to convert Christianity to southern enslaved persons on a broad scale, was an additional crucial factor in the formation of the pray’ s house tradition (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). After the 1820s, following closely on the heels of the (Denmark) Vesey and Turner uprisings, white denominations made a concerted effort to spread the Gospel to the plantations where enslaved persons were situated. Many southern plantation owners and church officials saw Christianization as the only means of "civilizing" and exerting power over enslaved persons (Johnson and Jersild 2014, p. 10). The tension that enslaved people felt between the spirituality they created and developed in their brush arbors and their efforts to resist the control of plantation owners and clergy to Christianize them encouraged the enslaved population to define for themselves how they would interpret Christianity in a way that honored African traditions without compromising their culture to the plantation owners' will. The struggle enslaved persons felt between the spirituality they established and grew in their brush arbors and their attempts to oppose the authority of their masters (Johnson and Jersild 2014, p. 10).

As enslaved persons worked toward a knowledge of the Gospel and made judgments about which components of it to adopt into their way of life, they confronted the dilemma of how closely their worship services should resemble those of white Christians (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). Protestantism and Catholicism both appreciate the religious significance of church building. Using architectural and material applications like cruciform building designs and stained-glass windows, a congregation is told a story that is both biblical and ethnic (Kernodle 2022, p. 25).

Kernodle elaborates on the following themes about the development of the church choir for persons of color: Despite the vast differences between the traditions of the African American church in the South and the North, music was a vital aspect of the African American worship experience in both locations (Kernodle 2022, p. 25). In addition to the sacred compositions of European composers like Bach and Handel, a considerable number of northern congregations began to popularize orchestrated versions of spirituals and anthems throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the early 20th century (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). As the 20th century progressed, the choir emerged as the most important conduit for worship, and music ministries eventually grew to encompass several choruses with a wide range of vocal styles and musical repertoires (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). In addition to extended meter hymns, anthems, and congregational songs, the gospel song, which was first characterized by the works of Charles Tindley, Lucie Campbell, and Thomas Dorsey, progressively gained popularity in many African American churches. In addition to other popular song types, this was true (The African American Lectionary 2018).

Although African American worship experiences were generally more conservative in the North and closer to their African roots in the South, the People of Color Spiritual quickly rose in popularity, becoming an outward example of African rhythmic culture and storytelling until it was fully incorporated into African American worship. Although African American worship experiences were often more traditional in the North and closer to their African origins in the South, the People of Color Spiritual gained popularity rapidly (Kernodle 2022, p. 27). In his book "Ain't Gonna Lay My 'Legion Down: African American Religion in the South," retired professor of history and theology of African American culture Jon Michael Spencer discusses the relationship between African rhythm and spiritual expression as a cultural impact. Spencer explains how these drums, and drums of lesser sanctity, play a crucial role in the music accompanying ceremonial dancing since the articulations of these instruments' drummers are (Spencer 1996, p. 39).

African rhythm is the singular noun intended to represent the common aspects of rhythm shared by most societies of continental Africa: first, its sacrality; and second, its multimeric, cross-rhythms, asymmetrical patterning, and call and response, all articulated improvisatory and percussively, particularly on the drum, and typically concretized through dance. African beat best describes the seductive rhythm (Spencer 1996, p. 39). However, although drumming was put on hold in the diaspora, the drumbeats of Africa survived the slave factories and the middle passage and were auctioned off with the enslaved Africans in the New World. Spencer proceeds by elaborating on the religious and cultural importance of drumming (Spencer 1996, p. 39). These drumbeats sat dormant in the galleries of innumerable white Protestant and Catholic churches until they could "steal away" and find general release in the bodily concretizations of those persons who had carried the rhythm in their blood, bones, and souls (Spencer 1996, p. 39).

African American religious traditions began to evolve due to the cultural influence of percussion rhythm after the drumbeat was kept and handed through generations in the Americas. The ring shout is an example of this religious ritual (Fox 2018). It is believed that the ring shout, which evolved from the ceremonial dances of West Africa and the transatlantic slave trade, is the oldest existing African American performance activity of any kind (Fox 2018). On a handful of plantations, the ring shout was practiced and celebrated underbrush arbors and inside the walls of praise cottages. In many instances, spirituals were sung to remember the ring yell.

## **The African American Church and Slavery**

During slavery, many plantation owners restricted gatherings of more than five blacks without a White overseer present to watch the situation; this restriction made it impossible for enslaved persons to congregate for religious services, although they had a great urge to express their religious and spiritual convictions. Additionally, it impeded their sense of community and reduced their opportunities for fellowship (Lincoln, 1973). Therefore, to evade the repercussions of breaching these restrictions, enslaved persons resorted to gathering for worship in unofficial, concealed locations, such as marshes and woodland areas (Frazier, 1963; Lincoln, 1973). According to Pinn (2011), these unofficial gatherings became less secretive and more accessible to the public towards the middle of the 1700s, laying the foundation for what would later be known as the African American Church. Enslaved persons could not get an education or establish a community anywhere else on the estate outside the churches, which constituted the center of their society (Pinn, 2011).

The plantation owners felt that if enslaved persons could read the Bible, their propensity to postpone dreams of freedom until after death would diminish, and a rush of strength and yearning for liberation would emerge; this concern accompanied the founding of the African American Church (Taylor et al., 1987). Enslavers feared that their enslaved persons might comprehend the Bible comprehensively, illuminating the inconsistencies and illogical ideas that supported a totalitarian slave system (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). If enslaved persons had a thorough comprehension of the Bible, they would have an increasingly difficult time comprehending a biblically based society that abducted and enslaved innocent people (Taylor et al., 1987). As anticipated, enslaved persons ultimately became dissatisfied with their living circumstances and turned to the Church to influence positive change in their lives. As their grasp of the Bible expanded, so did the enslaved people's unhappiness with organized religion, particularly Christianity. Enslaved persons felt that Christianity was only another instrument used by whites to subjugate them (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Despite attending the same places of worship, enslavers and their families were harsh to the individuals under authority (Johnson, 2019). Instead of offering a haven for mistreated African Americans, the Church became another forum for white people to exert their dominance, which many African Americans found overwhelming (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). To satisfy their yearning for their places of worship on southern plantations and to escape discrimination on Sunday mornings, enslaved persons founded their churches (Lincoln, 1973). Richard Allen laid the cornerstone for what would become the first African American Methodist church in 1807 (Wilmore, 1998). Black Methodist churches, considered the first of their sort, were founded in response to the Methodist tradition of having separate congregations for African Americans and Whites. African Americans' overwhelming flight from the Methodist Church was one of the first big civil rights rallies carried out by African Americans (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

The subsequent development of primarily African American congregations within the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal religions (DuBois, 1903) set the ground for the African American Church's significant growth during the Civil Rights Movement. In these churches, enslaved persons believed they were free to be themselves and that their status as enslaved persons did not supersede their individuality. These services provided both a therapeutic respite and an escape from the tensions and harshness faced on the plantation (Wilmore, 1998). Church services and other religious and spiritual resources functioned differently from therapy sessions in their most basic form.

The biblical promises of a future liberated from oppression gave enslaved people a cause for optimism about the future. They anticipated death as a respite from the suffering they faced on earth and a passageway to paradise's promised reward and freedom (Johnston, 1954; Wilmore, 1998). Enslaved persons might connect with the pain Jesus Christ, the actual figure of Christianity, endured during his lifetime. Enslaved persons were drawn parallels between Christ's crucifixion and the growing prevalent practice of lynching black men (Pinn, 2010; Terrell, 1998). Terrell (1998) emphasized further that the link between Jesus and enslaved persons was related to the biblical story of Judas betraying Jesus for financial gain; this was thought to be related to Jesus' relationship with enslaved persons. Enslaved persons were aware that their white owners had sold them into slavery, captured them, and transported them to the New World for the economic benefit of others (Pinn, 2011; Terrell, 1998). Even though enslaved persons were forced to labor under dreadful conditions on plantations, there is a scant indication that they were provided counseling services as a kind of support or therapeutic release. During this era, the Church was the primary resource for those seeking assistance and change. It is likely that the trend to seek consolation in religious organizations began during the era of slavery and continues to this day; this historical precedent may help explain why African Americans are far less likely than many other racial and ethnic groups to seek professional counseling (Ayalon & Young, 2005).

## **The African American Church and Civil Rights**

In the 1950s and 1960s, the African American Church began widening its theological concepts, selecting its leaders, and creating seminary facilities to teach its leaders; this resulted in the Church's growing independence (Lincoln, 1973). In addition, the African American Church offered a venue for campaigners to make lectures advocating for equal rights for African Americans (Chandler, 2010). The African American Church was involved in both global and micro-level socioeconomic concerns. Large groups, such as the NAACP, could get assistance from the African American Church in the form of, for instance, financial and emotional resources (Chandler, 2010; Students et al., 2010; Moore & Collins, 2002). Individuals who had difficulty paying their financial obligations received more granular economic assistance.

The establishment of self-help theology was motivated by the African American Church's growing financial independence. African Americans could not depend on aid from other sources at the time. African Americans realized that to survive, they had to be self-sufficient in all areas of life, including financially, mentally, emotionally, and socially (Littlefield, 2005). Some African Americans likely continue to hold this mindset; consequently, they may be less likely to seek help from services such as professional counselors. During the Civil Rights Movement, the African American Church was particularly significant as a location where African Americans could experience status, position, and power that were often denied to them by institutions controlled by the majority's culture (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). Consequently, many African Americans may doubt the counseling relationship, as it may represent the dominant culture from which they have faced discrimination and persecution (Sue & Sue, 2013).

Purpose

This literature review's principal purpose is to understand the topic under inquiry comprehensively. The secondary purpose of this examination of the relevant literature is the identification of potential gaps in the academic work that has previously been conducted on this topic. In establishing a knowledge gap for this strong mission involvement from an African American church, the concept of a five-fold mission service model necessitates more study to enable future studies on this neglected style of mission service. In other words, the phenomenological case study aims to analyze and understand Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries' rigorous five-fold mission activities.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to analyze and get a deeper understanding of the Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries' active five-fold mission endeavors; this researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Missionaries serving in Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief capacities will be interviewed. The researcher will have a better knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan and model for active involvement in transformational mission work on behalf of the African American Church as a whole because of the results of this study.

This researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. These meetings will occur at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The outcomes of this study have improved the researcher's knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan for the African American Church's active participation in transformational mission activity.

Rationale for Topics

This qualitative phenomenological case study is essential and required for various reasons. There is a gap in the conversation around all types of mission activity. Most of the already available information about the African American church and missions focuses on the paucity of African Americans working in global or international mission work. The vast bulk of previous academic study on African Americans who have worked in missions has been quantitative and has concentrated on the minimal number of African Americans who have selected professions that include working in global missions. The remarkable five-fold mission service model of the Ebenezer Baptist church, which is the focus of this research, is the subject of this inquiry, and the goal of this study is to focus on qualitative findings to get a thorough understanding of this model.

This study will not only provide information to other social researchers who are interested in this model and want to look beyond the historical reasons why the African American church is largely absent from global mission service, but it will also contribute new knowledge to an understudied aspect of a five-fold mission service model; this case study will be conducted in a primarily African American church of average size. A sizeable section of the congregation attends this church, and a sizeable number are actively involved in at least one of the five mission service areas.

## **Active Participation in Mission Service among the African American Church in the 21st Century**

The African American Church of bygone decades fought for equal rights in society; yet the African American Church of today has unique difficulties that other religious groups do not share. These impediments include health-related issues, such as HIV/AIDS, and social-related, such as welfare reform and disproportionately high unemployment rates among African Americans. HIV/AIDS is an example of a health-related difficulty (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994). Despite this, African Americans have made considerable strides compared to previous decades, especially in the sectors of education and jobs. Many feel that at least a large percentage of these advances should be attributed to the African American Church's efforts (Byrd, 2001). Because of the difficulties that the African American community faces, such as disproportionately high rates of physical illness, demands on financial resources, anxiety, despair, and family concerns, these developments are particularly relevant (United States Department of Health and Human Services 2001; 2011).

Even though these challenges may seem insurmountable for African American communities and the African American Church, scholars encourage the African American Church to depend on the resilience that enabled it to endure terrible times like slavery and the civil rights struggle (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994). Given the historical engagement of the African American Church in many areas of the individual lives of African Americans, it is simple to see why many African Americans consider their local churches a legitimate alternative to professional counselors. African Americans have been impacted in every part of their life by the African American Church (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994). Therefore, it is essential for counselors to get active in primarily African American communities and to familiarize themselves with the local churches. Counselors have the unique opportunity to partner with African American Churches in their communities to build trust, reduce the stigma associated with seeking help, assist in combating issues that affect many African Americans, and learn about the influence of African American Church theology (Billingsley & Caldwell, 1994).

## **African Americans and Global Missions: The Great Omission**

More than 42 million African Americans are in the United States, yet only 400 to 500 are cross-cultural missionaries (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). The Great Commission has been the Black Church's most significant area of neglect for most of the previous twenty years (Bennett, p. 344, cited in RMNI 2021). Before 1980, there may have been over 700 African American missionaries going "abroad," many of them traveled to Africa; nonetheless, there are now more persons serving than ever before. Still, 500 is relatively tiny compared to the overall number of Protestant missionaries working in North America, yet 12 percent of the United States population is African American (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

First, the abolition of slavery in the United States did not occur until 1865; thus, it was difficult for missionaries to spread the Gospel in other nations during a time when enslaved persons could not even travel freely within their counties without a pass. To gain their freedom, enslaved persons needed first to hear the Good News. Despite this, people like Lott Carey were able to discover Christ, freedom, and a mission field in Liberia. Most black denominational mission groups were not created until the 1870s, when almost half of the black missionaries served for black faiths; during the Reconstruction Era, the pursuit of even the most basic civil freedoms was a top priority for the black people after the abolition of slavery (RMNI 2021). There was a preliminary expansion of voting rights and access to public services. Hundreds of individuals were hanged, voting rights were revoked, and states were segregated as white "Jim Crow" vengeance for the freedom of black people (Lerone Bennett, cited in RMNI 2021).

From 1943 to 1969, there was a return of violence in the form of riots, and the Civil Rights movement, which battled to reclaim the rights taken away after Reconstruction, persisted until the late 1960s (Bennett, p. 344, cited in RMNI 2021). In addition, racism existed within the white evangelical Christian community, as seen by the exclusion of African Americans from several evangelical mission groups and institutions. Furthermore, relatively few African Americans were welcomed by white missions between 1920 and 1960 (Bennett 1976, p. 416, cited in RMNI 2021).

## **African American Church Theology**

Understanding the historical context of the African American Church is crucial, but it is even more essential to fully comprehend its fundamental belief systems and its responsibilities and actions. Theology serves as a uniting element for the African American Church and a distinguishing factor for local congregations. Frequently, various denominations and churches have divergent theological beliefs; consequently, they approach their mission, duties, and responsibilities with varying methods (Barber, 2011; Lincoln, 1974). People prefer to see the African American Church as a single institution instead of a collection of diverse congregations. Due to theological conflicts, however, this is nothing more than a farce (Barber, 2011). These theological viewpoints can serve as broad guiding principles and influences for parishioners' individual lives and decisions, including whether or not to seek professional counseling. Despite specific doctrinal differences, most African American churches have a similar theological perspective in that their members experience a personal visit from Jesus during worship sessions.

In most situations, this theological principle serves as the foundation for how services are conducted; this visitation may be by performing rituals such as yelling, singing hymns and gospel music, or speaking in tongues. Moore (2003) identified these behaviors as examples of the free-spirited worship often associated with the African American Church. Considering this, we might claim that these practices are characteristic of the African American Church; this may be puzzling to those seen from the outside (Johnson, 2010). Counselors unfamiliar with the culture of the African American Church may find these complexities perplexing.

In addition, many observers are perplexed by the many theological divergences and often contradictory character of an organization that, on the one hand, may be contemporary in its theology but, on the other hand, can be rather conventional in its theology; this seeming lack of clarity prompts many observers to pause and contemplate (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). If counselors are interested in enhancing their intercultural competence and knowledge of African American clients, they may find it helpful to have a grasp of the Christian theology that guides the African American Church; this theology may often influence the personal decisions of individual congregation members, such as whether or not to seek professional counseling. The following section contains further information on several theologies and how African American consumers may display their beliefs.

Liberation Theology

James Cone founded one of the most influential schools of thought in the African American Church, liberation theology (McBeth, 1981). According to liberation theology, African Americans seized Christianity, previously seen as the religion of White males, and adapted it to their trials and accomplishments; this is a fundamental principle of liberation theology. In comparison to other schools of thought, liberation theology is all-encompassing since it considers how people connect to God and relate to one another (Douglas & Hopson, 2001). According to liberation theology, the African American Church gave oppressed African Americans a sense of freedom that they could not otherwise experience in their daily lives; this was particularly true for individuals who were church members. In the African American Church setting, African Americans had the opportunity to assemble and express pent-up fury on the issues they faced as a community. In addition, the African American Church acted as a platform for initiating and carrying out social change (McBeth, 1981; Douglas & Hopson, 2001).

Churches whose members subscribe to liberation theology tend to concentrate less on oppression and more on the freedom felt when congregation members experience fellowship, as opposed to churches whose members belong to other theologies, which tend to emphasize Caucasians as oppressors (Burrow, 1994). African Americans place a significant emphasis on establishing and keeping positive connections because enslaved persons saw the relationship between master and slave as the exact embodiment of wickedness (Burrow, 1994; Douglas & Hopson, 2001). The holistic care of individuals is highly emphasized in liberation theology, which emphasizes the mind-body connection (Burrow, 1994).

Alternate Society Theology

Frazier's vision of an alternative society resembles liberation theology in that he advocated for the African American Church to operate as a sovereign community in which African Americans could express their genuine selves completely. Frazier conceived this concept for an alternative civilization (McBeth, 1981). Frazier founded this religion because Caucasians lacked an understanding of African Americans and could not adequately meet their needs (Frazier, 1963). Frazier was a proponent of the notion that the African American Church should act as its nation inside the United States and care for the many needs of African American communities, not only in the spiritual sphere (Frazier, 1963).

In a perfect world, the African American Church would be able to build educational institutions, financial institutions, residential communities, and social meeting places (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Ironically, Frazier knew that this alternate society would make it more difficult for African Americans to adapt to the dominant culture in which they were expected to live and function (Frazier, 1963). There is a strong likelihood that churches that adhere to this ideology believe they will be able to meet the psychological and spiritual needs of their congregation members. In congregations where this philosophical orientation predominates, members who seek guidance from church leaders may be prohibited from obtaining services such as professional treatment outside the African American Church.

## **Other-Worldly and This-Worldly Theology**

It is claimed that a church is alien if its members believe that salvation and reward are reserved hereafter. In other words, the adherents of these faiths are more forgiving of the misery and suffering they endure in this life because it is believed they will find peace in Heaven once they die. The singing of spiritual songs often calmed, led, and relieved African American enslaved persons, and these songs later became an integral part of their religion. These songs have served as a reminder that the suffering we endure on earth is only temporary and that beyond death, an eternal promise of heavenly peace awaits us (Cashwell & Young, 2011). In addition, theology is essential to the pastor's function as a powerful voice. During slavery, preachers often reminded their congregations of life beyond death, which contrasted with the life being lived at the moment, which was servitude. Even though some of the issues African Americans experience now may be different from those they encountered in the past, some pastors continue to offer sermons encouraging their congregations to be patient in the face of adversity and to anticipate the blessings that come with death (Wilmore, 1998).

Attendees of other-worldly religions may be less inclined to seek therapy, but when they do, the counselor must recognize that the client may be less concerned with finding a solution to his or her issue and more concerned with concentrating on life beyond death. Attendants of non-traditional churches may be less inclined to seek therapy (Chatters et al., 2009). Some counselors may focus on problem-solving activities early if they do not wholly appreciate and embrace this perspective, which is potentially detrimental to the therapeutic interaction. On the other hand, churches of this world often advocate publicly for the right of African Americans to have freedom and pleasure on earth. A member of a church that believes in life after death, for instance, may be content with the idea of receiving physical healing in this manner, whereas a member of a church that believes in living in this world may seek other means to alleviate their pain and suffering and delay death if possible (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). These ideas about suffering may also manifest in an individual's perspectives on psychological health and the need for treatment. In times of psychological distress, clients who attend churches that are more grounded in this world may feel a greater sense of urgency to seek counseling than those who attend churches that are more grounded in other worlds and may be less likely to seek professional help to alleviate emotional distress.

## **The Salience of Religion and African Americans**

The more significant church attendance percentage among African Americans compared to their white classmates has significant implications for the function of African American churches as essential actors in the lives of black students. More African Americans than white students attend church has these ramifications. Compared to non-Hispanic whites, African Americans participated in religious activities at a higher rate on average (Chatters et al., 2009). Seventy-five percent of African Americans, according to 2014 research on Religion and Public Life performed by the Pew Research Center, regard religion as highly important in their lives, and 47 percent of these persons attend religious services at least once per week.

Comparatively, 59% of Whites said religion plays a massive part in their lives, and only 34% routinely attended religious services weekly or more frequently (Chatters et al., 2009). Since most churches are dominated by one racial or ethnic group and have a small number of members from other groups, church congregations reflect a divided nation (Roozen, 2011). Regardless of the general trends indicating a decline in church membership over the last two decades, race-based analyses of these trends reveal that White churches see a decline while Black congregations have seen growth (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

The literature highlighted the importance of African American Churches in the everyday lives of African Americans. Historically, African Americans in the United States have been affiliated with a church; however, 80 percent of this group is affiliated with the seven mainline Black denominations, while only about 13.5 percent claim membership in predominantly White protestant groups or Roman Catholicism. Historically, African Americans in the United States have been recognized for their religious affiliation (Green, 1995; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Although some African Americans are members of white churches, most continue to attend traditional African American churches. The seven most significant and 34 oldest Black denominations include:

1. African Methodist Episcopal [A.M.E.]
2. African Methodist Episcopal Zion [A.M.E.Z]
3. Christian Methodist Episcopal [C.M.E.] Church
4. The Church of God in Christ [COGIC] (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).
5. The National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated [NBCA]
6. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated [NBC], and
7. The Progressive National Baptist Convention [PNBC].

The Baptist movement is credited with building the first African American churches and is home to the most significant number of African Americans since Baptists were among the first immigrants to the United States. Baptists existed over a century before Methodists, giving them a significant religious head start (Ngunjiri et al. 2012). Initially, Black Baptists had no political goals; instead, they concentrated on constructing their sacred space on southern plantations, which confined their existence to that of enslaved persons; this pushed their political ambitions into the background for a considerable amount of time; this prevented them from escaping the system of servitude (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

In contrast, current Baptist denominations are not strongly related to one another; instead, they work autonomously. Moreover, contemporary Baptist denominations engage in various activities, including evangelism, civil rights, education, and community development. Members of the Methodist church and movement constitute the second biggest subgroup of the African American Christian population. It is widely accepted that the Methodists were the first African Americans to form religious organizations.

In contrast to the Baptist movement, the first Black Methodist churches were founded in the northern states by free Black individuals challenging racist attitudes and ideas they had met in White Methodist churches they had previously visited. These liberated Black individuals established the first black Methodist churches. These freed Black people wanted their Black Methodist churches to establish their Black Methodist denomination (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Approximately 65 percent of African Americans who identify as Christian in the United States Christians are either members of the Black Baptist or Black Methodist churches (Green, 1995). Although between 66% and 88% of churchgoers are black women, black men have long held the bulk of leadership positions in African American churches; this pattern has endured throughout the history of the African American church (Barnes, 2006; Green, 1995; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Because the participants in this research were African American church leaders, it is essential to have a short conversation concerning gender inclusion; this is because the Black 35 churches have a long history of opposing the concept of putting black women in positions of authority inside the church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Ngunjiri et al., 2012).

In contrast, the dominant beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors emanating from African American Churches suggest questionable support for gender inclusivity under the guise of social justice; this solidarity is seen in how African American churches handle transgender individuals. The primary concepts of Black Liberation Theology argue that African American Churches must combat sexism as a form of oppression in addition to racism because racism and sexism are both oppressive practices (Barnes, 2006; Ngunjiri et al., 2012, p. 102).

## **Historical Roles of African American Churches**

 The relevant material analysis showed the crucial importance that African American churches play in the lives of African Americans in the United States. At the time, the African American Church was the only organization wholly administered by individuals of African heritage (Speakes-Lewis, Gill, & Moses, 2011, p. 241). Brand Gary recognized several ways the African American Church helps its community, including psychological affirmation, social identity, social support, political protest, economic aid, educational opportunities, artistic expression, and social connections (Brand Gary 1991). Paris's claim that no other institution in American culture puts a more significant premium on the well-being of African Americans than churches show the significant role that African American congregations play in American society (Paris 2008, p. 478).

Consequently, African American churches were at the forefront of assuming multiple roles and obligations to meet their people's needs. African American houses of worship continue to play a vital role in the lives of all African Americans. In their investigation, Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) discovered that the African American church experience was not only a reproduction or derivation of the White church but a parallel institution with significant cultural characteristics; this is because there was no African American before the White church. After the end of slavery, African American Churches emerged as the primary institutions providing services to the Black population. These services included supplying schools, financial institutions, insurance firms, housing, political forums, and nurturing young creative talent (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). According to Gaines (2010, p. 375), the African American Church gave publicly oppressed people a private space to grow, rejoice, and be validated; this may be an oversimplification of the church's influence in African American history, as an earlier study has shown.

According to Gaines (2010), "a substantial element of the success of the Civil Rights Cause depended on training and equipping people so that they would be assets to the movement rather than liabilities." During the Civil Rights Movement, African American Churches used the intrinsic qualities of the black community to effectively mobilize vast numbers of people (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 377). The cultural deficit theories of the 1960s are challenged by asset-based mapping, which puts African American churches in disadvantaged areas as assets instead of falling to the deficiency orientation of such groups, which is unduly reliant on contributions from outsiders. Asset-based mapping assists communities that rely excessively on outside inputs (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). In a similar spirit, Littlefield (2005, p. 687) characterized the objective of the African American Church as "self-help, defined as a value system that demands oppressed individuals to overcome their situations." Littlefield categorized the agenda of the African American Church in this manner.

Sociologists in the 19th and 20th centuries, according to Billingsley and Caldwell (1991), stated that the African American Church was an important institution within the African American community. Billingsley and Caldwell provided specifics. The African American Church has represented the persistent desire for liberation from many types of oppression throughout history. In the 20th century, these types of oppression included slavery, voting rights, and the Great Migration to the northern states in quest of better employment possibilities. During this epoch, the Great Migration occurred (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Littlefield, 38, 2005; Speakes-Lewis et al., 2011). Consequently, African American Churches have significantly influenced African American communities on several fronts, including social, political, educational, and economic fronts (Barnes, 2014; Barrett, 2010; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). During the era of slavery and the years that followed, African American churches acted as vital educational institutions, assisting in the fight against the prevailing racial and structural injustices of their period; this included encouraging enslaved persons and freedmen to read and write (Barnes, 2014; Barrett, 2010).

From Reconstruction in 1865 until integration in 1954, scholars acknowledged the significance of African American education as an issue that communities of African ancestry should consider. Studies undertaken in these neighborhoods in the early 20th century revealed that African American Churches valued community outreach efforts like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (Barnes, 2004; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991). In the latter half of the 20th century, research revealed that African American churches boosted their community involvement by offering financial aid to African American colleges and participating in government-sponsored programs such as Head Start and senior care (Barnes, 2004; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991).

African American Churches in Contemporary Society

In racially stratified societies, African American churches are solid and fundamental institutions that assist their members in navigating. Due to the lack of authenticity in predominantly White churches, traditional African American churches emphasized the eradication of racial prejudice in their teachings (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Barnes highlighted the priestly and prophetic responsibilities played by African American churches in their respective communities. The priestly office's function was emblematic of traditional churches' role in encouraging members to pursue religious devotion and anticipate reward in the afterlife (Barnes 2004).

On the other hand, the prophetic role represented liberation for 39 marginalized individuals in their contemporary reality; this involves applying practical solutions to societal problems such as unemployment and poverty (Barnes, 2004). Due to the historical significance of African American Churches and their ability to influence the lives of their members, the prophetic function and its efficacy in contemporary culture have been called into question. The emergence of the megachurch, according to Speakes-Lewis et al., has allowed the African American Church to deviate from its original mission of liberation for its members and the community; this has allowed the church to embrace a more consumerist perspective, where individual empowerment is emphasized at the cost of group identity, and social justice problems are at the forefront (Speakes-Lewis et al., 2011). In the middle of the twentieth century, these authors praised Adam Clayton Powell Jr. of New York City for his position as the first African American congressman from Harlem and a prominent preacher. Powell developed a theological praxis to advocate for improved health care and job opportunities for the African American community.

Due to his ability to pursue social justice while sticking to the principles of nonviolence, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is sometimes considered the most important leader of the Civil Rights movement throughout the 1960s. The activist leaders and clergy working in the paradigm of faith-based community organizers (FBCO) recognize, problematize, and fight a comfortable church culture, according to Delehanty (2016); this church culture is defined by a cultural orientation to religious life that, as an extension of individualistic forms of religious devotion, generates skepticism against structural and systematic analyses of inequities and collective action connected with such analyses (Delehanty 2016, p. 38) underlined that this general reference to FBCOs and the difficulties associated with a congregational aversion toward social justice primarily covers 40 African American churches; this cozy church culture hinders the efforts of FBCO leaders to cultivate a long-lasting cultural commitment to social justice advocacy.

Delehanty (2016) argued that despite the African American Churches' historical commitment to the Civil Rights Movement and some contemporary trends for increased social activism, several African American Churches had adopted the individualistic approach of the comfortable church culture, which opposes identification with collective social justice advocacy. Several African American churches have embraced the individualistic attitude of the comfortable church culture, which formed the basis of Delehanty's thesis; this study conceived and detailed the significance of African American Churches in the lives of Black male students in the post-Civil Rights period, which has been exemplified by modern movements such as Black Lives Matter; this study conceived and detailed the function of African American Churches in the lives of Black male students, given that African American Churches and its leaders have traditionally pushed for social justice in areas affecting African Americans.

Servant Leadership Styles

The African American church is a focal point of the black community and serves as center for social justice, educational support, and a source of refuge for African Americans. Leadership within the African American church contribute to the physical growth and spiritual maturity of the congregation as individual lives are impacted. (Addison, 2019) (Lincoln, 1990, p. 116)

Pastoring a congregation is a challenging responsibility and African American pastors face many challenges. Black pastors attract people by their ability to preach and lead but also by their personal charisma and their moral appeal of sincerity and hard work. (Lincoln, 1990, p. 117) Previous research has indicated that African Americans benefit in various ways when they are involved with religious organizations. (Chaney, 2008)

African American churches provide a positive forum of support and plays a significant role in positive self-worth and self-esteem of its members. (Chaney, 2008) People follow leaders because they believe that leader can see clearly and have a vision of where it is best to go. The concept of servant leader was coined by Robert Greenleaf. Much research has been done on the topic of servant leadership. Some researchers argue the concept of servant leadership is founded in Biblical principles. Greenleaf’s first book was “The Servant as Leader” a dichotomy between two roles fused in one real person. (Greenleaf, 1977)

A pastor’s role is that of a servant, the servant nature is first. This is one of the dominate leadership philosophies of Jesus. This represents the ideal type of pastoral leadership often found in the Black church today. “The servant-leader is servant first.” (Frick, 2004)

Greenleaf says a leader is one who “goes out ahead and shows the way”. (Frick, 2004) Jesus modeled servant leadership and taught his disciples this concept during his time with them. Several scriptural references relate to the principle of the servant leader being first a servant and a leader second. (Flanike, 2006) One of the strongest examples of the servant attitude of Jesus was when he washed his disciples’ feet. Jesus modeled service leadership in humility as stated in John 13:4-5 (New International Version):

“So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.”

The leadership example as demonstrated by Jesus is an appropriate model for pastoral leadership of African American pastors. (Bunch, 2013)

The history of the African American church is useful to help understand the leadership of African American pastors. Pastoral leadership among African American churches is unique to the Black church. While pastoral leadership may be learnt by secular sources, its primary source is rooted in the Word of God. (Bunch, 2013) Pastors have the power to influence their followers because they are under the direction of God.

According to Greenleaf, a servant-leader practices acceptance and empathy and can use power ethically with persuasion. (Frick, 2004) The African American pastor uses positive internal experiences that speak to the psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of the Black congregation using their powers of persuasion. (Chaney, 2008)

Greenleaf also describes various characteristics of the servant-leader to include the leader as guide, listener, intuitive, persuasive, and goal-oriented to name a few. (Flanike, 2006) These are relevant characteristics of a good servant leader. Serving others is one of the main responsibilities of being a pastor but the key focus of service is to God. (Bunch, 2013) The concept of servant leadership as coined by Greenleaf provide service to others, the role of the pastor as servant leader is a Biblical centered ideology and the original idea of servant leadership is a secular centered ideology geared toward work leadership styles in organizations. (Bunch, 2013)

The African American pastor is largely regarded as the single most important leader figure African Americans follow. Effective pastors in the African American church are both servants and visionaries. (Lincoln, 1990) (Barna, 2004)

Maxwell makes a strong statement, leadership can best be defined by influence, “The true measure of leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less”. (Maxwell, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership Follow Them and People will Follow You, 2007)

 Maxwell suggests that leadership is not defined by one’s power, position, popularity, or the ability to persuade but on the ability to influence. (Hall, 2012) Maxwell states “If you can’t influence others, they won’t follow you. And if they won’t follow, you’re not a leader.” (Hall, 2012) “If you don’t have influence, you will never be able to lead others”. (Maxwell, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership Follow Them and People will Follow You, 2007)

When people believe in their leader and the vision, they will follow their leader regardless of the conditions. To get this level of buy-in from the follower there must be a certain level of trust and credibility. Once people respect and trust you, they will follow you and the vision without reservation. (Maxwell, 21 Laws of Leadership in the Bible Learning to Lead from the Men and Women of Scripture, 2018)

Transformational Leadership

Leadership is defined as a process that encourages others to give their all to achieve a specific goal. Research has attempted to discover successful leadership styles that contribute to positive results. (Agbarakwe, 2021) Another leadership style noted is Transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire people to do more than they expected, they motivate and encourage follower commitment. The behaviors of the transformational leader transform and drive followers to achieve beyond expectations and transcend one’s self-interest for the sake of the organization. (Agbarakwe, 2021)

Transformational leaders are the change agents of the organization. They are known to change the culture of the organization to meet the specific environment of that organization. Transformational leadership from a Christian Perspective exemplify great examples of transformational leaders from the scriptures who created vision, showed courage and confidence, cared about people, and displayed a sense of justice. (Stetzer, 2010) Transformational leaders help people to understand the purpose and goal and help others to see a clear vision. From both a secular and biblical perspective, transformational leadership inspires, develops, and empowers followers. Jesus also embodied the example of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership typically has four theoretical constructs, Idealized influence (II), this refers to how much followers admire the leaders’ actions. Inspirational motivation (IM), this reflects how much the leader’s vision appeals to and motivates followers to achieve the stated goal. Individualized consideration (IC), this demonstrates how concerned the leader is about each follower and Intellectual stimulation (IS), this demonstrates the leader’s ability to question, take risks and get feedback from followers. (Agbarakwe, 2021)

Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration are all components of Transformational Leadership and can be significantly impactful on the follower’s buy-in and performance while serving. (Hamid, 2021)

Transformational leadership happens when the leader can impact the follower. Transformational leaders lead with integrity model desired behavior, make meaningful changes, and empower the follower to carry out the vision. (Agbarakwe, 2021) .

Jesus was the greatest example of a transformational leader during His mission on earth and His time with his disciples. As followers of Jesus Christ and as Pastors or lay leaders within the church we can follow Jesus’ example of a transformational leader. (Stetzer, 2010) In the book “Transformational Church”, Stetzer and Rainer provide six ways from a biblical perspective on how we can become transformational leaders like Jesus. (1) Articulate a clear and appealing vision, (2) Explain how the vision can be attained, (3) Act confidently and optimistically, (4) Express confidence in followers, (5) Lead by example, and (6) Empower people to achieve the vision. (Stetzer, 2010)

Leadership continues to be a subject of great interest and is relevant in both business and churches. (Hall, 2012)

Partnerships and Cultural Engagement

Partnerships are an important means for the church to do holistic ministry serving individuals and communities. There is a great cultural divide that distances Christians across social and economic lines. Partnerships help to narrow that divide when churches come together to collaborate on projects, incorporating their own unique perspective in a shared vision. (Sider, 2008)

Churches and Christians who desire to get involved with ministry partnership must strive to work from a point of equality, mutual respect, diversity and a biblical understanding of God’s economy and a shared sense of mission. (Sider, 2008) Partnerships can be a cross-cultural encounter or a partnership of like ethnic or cultural make-up. Partnerships of any kind requires “taking advanced missiological insights seriously to meet the challenge of genuine partnerships for the sake of the Kingdom.” (Sider, 2008, p. 27)

Community partners are vital to meeting people where they are working with them to meet their needs. Pastors, church leaders, and missionaries armed with knowledge and understanding of the Holy Spirit’s guidance can introduce them to the Gospel. Dr. Fuder provides tips to church communities who endeavor to cross cultural lines to partner with different communities in his book “Neighborhood Mapping”. To engage in partnerships (1) go as a learner, (2) seek out an “informant” a gatekeeper or person of peace, (3) build a relationship – be a participant observer, (4) use an interview guide to stay on script, (5) filter through a biblical worldview, (6) expand into the broader community, (7) network available resources, (8) determine what God is calling you to do, and (9) continually evaluate, study and explore. (Fuder, 2014)

Partnerships and Baptist on Mission (BOM)

Baptist on Mission is one of the many partnerships with Ebenezer Baptist church and Chosen City Church. This organization is an example of bridging the ethnic and cultural gap between Christian organizations. Historically it has been difficult for white mission organizations to accept African Americans serving as missionaries. Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church are the first African American Church to fully partner with this organization and have a seat at their table. The collaboration of this partnership resulted in over twelve thousand families in the African American and Latino communities having access to food services during the 2020-2022 world-wide pandemic.

Baptist on Mission vision statements is “Every Christian sharing God’s love with hurting people through word and deed”. Baptist on Mission’s desire is to help churches involve their members in missions and ministry in Jesus’ name. Baptist on Mission is an auxiliary to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Business As Mission (BAM)

There are several tenants in Business as Mission that can apply to the phenomenon of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church’s mission model for service. Business as Mission is based on the principle of holistic mission, with a kingdom perspective with the ultimate bottom line being the greater glory of God. (Johnson, 2009)

The BAM model can be a powerful tool for effecting economic transformation of a community with the emphasis on mission being the transforming agent of a community through business activities with the purpose of intentionally making Jesus known, encountered, and eventually followed. (Johnson, 2009)

Understanding God’s mission is essential. Every business and every church have a purpose and should identify what that purpose is clearly, concise, and motivating inviting others to join in and help fulfill the vision. (Baer, 2006) According to scripture, there is a purpose that is beyond profit and customers for organizations, there is a kingdom purpose. “A way in which the business specifically and intentionally connects to the growth of God’s kingdom in the world and thus brings glory to him.” (Baer, 2006, p. 47)

The phenomenon of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church is the idea of a five-fold mission model that incorporates the Great Commission for the Black church in the twenty-first century. The call of the Great Commission is not just for certain denominations or special Christians but should the calling card for every church under the leadership of a mission-minded, globally driven pastor. (Cooper, 2021)

We should bring the kingdom of God with us wherever we go. The modern church, the African American church is a great benefit to our society. The church and people with its imperfections is God’s idea to facilitate His missional plan to all the earth. (Winter, 2009) Cooper quotes a missiologist (Newbigin) in his book Missional Marketplace as it relates to missions and the church. “The mission of the Church is missions; the mission of missions is the Church.” (Cooper, 2021, p. 178)

Business as mission must become a key focus for the way we do business in the secular world and the church for the coming decades if we are going to fulfill the Great Commission. The movement has begun, and we are in position to champion the movement. (Cooper, 2021) The five-fold mission model of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church is an intentional model that demonstrates the love of God locally, stateside, nationally, internationally and in disaster ridden areas. The missionaries who serve get to show the love of God and proclaim the kingdom of God by utilizing organic opportunities adding value to the communities and people they encounter.

Movements

Movements have historically changed the world because of the transformative catalytic impact and influence in society. Movement thinking is a vision of the kingdom that is dynamic enough to shift history. (Addison, 2019) The body of Christ is intended to carry the good news of the Gospel around the globe. Leaders who are movement thinkers are strategic by being around other movement leaders who share insights, experiences, innovations, and learning.

Addison contends there are recurring patterns in the strategy of movements found in the ministry of Jesus, his training of the disciples and the multiplying phenomenon of the early church. Jesus and his disciples were movement pioneers. Jesus is still calling us today to lead his people into a missionary movement. Movement pioneers (1) they see the end, their identity is aligned with God’s purpose, (2) they connect with people, crossing boundaries to establish contact with people far from God, (3) they share the gospel communicating the truth about God and salvation through Christ, (4) they train disciples and teach them to obey what Jesus has commanded, (5) they gather communities where they join together in churches to study and obey God’s Word, and (6) they multiply workers by equipping local church leaders to multiply disciples and churches. (Addison, 2019, p. 53)

“The key to rapid growth of any movement is face-to-face recruitment within pre-existing social networks. The stronger the social network, the faster the movement spreads. For a movement to grow, it must not only reach new people, but it must also keep them and build them into a committed force for change.” (Addison, 2019, p. 54)

Conceptual Framework

The main objective of the conceptual framework for this study was to analyze the lived experiences of missionaries who actively participate in the five-fold mission ministry of the Ebenezer Baptist Church using an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis framework (IPA). Phenomenology is a rigorous qualitative study used to examine people's experiences and how individuals make sense of their experiences (Young & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2016). The area of phenomenological psychology includes the scope of idiographic psychology. In idiographic psychology, those observed are invited to construct meaning from a shared experience (Peoples, 2021). The objective of qualitative research is to get firsthand knowledge of the links between causes and consequences, and it may be undertaken by utilizing a range of research techniques (Young & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2016).

This literature review examines several active mission activity paradigms within the African American church context. According to Bill Hybels, the founder of Illinois's Willow Creek Church, who is also regarded as "the hope of the world," the local church is the most critical institution in the world; this comment is especially significant because of the importance and impact of the African American Church within the African American community (Jim Sutherland., 2020) In addition to providing educational and social services, the African American Church has been a source of spiritual guidance and a guiding light for the African American community throughout history. In addition, the African American Church has been a source of strong leadership during eras of racial inequality and social injustice. There is no way to diminish the influence that the leadership of the African American Church has had on society, government, and the community at large. To accomplish the Great Commission, however, will need spiritual leaders and churches from each of the world's people groupings. These leaders and churches will need to have a substantial social or communal footprint and a profound understanding of what it takes to take their position on the global missionary stage. No exemption is made for the African American Church.

Comparatively, around half of African Americans prioritize religious activity, but over 80% do (Pew Research Center, 2009). In addition, most African Americans identify as Christians, and half attend religious services in their communities regularly. The overwhelming majority of African Americans are members of a primarily African American church (Pew Research Center, 2009). Many African Americans see their trust in God as a crucial component of their capacity to manage through difficult moments in their life (BellTolliver & Wilkerson, 2011; Whitley, 2012). In addition, African Americans assert that engaging in religious activities such as attending worship services and Bible study, being actively involved in their churches, making time for devotional activities, and listening to religious sermons and gospel music helps them conceptualize their struggles within the context of a larger struggle between good and evil, also knas God and the devil (Whitley, 2012).

When Christianity was brought to these people, it challenged various African religious rites and ceremonies, most of which were constructed from a polytheistic perspective. In his work "Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South," Albert J. Raboteau, a former religion professor at Princeton, discusses the transfer of enslaved people from traditional African faiths to Christianity. The transition from traditional African faiths to Christianity was his main emphasis. According to him, "belief in a High God or Supreme Creator of the cosmos was widespread throughout African civilizations" (Raboteau, 2004). However, this High God was somewhat detached from the human realm's activities.

Although "lesser gods and ancestor-spirits were actively and perpetually engaged in the daily lives of the individual and the problems of society," it was thought that the High God was unique from the other gods of the world (Raboteau 2004, p. 8). Popular among the ancient religions of West Africa was the notion that the High God is the father of the more minor and lower gods, who are often seen as intermediaries between man and God. According to this belief, there are several lesser divinities or subsidiary gods. People in several African civilizations regarded the relationship between themselves, the Supreme God, and the lesser gods in terms of "pantheons," or groups of gods associated with natural forces and occurrences (Raboteau 2004, p. 9).

**Narrative Description**

This research will examine the experiences of African American missionaries who actively engage in all five mission service areas (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) as part of Ebenezer Baptist Church's Mission Movement. It is unknown what is necessary for the African American Church to build a comprehensive mission service that spans the five-fold areas of mission endeavors (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) and a transformative Mission Movement. These are the areas of mission work: the United States, the nation, the world, and disaster relief.

This research is significant as a prospective road map and strategic plan for African American pastors to create their dynamic transformational mission ministry; this study can affect how the African American Church and community integrate the Great Commission vision into the church's fabric; this may be achieved by utilizing the five-fold mission service paradigm, which comprises Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief, to persuade the African American church to abandon historical constraints and emotional attachments to home. This phenomenological case study aims to analyze and understand Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries' active five-fold mission endeavors.

This researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. These meetings will occur at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The researcher has a better knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan for active involvement in transformational mission work on behalf of the African American Church as a whole because of the results of this study. Interviews with missionaries participating in the mission’s ministry at Ebenezer Baptist Church (the EBC missions ministry consists of five areas: local, stateside, national, global and disaster relief) would be the primary data source for this qualitative research design-focused study.

In addition, to include independent factors such as views, attitudes, roles, movements, and other EBC attendees, the research would also include servant leadership and the global pandemic as independent variables (exasperated needs). In addition, the research would include organized interviews that would be conducted methodically to ensure that each participant would be given the same predetermined questions. Therefore, the data analysis would consist of conducting semi-structured interviews with members of the leadership and missionaries, using any collected documents, reports, or artifacts. For the study's Content Analysis, the Dedoose Analytical tool would examine the acquired research data, which may include text, audio, video, spreadsheets, questionnaires, and demographic information; this study's conclusion will enable the researcher to examine the potential of developing a mission program model that will aid African American churches in collaborating as a community to engage more people in mission activity.

**Graphic Description**

This study used interpretative phenomenological analysis to perform a qualitative examination of the actual experiences the participants experienced in their life (IPA); this study's questions concentrated on building a paradigm for the active participation of African American church members in mission work. According to the study results, African American Churches use protective qualities to preserve their resilience in the face of many obstacles and strains faced in educational settings and programs.

## **The State of the Church.**

The institution's existence depends on the church's business status. People who attend a healthy church are unified with Christ and in accord with one another as a community of faith, all while working to carry out God's plan; this enables the church to function correctly as part of Christ's body (Manala, 2010); this is done by the use of four fundamental components, namely, sound theology, holistic relationships, biblically-based responsibilities, and a lifestyle defined by robust growth concerning both God and other individuals (Manala, 2010).

Every pastor hopes his church will be where love, unity, and strength may bloom and ensure that the house of God continues to operate as a living organism and that the body of Christ continues to provide life; it is essential to have strong leadership, intelligent management, and dedicated and committed services (Manala, 2010). Nehemiah, a servant, described in the Bible, exemplifies the servant-leader concept, which blends superior business savvy with a dynamic leadership style (Manala, 2010). The roles that Nehemiah played, such as convincing the workers of the value and responsibility of the operation of building the wall, delegating authority to all those connected to his leadership, and appointing the appropriate leaders and workers to work alongside him, inspired everyone to complete this task for God's glory. Due to the roles, he performed, Nehemiah was able to convince the workers of the value and duty of the operation of constructing the wall (Manala, 2010).

## **Chapter Summary**

Since only a small number of African Americans are active in missionary activity, the study literature tries to fill the void left by prior academic research on African Americans in mission service. According to public data, the Southern Baptist International Missions Board has said that just 0.3% of its 3,700 staff employees operating in different mission areas are African Americans. In Virginia, Liele, an enslaved African American born in Virginia in 1750 and regarded as the first American missionary, served. According to the study, it is feasible to ask if African Americans were establishing an African-centered holy place for themselves since the Church's importance may be better understood by those trained to provide it after reading its history. Because data indicates that African Americans were enslaved persons in the United States, this is the case.

According to the available literature, the arrival of Christianity caused various challenges for the African people's many religious rites and celebrations. The belief that the High God is also the father of the lower and weaker gods was widespread among ancient faiths in West Africa. A variety of minor deities or subsidiary gods are believed to exist by supporters of this idea. It was a terrible and confusing period for the enslaved people when they were forcibly separated from their traditional means of religion; this was particularly true for individuals with intense recollections and experiences of their previous life in Africa. Most individuals born into slavery at this time in American history were American born. Between 1740 and 1780, there were several religious uprisings in the United States. Enslaved persons born in the United States could learn the culture and language of white people, making them more viable candidates for conversion. Slaveholders opposed the revivalists' efforts to teach African Americans to read and become lay preachers.

At the heart of the conversion, the campaign was the issue of whether enslaved people had souls that needed rescuing, and there was widespread concern that the rise of Christianity among enslaved persons may ultimately lead to arguments against the institution of slavery. Considering this, Raboteau argues that switching to Christianity made the faith more accessible to illiterate individuals, including slaveholders. The unwillingness of the Revivalists to oppose slavery as an institution led to their lack of confidence in their enslaved persons. As a direct consequence of the Revival, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, and the Presbyterian Church were all able to grow.

When religious fervor existed, landlords were far less indifferent to their religious commitment and maybe that of their enslaved persons; this was particularly true during periods of religious fervor. Slave people liked singing, dancing, praying, and spirit possession, which added to their overall fondness for religious celebrations. The enslaved persons used various methods to conceal their religious meetings and rites from their owners (Riggs, 2014). White clergy pounded the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and other biblical texts encouraging submission and obedience into the skulls of black people. African Americans began forming their congregations in the late 18th century, ultimately leading to the erection of church buildings. DuBois documented the inevitable separation of churches frequented by people of color and whites throughout this period (Rusaw, 2004).

At the time, the United States was in the middle of the Civil War, and the only option for people of color who wanted to practice their faith was to fight for their freedom. DuBois asserts in his book "The Souls of Black Folk" that the churches of African Americans were not the result of a white missionary effort (DuBois 2011).

Their group was founded in reaction to white people's racism toward African Americans. Black-led congregations and denominations arose virtually simultaneously in the North and South, and this phenomenon has been ascribed to the development of an "invisible institution." (Students et al., 2010; Moore & Collins, 2002; Newsome-Camara, 2012; Smith, 2019) The liberation theology may have inspired Frazier's concept of an alternative society. African Americans place great value on developing and maintaining positive interpersonal connections. If they seek guidance from church leaders, members of congregations where this technique is prevalent may be prohibited from getting professional therapy outside the African American Church.

Singing religious hymns often aided, directed, and soothed slave communities in the Americas. Even throughout slavery, preachers often urged their congregations to believe in life after death. Some pastors continue to offer sermons encouraging their congregations to have patience, although some of the obstacles African Americans experience in the modern world are different from those they faced in the past. The churches worldwide often take a public stand in favor of the right of African Americans to live in freedom and happiness wherever in the world they choose. People who attend non-traditional churches may be less likely than those who visit regular churches to seek therapy. It is conceivable for some counselors to immediately engage in problem-solving activities if they do not fully comprehend and embrace this strategy.

This section's study highlighted the relevance of African American churches in the daily lives of African Americans; this relevance is tied to the fact that more African American students than white students attend church, which has implications. Eighty percent of this group's followers are members of the seven main Black churches, while just 13.5 percent claim membership in mostly white protestant groups or Roman Catholicism. Baptists are the most populous African American Christians, and their congregations built some of the first churches in the history of the African American church. Black Baptists existed more than a century before black Methodists; this provided black Baptists a significant religious advantage. People connected with the Methodist church and movement represent the second most significant component of the African American Christian community.

Since the dawn, black men have occupied the bulk of leadership positions in African American churches. Under the guise of social justice, African American churches' dominating beliefs, attitudes, and actions indicate a questionable commitment to gender inclusiveness; African American churches reportedly provide this assistance. Despite focusing extensively on Christ's message of freedom, equality, and justice for the downtrodden, a substantial element of Black theology mirrors conventional Christian male domination and patriarchy.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods followed during the duration of this project. Phenomenological research is a strategy that may be applied to various scenarios and is used to explain the experimental group has lived experiences; this is an example of a mixed-methods research project in which both phenomenology and case study techniques are used. The combination of these two study methods enables me, as the researcher, to evaluate the church of Ebenezer Baptist's robust mission initiatives in its natural environment. This literature review's principal purpose is to understand the topic under inquiry comprehensively. The secondary purpose of this examination of the relevant literature is the identification of potential gaps in the academic work that has previously been conducted on this topic. In establishing a knowledge gap for this strong mission involvement from an African American church, the concept of a five-fold mission service model necessitates more study to enable future studies on this neglected style of a multiple mission service model.

In other words, the original goal of the phenomenological case study was to analyze and understand the rigorous five-fold mission activities performed by Ebenezer Baptist Church missionaries; this researcher will conduct interviews with church-affiliated missionaries to explain the phenomena of missionaries working in the five-fold areas of mission service (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) at Ebenezer Baptist Church. These meetings will occur at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The outcomes of this study have improved the researcher's knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan for the African American Church's active participation in transformational mission activity.

The researcher is a member of Chosen City Church (CCC) which was formally a church plant campus of Ebenezer Baptist church. The researcher currently serves as both a participant observer of CCC’s missionary team and Co-Pastor over the Missionary Ministry. Over the last five years, the researcher has participated in various mission-related tasks as a team member. The five-fold mission service areas at both Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church are now the subject of this approach, which requires that the groups being observed be scrutinized and observed organically while they are actively engaged in the five-fold mission service experience; this mixed-method technique includes an observational component, a participant component, an interview component, a photographic component, a video component, a journaling component, and a document analysis component.

Overview of Qualitative Design

The essential knowledge for this chapter is understanding the approach chosen and implemented and building a phenomenologically consistent step-by-step data analysis procedure. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods followed during the duration of this project. However, the phenomenological research method attempts to adopt a mixed-method research project that qualitatively integrates the phenomenological method with the case study research method. The phenomenological research methodology necessitates an adaptable depiction of the experimental group's daily experiences.

The combination of these two study methods enables me, as the researcher, to evaluate Ebenezer Baptist Church's robust mission initiatives in its natural environment. Regarding participant observer and missionary, the researcher aims to utilize the Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church missionary teams as a case study. Participants who have served in a range of missional opportunities with the teams over the last five years will be used to determine the group being monitored, examined, and viewed organically. In addition, the participants will live their experience of serving in the five-fold mission work prevalent at both Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church respectively.

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative research project used interviews, observation, and document analysis approaches to gather data. My perspective is molded by the natural course of events that started when this researcher worked as a missionary for another congregation in Charlotte, NC and saw the work of the Ebenezer Baptist Church mission team; this resulted in my leaving that congregation after seventeen and a half years to work more closely with Ebenezer Baptist Church, which finally led to my becoming a member of Ebenezer and serving in different areas of the ministry there; this evolution has influenced my approaches. Subsequently, during my transition to joining Ebenezer Baptist Church an additional campus was planted. This Ebenezer Baptist Church plant is now known as Chosen City Church. The only objective of the phenomenological study is to comprehend events in their experienced form (Peoples, 2021). As I became more engaged in the mission team's operations, journaling became a natural component of the overall observation approach.

According to this researcher, this corpus of work was analyzed using hermeneutic phenomenology. Throughout my engagement with this church, which has now spanned more than five years, this researcher has been able to watch the detailed workings of the mission service activity at Ebenezer Baptist Church, from the leadership to the lay members. Consequently, I updated my viewpoint from when I initially joined this church. The hermeneutic phenomenology method enables the researcher to have prior knowledge of a phenomenon, which may then be updated as new information is presented or comprehended (Peoples, 2021). The establishment of a church plant in Chosen City Church is now a part of the new information included in the observation process. Now I get to observe two mission teams one that is strongly established utilizing the five-fold mission model they created over years of service and the second team while incorporating the five-fold mission model as a template will adjust the model as necessary to meet their current need.

Throughout the remainder of chapter three, the overall approach, and results of the pilot study are detailed in great depth. The subsequent step is data collection, which involves the technique of the pilot study, which includes adjustments to the questions, question order, and interview formats; this chapter concludes with a description of the study's methodology and the findings from the data analysis.

The following graphic is intended to depict "what" and "how" something is viewed in connection to a phenomenon. Following the data analysis steps, a description of the phenomenon based on the individual's real-life experiences will be developed. The following figure, based on Creswell’s phenomenological approach to phases and processes.



Participant Observation

Researchers draw on their experiences in a range of social contexts. The notion of the researcher actively partaking in the lives of the people they are watching enables the researcher to understand the world of the people they are seeing and interact with them as participant observers in ways that make sense to the subject of the observation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Participant observation is a technique for collecting data used in qualitative research across various disciplines. In this study, participant observation was used, and field notes were taken as this researcher actively participated in mission service activities with Ebenezer Baptist Church congregation members.

This researcher was able to learn about their mission practice by continuous exposure and interaction, monitoring their behaviors and activities in the typical daily occurrences of missionaries who frequently serve in a variety of mission service regions; this allowed me to get knowledge about their mission practice. In the study done by DeWalt and DeWalt, it was discovered that a participant observer needed to be both a good listener and receptive to the unexpected (DeWalt, 1998). The use of participant observation as a data gathering method extends back more than a century and is regarded as the foundation of anthropological study (DeWalt, 1998).

Participant observation is categorized by such actions as being nonjudgmental and having an interest in learning more about others in addition to being a good listener and being opened to learning and experiencing the unexpected. (Kawulich, Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method, 2005)

The following figure depicts the participant observer process this researcher followed. I considered the sensitivity to the subject matter as an outsider, becoming a part of the team helped to build trust and over time and subsequently helped the participant group become familiar with the study topic. As shown in the figure below this process begin as an informal covert exercise. As time progressed and I was accepted as a member of the mission ministry the need to become transparent as a researcher and participant observer was necessary for credibility and preparation for the conduction of data collection and the interview process.



Overview of Phenomenological Case Study Design

This research will examine the experiences of African American missionaries who actively engage in all five mission service areas (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) as part of Ebenezer Baptist Church's Mission Movement. This movement facilitated a church plant in Chosen City Church to carry on the work of the Gospel and model the significance of Mission service within the African American Church. The African American Church can benefit from a comprehensive mission service that spans the five-fold areas of mission endeavors (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) and to create a transformative Mission Movement. These are the areas of mission work: the United States, the nation, the world, and disaster relief; this research is significant as a prospective road map and strategic plan for African American pastors to create their dynamic transformational mission ministry; this study can affect how the African American Church and community integrate the Great Commission vision into the church's fabric; this may be achieved by utilizing the five-fold mission service paradigm, which comprises Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief, to persuade the African American church to abandon historical constraints and emotional attachments to home.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to analyze and get an understanding of the missionaries of Ebenezer Baptist Church's active five-fold mission endeavors. The interviews will comprise the research; this researcher will conduct interviews with members of the missionary community at Ebenezer Baptist Church to explain the phenomena of missionaries operating in the five-fold areas of mission service. These sectors include Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief Services. The researcher has a better knowledge of how to construct a contextualized strategic plan for active involvement in transformational mission work on behalf of the African American Church as a whole because of the results of this study. The central focus of this study is on using a qualitative research technique, which includes Interviews with missionaries actively engaging in Ebenezer Baptist Church's mission ministry would be the primary source of data for this investigation. The EBC mission’s ministry consists of five different areas: local, stateside, national, global and disaster relief.

Overview of Pilot Interview Design

In addition, to include independent factors such as views, attitudes, roles, movements, and other EBC and CCC attendees, the research would also include servant and transformational leadership as independent variables. In addition, the research would include organized interviews that would be conducted methodically to ensure that each participant would be given the same predetermined questions. In selecting the participants for the pilot interviews, I considered their knowledge, experience, and willingness to participate in this research. The three participants in the pilot study were purposefully selected and informed of the semi structured, open-ended interview questions and given a consent form to properly document their voluntary participation. The consent form included language to ensure participants of the efforts made to protect their identity. Once the consent forms were completed, I planned for interview locations according to their respective convenance.

 Participants were given detailed instructions prior to the beginning of the interview to ensure they fully comprehended the reason for the study and to ensure the minimization of risks during the interview process. I ensured the anonymity of research participant by assigning coded numerical names.

As a result of the pilot interviews, several changes were made to prepare for the formal interview process. Four significant changes came from the pilot study. (1) I documented the original questions and noted the change in verbiage for some questions. I restructured the questions by essentially combining questions I considered to be redundant. (2) I deleted questions I did not believe added value to the interview. (3) I changed the order of some of the questions to what seemed like a more logical sequence. (4) I added three new questions I did not originally start with in the interview. These were added based on the organic flow of the interviews and the responses from the participants. The additional questions included concepts around leadership styles, and the viability of duplicating and replicating the five-fold mission model currently used by Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church.

The final question focused on any element of fear while serving as a missionary if it was ever experienced and why? The following table depicts the questions asked and the changes made as of a result of the pilot study.



The data analysis would consist of conducting semi-structured interviews with members of the leadership and missionaries, using any collected documents, reports, or artifacts. Analyzed data is available by listening and transcribing the recordings of the interview. The transcription for the recorded interviews was completed by using the application tool Otter.AI. This software is a program that shows captions for live speakers and generates written transcriptions of speech. For the study's Content Analysis, the Dedoose Analytical tool would examine the acquired research data, which may include text, audio, video, spreadsheets, questionnaires, and demographic information; this study's conclusion will enable the researcher to examine the potential of developing a mission program model that will aid African American churches in collaborating as a community to engage more people in mission activity.

Data Collection

Data collection for this research project occurred through several years of participant observation and interviews designed to explore the lived experiences of missionaries serving at Ebenezer Baptist Church and Chosen City Church. A purposeful sampling method was used in this research. The sampling technique employed is a vital element of the overall sampling strategy. (Wilmot, 2005) Qualitative research uses non-probability sampling since a statistical inference is not required. A feature of qualitative sampling is that the number of cases sampled is often small and a phenomenon can only appear once to be of value to the research project. (Wilmot, 2005)

Sample size for qualitative research is one that adequately answers the research question, and the number of participants can change as the study progresses and new categories, themes and patterns emerge. (Marshall, 1996)

I used purposeful sampling to collect data in this study because the participants were knowledgeable about and experienced with the phenomenon of interest. The participants were also willing, available, and had the ability to communicate their experiences in an articulate, open, and insightful manner that would be useful for the research. (Etikan, 2016)

The authors of a research project that looked at a sampling framework for personal interviews in qualitative research identified three approaches to determine a feasible sample size for qualitative work. The three approaches identified are: (1) Doctoral Thesis, (2) Guidelines by Experts (Rule of thumb), and (3) Saturation Principle. (Kumar, 2020) (Mason, 2010)

According to (Mason, 2010) the guiding principle of sample size in qualitative research should be the concept of saturation. This number of interviews can vary based on the methodological discipline. As it relates to this research on sample size, (Creswell J. , 2013) has made recommendations for five different approaches to include case study with four to five cases, and phenomenology with between three to ten cases. (Kumar, 2020) Regarding the issue of saturation, (Mason, 2010) describes saturation as the point where diminishing returns set in where more data will not yield additional information. Saturation is key to excellent qualitative work; however, it is difficult to pinpoint definitive published guidelines of adequacy for estimating a sample size to reach saturation. (Kumar, 2020)

Throughout the data collection process, I took care to remain unbiased to the participants opinions and responses allowing them to express their ideas freely. This allowed me to collect rich information while making the participants feel comfortable. The three participants included in my pilot study reached the point of saturation according to (Mason, 2010) at the end of the third pilot interview new ideas, thoughts and concepts did not emerge from the conversation.

The following



Collecting Data through Semi-structured Interviews and Documentation

During the semi-structured interview, data about the subject and topic framework of the study, which is actively involved in mission service for the African American Church, will be gathered, and research-related questions will be answered. Structured and unstructured interviews would be the principal mode of data collection for this qualitative research utilizing an exploratory social science type of compilation. Even though the great majority of the questions would be predetermined, a few would depend on the development of the argument as the research was conducted. The semi-structured interview includes characteristics of the structured and unstructured interviews. Therefore, semi-structured interviews have the advantages of both structured and unstructured interviews, such as gathering comparable and reliable data and asking follow-up questions.

The ability to design a theme structure in advance is one of the most apparent advantages; this helps maintain focus for both the interviewer and the interviewee, lowering the possibility of distraction and fostering conversation in both directions. In addition, semi-structured interviews provide richness and depth to the acquired data. Even though they are methodologically equivalent to structured interviews, questionnaires, and surveys, the open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews allow for more meaningful information and depth because structured interviews need precise information to perform appropriately. To accomplish this objective, participants may, depending on the circumstances, be asked to extend, restate, or explain their opinions.

Participants in Pilot Interview Group

Executing these preparation processes as part of a pilot study may assure the quality of the primary research endeavor. As the demographic data for this research project contains African Americans between the ages of 40 and 65. Additionally, both males and women are included in the demographics. Having all protocols in place, including interview criteria and a method for evaluating the data collection's quality, is essential. Therefore, each step of the study technique must be modified to be applied to the African American Church. Such preparations should be the standard when establishing research projects; nonetheless, they are seldom apparent during the planning process.

Due to the lack of published research on effectively performing pilot studies, the research must apply a Phenomenological method to design the pilot study to get an expected outcome. In addition, three goals were established for the pilot study. These goals included gathering data and providing guidance for comprehensive research that could be tailored to the Ebenezer Baptist Church mission team members, who are African American adults who participated in the study. Also, ensuring a critical interrogation of participants by using the most effective conduct of a pilot study, which includes the use of observational and video-recorded data, a methodology we have named a "collaborative self-study approach," Lastly, there is an emphasis on Missionaries as a way of data collection, with a concentration on discovering mission service needs affiliated with the African American Church.

Participants in Formal Interview Group

This research project's demographic data comprises African Americans aged 40 to 65. Additionally, the demographics include both men and women. These middle-aged and elderly African Americans are all members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church's outreach team; this examination focuses almost exclusively on missionaries, who also serve as its central data source; this research will examine the experiences of African American missionaries who actively engage in all five mission service areas (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) as part of Ebenezer Baptist Church's Mission Movement. The African American Church must build a comprehensive mission service that spans the five-fold areas of mission endeavors (Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Disaster Relief) and a transformative Mission Movement. These are the areas of mission work: the United States, the nation, the world, and disaster relief; this research is significant as a prospective road map and strategic plan for African American pastors to create their dynamic transformational mission ministry; this study can affect how the African American Church and community incorporates the vision of the Great Commission into the fabric of the church via the use of the five-fold mission service model of Local, Stateside, National, Global, and Crisis Relief; this paradigm urges the African American church to abandon its historical restrictions and emotional inward focus to the community and go beyond its current boarders.

Sampling Strategy

Examining is the objective of this study; thus, sampling is the method used. The emergence of a paradigm for active engagement in mission work within the African American church: a phenomenological case study. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a regularly used approach; this kind of sampling permits researchers to conduct interviews with people whose contributions to the study are considered especially significant. Typically, the researcher will choose the study participants before beginning the investigation. Various sampling approaches are applied to recruit participants for qualitative research efficiently.

Purposeful sampling is a kind of sampling used by qualitative researchers to recruit people who can provide in-depth and specialized knowledge on the issue under investigation; this is the primary rationale for purposeful sampling. The researcher determines each participant's eligibility for participation in the study endeavor. The study is thus subjective, and researcher defined. Participants must be African American adults between the ages of 40 and 65, members of the Ebenezer Baptist church's mission team, missionaries, and leadership.

Ethical Compliance

Everyone who participated in this experiment did it of their will. Participation was entirely optional. Every piece of information is hidden from public access, and participants' names are never revealed. Before each participant gave informed consent to participate in the study, they were given a document that outlined the purpose of the research, the purpose of the interview, and the procedures for protecting their names and identities following the standards and expectations of the Institutional Review Boards (IRB). Each participant also had the opportunity to decline participation in the research and withdraw from the inquiry at any time.

Demographic Data

This research project's demographic data comprises African Americans aged 40 to 65. Additionally, the demographics include both men and women. These middle-aged and elderly African Americans are all Ebenezer Baptist Church's outreach team; this inquiry focuses primarily on missionaries and utilizes them as its primary data source.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Qualitative research employs structured open-ended questions with the aim of data collection. In qualitative research, the participants' lived experiences are highlighted, allowing the researcher access to a more prosperous and diversified pool of knowledge (Janesick, 2004). The technique for collecting data in qualitative research is often more time-consuming than the procedure for collecting data in quantitative research; nevertheless, the depth of the participants' responses enables the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the studied issue (Janesick, 2004). If the qualitative method technique is employed in this research study, the researcher will be able to examine the missionaries working in one or more areas of the five-fold mission service practiced by Ebenezer Baptist Church in more detail. A multiple-method approach to data collecting, sometimes "triangulation," will be used to acquire the study's data, which will then be used to correlate the data collection. This is done to decrease the possibility that the data collected could be misconstrued (Flick, 2007).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Through their engagement as active participants, observers, and present members of Ebenezer Baptist Church, the principal subject of this research project, the researcher has earned the trust of the church's leadership and missions’ team. In addition to holding a leadership position, this researcher is licensed as a minister and serve as a leader of those who gives service. The congregation is familiar with my presence due to my continual commitment to this community and church body. Since I am now an active member of the congregation of Ebenezer Baptist Church, both the members and the church's leadership see me as a valid and viable candidate for the employment of a high-quality research project.

In contrast, the research evaluates four crucial qualities, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to establish the reliability of these data. Because trustworthiness is a component of the trustee, it serves as the basis for consumers' judgments of the business, considering factors such as hidden values and prior acts (Devlin et al., 2014).

Regarding Credibility, which pertains to the veracity of the facts, the participant's viewpoints, and the researcher's interpretation and portrayal of those, it is essential to emphasize that (Cope, 2014). The approach used to ensure the credibility of the results is structured interviews, which improve the accuracy depending on the participants' approval of the data interpretation. Participants are invited to discuss their subsequent experiences.

To satisfy the dependability criteria, the research must be reliable. The reliability of information is judged by its consistency across comparable situations (Cope, 2014). Consistency's strength presents a threat to reliability. The approaches applied in this research to show dependability contributed to reducing this danger. Methods involve accurate alignment of the issue statement, study focus and question narrative, methodology, research design, a detailed explanation of the technique, and documentation of the data analysis procedure.

The notion of transferability evaluates the validity of qualitative research and seeks to generalize the results (Cope, 2014); Furthermore, according to Cope, the word "transferability" refers to information that may be applied to other sorts of communities; this study may be helpful to future policies, practices, and research on how to encourage individuals in this group to join in mission service and how to expand their total participation.

Confirmability is the researcher's capacity to deliver data that reflects participant experiences rather than the researcher's perspective. Lastly, while addressing confirmability, the study exhibits its dependability since confirmability is the researcher's capacity to offer data reflecting the participants' experiences (Cope, 2014). In addition, the confirmability of this study is enhanced using coding, researcher reflexivity, the detailed methodological description described in the section on dependability, admission or statement of the researcher's beliefs and assumptions, and recognition of the limitations of both the study's methods and its potential effects. The confirmability of the conclusions is jeopardized by the accuracy of the data collected and the ease with which the researcher may assess the data along their travel. Because reflexivity leads to more responsible and relevant research, it is intended to prevent the researcher's bias from influencing the study's conclusions (Flint & Shelton, 2019).

Limitations of Study

As the only congregation of its sort in Charlotte, North Carolina, the congregation of Ebenezer Baptist Church serves as the only sample for this research. The issue lies in selecting a sample size that is big enough to effectively represent a substantial proportion of the demographics present on the mission team, including those actively working on any of the five-fold mission teams.

 Chapter Summary

After completing this inquiry and its accompanying analysis, the researcher will have a deeper comprehension of the observed phenomenon. Since the researcher is both a participant observer and a member of Ebenezer Baptist Church, she may easily engage with other members personally. Participant observers' observations are constantly subject to the researcher's interpretation and are impacted by their biases (Janesick, 2004). Since this researcher is working as an active participant observer with the Ebenezer Baptist church mission team, I have better access to the data. If I had not been functioning in this role, it is possible that I as the researcher would not have had access to this volume of data or direct relationships with the persons under observation. As a researcher and observer, it is not my obligation to speak on behalf of any of the participants in this study; instead, it is my duty to authentically portray the participants' lived experiences through the lens of my observations and contacts.

CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

[Brief introductory paragraph.]

Objective Descriptions of the Findings

(Other headings as needed; finding are not subject to interpretation by researcher.)

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[Brief paragraph of introduction to the chapter without a heading.]

Subjective Description of Meaning for Each Finding

Analysis related to Research Questions

Conclusions

(Typically each conclusion drawn should be tied to the respective finding and interpretations.)

Recommendations

[Appropriate Level 2 Headings of Your Choice]

Suggestions for Further Research

[BACK MATTER]

 Many details are compiled in a section knas back matter; this information is more detailed than is needed for general comprehension of the purpose and outcomes of the research but is preserved in the report so that the entire process can be verified or repeated. Include all elements that were part of your research. These pages all carry page numbers.

 Works Cited. All materials referred to in the text.

 Related Works (Rarely used). Materials used in the development of the project, but not cited in the text. These materials provide prerequisite or supplemental information not used in the research but that is closely related to the topic.

 Appendixes

1. Consent Form
2. Interview Protocol
3. Interview Notes and Transcripts
4. Software Report

 The author’s vita

 Index (Rarely used)

[OTHER BACK MATTER]

Anything else that is important to add follows the appendixes. Such items, which are optional and depend upon the nature of a particular project, could include:

Bibliography (materials consulted that contributed to your project but not cited)

Sources recommended for further information on the subject of the research

These are used uncommonly, but if you have materials that you believe must be included to enable optimal comprehension and use of the content, talk to your advisor about including them. Extraneous material diminishes the credibility of the study.

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This is a list of all the books, journal articles, and information from other sources that are quoted or paraphrased in the report. APA 6th calls this a Reference List, but we prefer Works Cited. Follow precisely the correct style shin APA 6th (6.22-6.26, p. 180-183 and especially pp.193-215). Double space throughout with ½” hanging indent. Degrees and first names are not included in either references or in parenthetical citations (where initials are also omitted).

Everything in Works Cited must be used in the body of the report; every parenthetical citation in the report must be detailed in Works Cited. When you have finished all writing, print a copy of your Works Cited. Go through the text from start to finish to look at each parenthetical citation. If it is in Works Cited, put a check mark beside the listing. Then, see if you have any entries in the Works Cited that do not have a check mark. If you do, either delete it (it doesn’t belong because you didn’t use it) or see if you may have missed it when you went through the first time.

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APPENDIX A

TITLE OF APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: TITLE OF APPENDIX

The plural form of “appendix” may be either “appendixes” or “appendices.” The dictionary followed by APA 6th (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2005) shows “appendixes” as the preferred form, as do most other current dictionaries. The appendixes follow immediately after the Works Cited and are placed in the sequence in which their material appears in the body of the dissertation. The appendixes that are included depend upon the nature of the research. Each has a title page identified by a letter—A, B, C and so on. (This book does not follow that practice.) Should you have more than 26 (!), continue from Z as AA, AB, AC.

An appendix may contain only one item although that item may be multiple pages. For example, a survey would be in one appendix, but a permission form for a minor child to fill out the survey would be in another. Include all material that would help a naïve reader to comprehend exactly what you did, but only if the material is relevant. Do not open yourself to criticism of padding out a weak report.

Side margins of an appendix may be narrowed to accommodate a data table but reducing the size of the table is generally preferred. If the size of a figure or historical document is reduced, insert that information on the title page for that appendix (E.g., Map is 80% of actual size.)

Any instruction or other information given to participants. If given orally or by

 recording, include the script.

Letter requesting permission to do research at a location

Authorization received in response to a request for permission.

Forms for permission, release of information, or waiver of liability

CURRICULUM VITAE

A one-page vita is placed immediately after the last appendix. The vita includes significant summary information, including date of birth; granting institution for previous college degrees with dates, degree nomenclature, and field of study; a brief summary of employment; and any other facts (such as awards) that describe your qualifications as a researcher. The information is limited so that it fits on one page with adequate white space.