

EXPERIENCES OF HISPANIC UNITED METHODIST CLERGY
SERVING IN CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-RACIAL APPOINTMENTS
IN THE GREATER NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practice of a cohort of selected ministers. In order to do this, I interviewed forty percent of all Hispanic clergy pastors currently leading Euro-American congregations in the GNJUMC. Themes surfaced from these interviews that shed light on the disparities between the UMC's claims of inclusivity and the lived experiences of Hispanic clergy in cross-racial and cross-cultural (CRCC) appointments.

The research findings demonstrated that despite issues of prejudice, the Hispanic clergy adapted to the challenges, built trust, and effectively led their congregations and communities towards courageous transformation in inclusivity, reconciliation, and healing. Hispanic clergy helped members of their congregations expand their hospitality skills, which led to people in minority groups becoming more confident in joining the

congregation. The findings also revealed that CRCC appointments could be a helpful solution to embracing the increasing multiculturalism in our churches. The findings and implications of this study could help congregations overcome the barriers of multiculturalism as well as to train current and future cross-cultural and cross-racial appointments.

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I am a Hispanic Christian (parent, husband, pastor, and teacher) who still longs for racial reconciliation. This project emerges from the deepest yearnings of my spirit. It is written with empathy with those called to follow Christ. I thank the United Methodist ministers depicted in this study who serve so lovingly and courageously. Without their humble willingness to participate, this study would never have materialized. Their experiences and testimonies recorded in this work provide the ingredients for healthier cross-racial and cross-cultural (CRCC) appointments in Methodist churches. I pray that they will continue to allow God to use them as they help to build God's reign and realm.

Finally, I dedicate this project to all those who desire CRCC appointments to transform our church into the image of God. The sacrificial work of Hispanic clergy who serve Euro-American congregations and who feel called by God to such ministries is amazing and indispensable. I also dedicate this work to members in CRCC congregations

who are open to following God's transformative work and for our leaders who labor and pray for these appointments to work for the glory of God and the joy of all people.

This research makes no pretense of answering all the challenging questions that the project raises. Still, I hope that the work contained here will benefit cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - WE NEED A NEW PATH

“We commit ourselves to crossing boundaries of language, culture, and social or economic status. We commit ourselves to be in ministry with all people, as we, in faithfulness to the Gospel, seek to grow in mutual love and trust.”

*The United Methodist Book of Discipline.*¹

In 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o’clock on Sunday morning.”² According to experts, that assertion remains true today. Eight out of ten American congregants still attend services at a place where a single racial, or ethnic group, comprises at least eighty percent of the congregation.³ Is there something we can do to transform the racial issues in Christian congregations? How can we reduce racism in United Methodist Anglo churches? How can local congregations bring about racial reconciliation?

Christian doctrine teaches that God calls the church to a higher standard of love and reconciliation that is beyond cultural practices and can only exist in a relationship with God. God calls all Christians to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, welcoming those who are different. In a world of competition, the Christian faith invites people to acknowledge differences and share them as contributions to enrich each other. While all cross-racial and cross-cultural (CRCC) appointments have challenges and blessings, the experience of Hispanic clergy is remarkably different from other kinds of

¹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), ¶125.

² Michael Lipka, “Many U.S. Congregations are still Racially Segregated, but Things are Changing” Pew Research, December 8, 2014, accessed January 29, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/08/many-u-s-congregations-are-still-racially-segregated-but-things-are-changing-2/>

³ Ibid.

appointments.⁴ A Hispanic clergy-person leading a Euro-American church is considered to be a cross-racial and cross-cultural appointment; however, Hispanic is not a race but an ethnicity.⁵ Many Hispanic pastors are immigrants, but others were born in the US, and English is their first language. While all may be considered Hispanic, they have specific differences, from phenotypic expression, to skin colors, accents, places of origin, and customs. Despite all their differences, something calls them to be together and identify with each other. Something called them to be unified in their differences. This experience can be of great inspiration to today's American church and its future.

Many years ago, as a Hispanic immigrant aspiring to become a pastor, I became a United Methodist because I believed in its convictions regarding discrimination against church leaders based on race or ethnic background. The United Methodist Church (UMC) doctrine has always intended to include everyone, but it has not always done so in practice. In the last thirty years, the church has increased its efforts to fight the sin of racism in society and worked to overcome xenophobia, prejudice, and discrimination in local churches, yet much work remains. *The Book of Discipline*, which constitutes the law

⁴ An appointment in the UMC is an assignment of ordained clergy made by the Bishop and appointive cabinet to a local church or another context of ministry. According to *The Book of Discipline*, "appointments are to be made with consideration...to congregations and institutions' needs, characteristics, and opportunities." See, *The Book of Discipline*, ¶425.1. For the purposes of this project, the term "appointment," refers only to the assignment of a clergy-person in a ministerial position in a local church.

⁵ *The Book of Discipline* defines "cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments as appointments of clergy to congregations where the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergy person's own racial/ethnic and cultural background." See, *The Book of Discipline*, ¶425. Some clergy argue that every single appointment is a cross-cultural appointment because most clergy do not grow up in the same culture to which they are appointed. Most clergy have to do some cross-cultural work wherever they are sent. In the case of Hispanic clergy, the element of ethnicity and immigration adds to the equation, affecting the relationship between clergy and congregation. Ironically, race alone represents only an essential but small part of who a person is. Therefore, the weight that "race" holds to the appointment seems to be due to the congregation's focus, bias, and prejudice about looks rather than a clergy's effectiveness in ministry. Other specificity also adds to this equation, such as gender, age, and theological persuasion, which are often perceived as complications.

and doctrine of The United Methodist Church, states in paragraph four, of the constitution's Article IV:

The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.⁶

Unfortunately, there are still discrepancies regarding racism and xenophobia within the denomination and the local church.⁷ There are still church participants who resist the presence of leaders who look different from most members of their congregations. Despite this resistance, many denominational leaders have courageously and prophetically supported the work of clergy in minoritized groups.⁸ They have taken several risks to create a more inclusive and equitable local church appointment, yet not without struggle.

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual

⁶ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶4.

⁷ Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Cultural-Cross-Racial Appointments* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2003), 2-4.

⁸ Some people view the term "minority" negatively because it suggests that people in this group have less or no representation and power. From a Christian theological point of view, no group of people should be considered minor or lesser because all people are equally children of God. The term "minority" results from a social construction imposed on people, leaving them vulnerable to stigmas and prejudices. This term is used to describe people who have been made a minority in the United States. However, they are a majority in other parts of the world. For instance, Hispanics make up most people living in South America, but they become minoritized by the majority when they live in the United States. When referring to Hispanic people living in the US, this project will use the term "minoritized" instead of the more common term "minority" to name people of color or other races or ethnic groups that live in the U.S. that are not Euro-American. I will not use this term to identify other minoritized groups, such as women, undocumented immigrants, people with disabilities, people in the LGBTQI+ community, and others.

Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC), and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practice of a cohort of selected ministers. This research will be used to inform the creation of resources for new cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments, because CRCC appointments are the most authentic expression of open itinerancy in the church.⁹ For ease of reading this project, which discusses CRCC appointments and issues of race and discrimination in local churches within the Greater New Jersey Conference, I have compiled a list of terms used throughout. Except for the concepts stated in *The Book of Discipline*, most of the terms do not have a single or uniformly agreed upon definition in the academy. These terms and concepts are listed in Appendix C.

The chapter below will establish the context and theoretical grounds of this project. This project is divided into three parts: the first part will describe the vision of a multicultural church and CRCC appointments as a tool to realize God's reign through the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Part two will describe the challenges that prevent ministers and congregations from fulfilling this mission. The final part will look at the necessity and advantage of CRCC appointments and conclude with an examination of its limitations.

⁹ *The Book of Discipline* guarantees the appointment of clergy based on gifts and graces and encourages the practice of open itinerancy. Open itinerancy is the UMC's practice where appointments are made "without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age." See, *The Book of Discipline*, ¶425.1. While some still believe that white churches should have white pastors and Hispanic churches, Hispanic pastors, according to *The Book of Discipline*, the UMC must practice appointment decisions based on a clergy's gifts and needs rather than race or ethnic background. In the same paragraph cited above, *The Book of Discipline* notes that the responsibilities of the Annual Conference with regard to open itinerancy. It states, "annual conferences shall...prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age." See, *The Book of Discipline*, ¶425.1. *The Book of Discipline* affirms open itinerancy by affirming that "the United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of an inclusive church with the formation of open itinerancy." See, *The Book of Discipline*, ¶425.3.

Background And Context

The writers of the Hebrew Bible claim that God created all people in God's image and called them good. However, some church-going Christians act and interact in a way that reflects a lack of consideration for people in minoritized groups.¹⁰ While Hispanics still contribute to the progress of America, they suffer prejudice and discrimination. This situation is particularly challenging when Hispanic clergy are sent to lead and serve Euro-American congregations and communities.¹¹ *The Book of Discipline* states that "the church is in ministry without regard of ethnic origin, economic condition, gender, age, or the disabilities of its constituents. To fulfill God's reign and realm in the world or be truly alive, [we must] embrace Jesus' mandate to love God and neighbors and make disciples of all peoples."¹² However, while church leaders have set expectations and guidelines to live as an inclusive church free from discrimination, it is not fully reflected in practice.¹³

The Vision and Mission of the Church

The Book of Discipline is consistent with the vision and mission set forth in the Scriptures, specifically, 1.) the Great Commandment and 2.) the Great Commission are fundamentals to fulfill God's reign and realm. *The Book of Discipline* states:

The fulfillment of God's reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us... Jesus' words in Matthew provide the Church with our mission: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you" (28:19-20), and "You must love the Lord

¹⁰ McSpadden, 2-4.

¹¹ The terms Euro-American, whites, or Anglo-American are used interchangeably in this project. They refer to United States residents who can trace their ancestry to Western European people. In this dissertation, I use the term Euro-Americans only when referring to white Euro-Americans, even though Euro-American people can also be a part of a minoritized groups such as brown Euro-Americans, black Euro-Americans, Asian Euro-Americans, and others.

¹² *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶121.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ¶ 425.1.

your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. . . . You must love your neighbor as you love yourself” (22:37, 39).¹⁴

Jesus gave his followers the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). The message of two verses are essential practices of Christianity, entailing how a disciple relates to God and their neighbors. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission lead the Christian mission and ministries and demonstrate how Christians ought to treat others, especially those who are different from them. According to the UMC, its mission is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”¹⁵ This mission happens through local churches because that is where disciple-making takes place.¹⁶ Local churches will grow spiritually when congregations believe and act according to their mission. In the same paragraph, *The Book of Discipline* states that UMC realizes its mission “by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world.”¹⁷

This mission involves an imitation of Jesus’ command to love God first and then to love one’s neighbor, as described by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In this parable, Jesus asks, “Who is my neighbor?” The answer to this question challenges Jesus’ disciples to receive Samaritans, those who to his intended audience were foreigners, had different customs, and were regarded as strangers. Therefore, the fulfillment of God’s reign is motivated by a love that transcends borders. Understanding

¹⁴ Ibid., ¶ 121.

¹⁵ Ibid., ¶ 120.

¹⁶ Ibid., ¶ 120.

¹⁷ Ibid., ¶ 121.

and accepting other cultures is indispensable to the practice of Christian love. To this end, professor of cross-culturalism Duane Elmer writes,

We are called to love all people. But can I truly love someone I do not, at least in some measure, understand? Love requires some understanding of its object. That means love is culturally defined. When we truly love others, we love them in their own context, in keeping with the way they define love. We can't express love in a vacuum. It can be expressed egocentrically (my way) or sociocentrically (as the other person would define an act of love).¹⁸

The Book of Discipline and prominent Methodist founding fathers, like John Wesley, Phillip Otterbein, and Jacob Albright, understood the mission as “our grace-filled response to the reign of God in the world announced by Jesus.”¹⁹

Many church leaders and general agencies have voiced their concerns about discrimination and segregation, urging members to pray, educate, and engage in conversations regarding these issues. However, while UMC leadership tried to address institutional and systemic racism, there is still a long way to go.²⁰ CRCC clergy serving Euro-American churches report passive-aggressive behaviors and micro-aggressions perpetuated against them from their congregants.²¹ The Council of Bishops calls on all members to name racism a sin and resist injustice and violence towards minoritized people.²² In its section on the UMC Social Principles, *The Book of Discipline* states,

¹⁸ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 14-15.

¹⁹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶121.

²⁰ McSpadden, 4.

²¹ Rejection of clergy by members of congregations is not only a matter of race, but it is an intersectional issue because it rejects simultaneously and multiple social identities within interlocking systems of oppression. According to Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, “People experience always and at once their gender, race, sexual identity, ability, age, social class, nation, and religion, [theological persuasion].” See, Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide* (Minneapolis, MN.: Fortress Press, 2018). All interviewed Hispanic clergywomen reported that it was worse to be rejected for being women than for being Hispanic.

²² “Council of Bishops’ statement on the Scourge of Racism,” Council of Bishops, June 8, 2020, accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/files/websites/www/pdfs/cob+Statement+on+racism+-+june+8+final.pdf>.

“Racism, manifested as sin, plagues, and hinders our relationship with Christ, in as much as it is antithetical to the Gospel itself... We commit as the church to move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access.”²³ The UMC website further states, “[The church] supports the concept of affirmative action to guarantee more opportunities for all to compete for jobs. It opposes racial profiling, mass incarceration, targeting migrants, and sentencing practices which disproportionately penalize minorities.”²⁴

As the body of Christ, the church has a theological commitment to fulfill the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The theological concepts contained within these verses represent the true vision of the church. The next section will state the issue that impede church members from realizing the church’s vision and mission.

The Research Problem

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC), and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practices of a cohort of ministers. In her book, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Racial Appointments*, Lucia Ann McSpadden observes that Bishops and Superintendents “express the hope that cross-cultural and cross-racial appointments will expand church member’s sensitivity toward cultural and racial issues and will prompt institutional

²³ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶162.

²⁴ "What does The United Methodist Church say about racism?" The United Methodist Church, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-does-the-united-methodist-church-say-about-racism>.

change.”²⁵ In the early 2000s, several District Superintendents from the Northern New Jersey conference stated,

We are the conference in which the churches are forerunners of the world to come. The Bishop feels very strongly that the church should be the leader, demonstrating to society what it means to live in a multicultural society. The church can be a good example. These [clergy/congregation cross-racial] matches are intentional, strategic appointments in the sense of the future context of ministry that will be much more multiethnic. These appointments can help the church to regain its vitality and growth. We feel that it is the growing edge.²⁶

However, while these are consistent messages from denominational leaders, there are still expressions of racial discrimination and racial hierarchy in the church. For instance, there are still committees in some Annual Conferences that do not have minoritized group representation. Multiculturalism is a sign of faith development because it fulfills God’s reign and realm in the world. In this multicultural world, how disciples of Jesus treat those different from them will promote, or inhibit, their spiritual growth. Therefore, effectiveness in Euro-American congregations is rightly demonstrated by how members grow in their relationship with God and how they relate to other people, especially people from marginalized groups. This concept is crucial because of the racially challenging times we live in today.

The cultural and racial challenge in the UMC is fourfold: ethical, theological, missional, and educational. It is ethical because of discrimination and oppression based on race and ethnicity in CRCC appointments. The theological problem is the misunderstanding of Methodist doctrine and practice that can lead to unethical behavior—such as a congregation’s resistance to minoritized groups. It is missional because the

²⁵ McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross-Cultural-Cross-Racial Appointments*, 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

unsatisfactory processes in the ministry will eventually cause difficulties for members, communities, and church structure. The missional problem is the supply and demand of clergy, and the rapid racial and ethnic changes in communities around traditionally white neighborhoods. Finally, it is educational because cultural competence and diversity, equity, and inclusion training did not achieve the expected outcome.²⁷ On the other side, the traditional ideas of equality tend to support colorblindness and do not bring about reconciliation. In what follows, I will expand upon the four cultural and racial challenges listed above.

The Ethical Problem

Despite all claims of inclusivity and antiracism campaigns, some church members still oppose CRCC appointments based on race or ethnicity, ignoring the institutional commitment to inclusivity. Some congregations refuse to open their doors to baptized people for whom Christ died due to racial biases. *The Book of Discipline* states that “cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership.”²⁸ The vision of inclusion in the UMC appears to be an overly idealistic dream when compared to statistical research regarding discrimination, xenophobia, and racism. CRCC Hispanic clergy and their families endure acts of prejudice and microaggressions from members of the congregations as well as from within the wider communities they serve.²⁹

²⁷ George A. Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division, A Unifying Alternative to Colorblindness and Antiracism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2022), 90-91.

²⁸ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶425.4.

²⁹ Yancey, 60-83. See also, The Encyclopedia Britannica defines microaggressions as “verbal or behavioral slights, generally subtle and often unintentional or unconscious, that communicate a stereotype or negative attitude toward a person of color and thus indicate an implicit bias based on race.” The Encyclopedia Britannica article “Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory” indicates that “the common occurrence of racial microaggressions is indicative of the pervasiveness of racist attitudes even among people who consciously reject racism, and their cumulative effect on people of color can be

People are more than their race, privilege, and ethnicity. In an interview with Ruby Sales titled, “Where does it hurt?,” she said that there are people, “who have been told that their whole essence is whiteness, power, and domination, and when those no longer exist, they feel as if they are dying.”³⁰ When their whiteness is threatened, Euro-Americans panic as if that is all they are or have. Church and theology failed because it was incompetent to help people understand that they were more than their whiteness.

When we think of theologies of liberation, we think of theologies for minorities. However, a theology of liberation among Euro-Americans will be one where people understand that they are more than their power and privilege. Their worth is so abundant that there is more than enough to share with others. Racism always causes wounds on both sides, on the victim’s side and on the attacker’s side. People tend to focus on the victim. However, for those at the other end of the wound of discrimination, a theology of unwavering love can be an instrument of healing. As Sales states, it is not about being angry about injustice, but it is, instead, more about loving the idea of justice.³¹

The Theological Problem

The UMC emphasizes mission, unity, and inclusivity. One of their slogans reads, “Open arms, open minds, and open hearts.” However, some members still have their arms, minds, and hearts closed to CRCC appointments and its efforts towards multiculturalism. Discrimination goes against the teachings of Jesus Christ and the

psychologically devastating.” Encyclopedia Britannica, “microaggression,” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic>. See also, Encyclopedia Britannica, “Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory,” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory/Basic-tenets-of-critical-race-theory>.

³⁰ Ruby Sales, “Where Does it Hurt?” On Being Podcast, last modified January 16, 2020, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt-aug2017/>

³¹ Ibid.

Methodist doctrine. Jesus called his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations.”³² Many scholars have pointed out that the Greek word *ethne*, translated as “nations,” is the plural form of *ethnos*, from which *ethnic* and *ethnicity* are derivatives. If we follow this translation, Jesus was not speaking about going to an institution or a location, rather he was calling his followers to minister to different groups of people.³³

The Missional Problem

While ethical and theological challenges are enough to make drastic changes when dealing with racial and cultural issues, three significant missional problems also require attention. First, Christians in America will become more diverse in the years to come.³⁴ Second, there will be an increasing scarcity of Euro-American clergy in the US, and, thirdly, traditional white neighborhoods will become more multicultural and multilingual.³⁵ These issues are not problems in and of themselves, but the lack of action and transformation in response to these issues result in hurt and harm, which will continue to impact the church if laity and clergy do not take new approaches to the growing diversity of the population of the U.S. generally and within the church, specifically.

Local churches must consider multiculturalism simply because the U.S. is becoming more multicultural. East Coast communities are rapidly becoming more diverse which demonstrates that multiculturalism will need to be embraced. For instance, hospitals in New Jersey receive individuals of every race and ethnicity, and laws require

³² Matthew 28:18-20, NRSV.

³³ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 718.

³⁴ Jeff Gammage, "The United States Is Becoming More Diverse and Quickly, in Certain Places," accessed January 22, 2022., <https://www.inquirer.com/news/demographic-diverse-Euro-American-non-Euro-American-pew-20190826.html>

³⁵ Ibid.

hospitals not to reject patients if they do not speak English. New Jersey law states, “A non-English-speaking person who visits or stays in a hospital can expect the hospital to determine what language they speak and offer language assistance provided by the hospital. The hospital cannot require a patient to bring an interpreter.”³⁶ Neither can a patient request to be attended by different medical personnel due to the attending professional’s race or ethnicity. Therefore, it is reprehensible that UMC church members oppose having CRCC appointments due to the clergy’s race or ethnicity. While laws protect clergy in minoritized groups against this kind of discrimination, the behavior of some church members shows a different story.

In the last several years, secular parts of society like business, healthcare systems, and institutions of higher education have developed laws and guidelines to create environments where people of all races can interact. As cultural shifts happen in neighborhoods, and the world grows in diversity, there is a need for clergy with cross-racial and multilingual competencies to lead communities of complex racial compositions. Being more open to cross-racial appointments is one step toward Christian congregations growing in understanding the multiracial movement.

Many United Methodist Church researchers, such as Rev. Lovett Weems, have stated that the UMC will only have a future if it reaches individuals of multiple ethnic groups.³⁷ Therefore, the Christian church must inevitably change. The Pew Research Center states that America is becoming more diverse as the Euro-American share of the

³⁶ "A Hospital Patient's Right to Language Assistance Services," LSNJLAW, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.lsnjlaw.org/Health-Care/Uninsured/Hospitals/Pages/Hospital-Patients-Right-Language-Assistance-Services.aspx>

³⁷ Lovett Weems, Speech presentation on Nov. 6 to the denomination's Council of Bishops after examining the State of the Church Report 2007, accessed January 21, 2022, <https://www.umcna.org/postdetail/121285>.

population decreases and Hispanic, Asian, and African American populations increase. This projection reveals that the number of minoritized people will increase in the next few years and will no longer be the minority.³⁸ A second reason is that in recent years, the number of Euro-American churches has increased more than the number of Euro-American clergy available to serve in the GNJUMC. In the same way, there are also more clergy of minoritized groups than churches of minoritized communities. Therefore, some churches may have to embrace CRCC appointments in order to have functioning congregations.

Finally, the missional reason to embrace multiculturalism and CRCC appointments is the transformation of Euro-American communities into more diverse neighborhoods. In the past, Methodist congregations built most UMC places of worship amidst white communities in the past. Recently, these communities have become more diverse. New generations of Euro-American church members move out of their local church's neighborhoods and into nearby cities, while minoritized groups have moved into the old neighborhoods. Therefore, in some areas, the church communities have become more racially and linguistically diverse, and this trend will continue. There is a need for bilingual clergy to assist the pastoral needs of the church's communities even when the Euro-American congregation members are still a majority.

The Educational Problem

Our society and our church have been taking two approaches to fight the problem of separation in the last few years. In one corner, colorblind people assume that race does not matter and everybody is the same. They do not understand why non-majority people

³⁸ Gammage, "The United States Is Becoming More Diverse and Quickly, in Certain Places."

do not accept that. On the other corner, antiracists assume that race and people's differences are very important; and the only solution for reconciliation is that white people admit and somehow dismantle their whiteness. The most progressive members of the Methodist denomination have taken this second approach. However, research has shown that neither of these approaches accomplishes the desired outcome.³⁹ While colorblindness ignores the voice of the minoritized people, extreme antiracist efforts try to silence the voices of Euro-American people. According to research, cultural competence training—while well-intentioned—has not shown to have a long-term effect on prejudice and discrimination or expand social justice outcomes.⁴⁰ In some cases, diversity training based on antiracist principles seems more like indoctrination. Some of these programs emphasize the importance of white people learning about their privilege and focus on teaching them to be humble. Antiracism emphasizes the need to compel white people to learn from minoritized people. However, research has indicated that “forcing whites to undergo diversity training can generate backlash against people of color.”⁴¹

Another theory that this project will consider comes from Professor of Religion Jennifer Harvey, who notices a contradictory problem regarding reaching reconciliation in the church. Harvey is not against reconciliation but critiques the traditional reconciliation paradigm because it has failed to create reconciliation.⁴² The reconciliation paradigm teaches that all people are equal and must leave the past behind. She writes, "If we continue to live with an acknowledged history of white hostility to and violence

³⁹ Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 90-91.

⁴⁰ C. K. Lai, et al. (2016). “Reducing implicit racial preferences: II. Intervention effectiveness across time.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 145(8), 1001.

⁴¹ Yancey, 90.

⁴² Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2020), 19-20.

against communities of color, then speaking of reconciliation may do more harm than good."⁴³ Harvey believes that only a reparation paradigm, based on a knowledge of history and structural privilege, will bring society to real reconciliation.⁴⁴ She argues that we have missed the step of reparation; without it we will not reach reconciliation.⁴⁵ The reparation paradigm is theoretical and Biblical. In the Gospel of Luke, Zacchaeus came down from a tree despite his fear and trembling. When he met Jesus, he immediately repented of his sin. Zacchaeus declared that he would give half of the wealth he had accrued through complicity in an unjust and violent system to the poor, and fourfold back in reparations to those from whom he had stolen. The story ends with Jesus declaring, "Today salvation has come to this house."⁴⁶ The work of reparation helps church members identify the necessary pathways for responding to our actual racial crisis. We have seen that the cultural and racial challenges in the UMC are fourfold: ethical, theological, missional, and educational. Despite these obstacles, the benefits of multiculturalism and CRCC appointments outweigh the challenges.

The Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading local Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practices of a select cohort of ministers.⁴⁷ The following research objectives drive this project, including data

⁴³ Ibid., 91-93.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 121-123.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Luke 19:1-10, NRSV.

⁴⁷ The terms Hispanic American, Latino/Latina, Latin American, or Latinx are used interchangeably throughout this project. These terms refer to United States residents who can trace their

collection, analysis, and conclusions. These research objectives also help narrow the focus of the research and key variables guiding the research process. The objectives for this project are as follows:

1. To assess the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of their appointment in the GNJUMC.
2. To evaluate the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service.
3. To identify the contributions to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last few years.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What can we gain from assessing the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of the appointment?
2. What are the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service?
3. What has contributed to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last few years?

Below you will see an explanation of each question and the rationale for their consideration:

The Research Significance

This study will research the relationships between Hispanic clergy and Euro-American congregations in CRCC appointments to assess the effectiveness of multiculturalism, inclusivity, and appointment-making in churches in the GNJUMC. This work will be done by surfacing and evaluating the experiences of Hispanic clergy serving Euro-American congregations. This study will also address the current shortage of research in this area and provide real-world value to GNJUMC-appointing officials, Hispanic clergy in CRCC appointments, and Euro-American congregations in CRCC

ancestry to Hispanic Americans, people from Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, or any other person born in the U.S. who consider themselves of Hispanic ethnicity.

appointments. By assessing the experience, evaluating the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges, and identifying the contributions to the success of Hispanics in CRCC appointments, this study will contribute to the transformation of communities and local congregations. From a theological perspective, this study will contribute to the realization of the UMC's vision and mission, the spiritual development associated with inclusivity, the healing of minoritized communities, and the building of the reign of God.

The Research Limitations

In this section, I want to acknowledge the potential limitations of this research project, such as a narrow scope, the research methodology, the lack of resources and the generalizability of the study. The focus of this study is very narrow; it does not consider how certain variables interact with each other, i.e., theology or gender. The collection of data took place over one-month time period, in which I conducted a single one-hour-long interview session with each interviewee. A more in-depth study would interview the participants several times. In general, the research takes on the perspective of the Hispanic pastor and not that of the church members. Another limitation is the research methodology used for this study. I am using a qualitative methodology, which some may consider overly subjective. In addition, the resources used for this study, such as time, money, and equipment, were limited. Finally, the generalizability of the study could be challenging because the experience of clergy is different from church to church and state to state. This is a study of a specific group of people in specific situations: Hispanic pastors serving in Anglo-American congregations within the GNJUMC.

Structural Outline

Chapter One introduces the context of the study, the research objectives and questions, and the study's limitations. In Chapter Two, the existing literature is reviewed to identify the need and advantages of multiculturalism and CRCC appointments. In addition, the historical precedent of racism and xenophobia in America and Methodism and how it changed over time will help us to understand and analyze CRCC's current situation. Chapter Three presents the theoretical framework: adopting a qualitative, inductive research approach, and the broader research design will be discussed, including limitations. In Chapter Four, the findings are presented and divided into vocation, prejudice, transformation, and healing themes. Chapter Five analyzes the findings of Chapter Four, and the summary of key findings is presented. Chapter Six presents the overall findings: how they relate to the theory, the practical contributions to the church and society, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE - WHERE WE ARE

This chapter will present the need for CRCC appointments in the context of today's multicultural society and will explain how CRCC appointments may bring about a solution to the skepticism of multiculturalist efforts and bring about healing in integration. It will present the advantages of multicultural churches and CRCC appointments as an effort to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our churches and embrace society's diversity in order for CRCC ministries to be effective. Finally, this section will present the historical precedent to understand the struggle against racism and xenophobia in Methodist history that can help church members better understand the current situation.

Objections to Multiculturalism

Cross-racial and cross-cultural (CRCC) appointments can help the church build bridges among people of different races and ethnic identities and, thus, realize its vision and mission. Before arguing in favor of CRCC ministries and multiculturalism in local churches, it is necessary to point out two primary arguments against multicultural churches and, by extension, CRCC appointments. One of the most influential researchers on multicultural churches, George Yancey, notes that these theories come from church growth theory and a cultural pluralism argument.¹ Church Growth Theory argues that the fastest-growing churches are monoracial. On the other side, cultural pluralists argue that multiculturalism risks erasing smaller minoritized church cultures.

¹ George A. Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 29.

In his book, *White Over Black*, Jordan D. Winthrop argues that church growth is the essential task of the church following the Great Commission. Winthrop argues that church growth depends on its members feeling comfortable.² This approach works when congregants share the same lifestyle and experiences, including race, ethnicity, and cultural background.³ In the late seventies, C. Peter Wagner, who coined the phrase “homogeneous unit principle,” also contends that culturally homogeneous churches grow the fastest, and that focusing on diversity is time wasted.⁴

On the other hand, cultural pluralists, including some liberation theologians, are skeptical of multiracial churches because they fear the risk of their minoritized cultures being absorbed and erased into the larger Euro-American culture. They advocate preserving minoritized cultures that have suffered from attempts at assimilation made by Euro-American culture. These scholars maintain that since minoritized groups have an equal value to Euro-American culture, they should also have equal opportunities to express their culture. Hispanic theologian Arturo J. Bunuelas believes that when we rush to integrate Euro-American and minoritized groups, Euro-Americans tend to assimilate them; therefore, the call for multiracial churches must not result in minoritized groups becoming part of Euro-American churches.⁵ In some cases, non-Euro-American worshipers had to sacrifice their culture or heritage to worship in a “whiter” way. When minoritized communities are rushed to integrate, Euro-American religious practices and traditions dominate, even if the Anglo group is smaller. Cultural pluralists do not deny

² Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

³ Ibid.

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979).

⁵ Arturo J. Bunuelas, “U.S. Hispanic theology: An Initial Assessment,” in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective.*, ed. Arturo J. Bunuelas (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 55-822.

the value of multicultural congregations and CRCC appointments, but they are cautious about using multicultural strategies that could suffocate the culture of minoritized congregations.⁶ They intend to preserve and maintain the worth and dignity of minoritized cultures.

Despite these two arguments, the advantages of multicultural churches and CRCC outweigh their potential challenges. Multiculturalism is a movement that tries to build a better world where people from distinct backgrounds can live in peace and with equal respect—where all can celebrate and recognize their racial and ethnic identity, and cultural diversities. To realize this vision, every Methodist must work for inclusion and equity, respecting and valuing the uniqueness of every individual and culture.

Advantages of Multicultural Churches and CRCC Appointments

How do we create a world where all people from different races, ethnic identities, and cultures can equitably live together? Theologian Giancarlo Collet, who tried to convey concerns of Liberation Theology into the European theological debates to break up the Eurocentrism of theology, considers the term multiculturalism as “a social model for the future.”⁷ He imagines a world where all are respected and recognized regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture. Similarly, sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas understand multiculturalism in a more militant expression—as a way of “overcoming an illegitimate division of society.”⁸ He sees multiculturalism as “the struggle of oppressed

⁶ Virgilio P. Elizondo, “Mestizaje as a Locus of Theological Reflection,” in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, ed. Arturo J. Banuelas (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 13.

⁷ Giancarlo Collet, “From Theological Vandalism to Theological Romanticism? Questions about a Multicultural Identity of Christianity,” in *Christianity and Cultures*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 28-29.

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, “Struggles for Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 177.

ethnic and cultural minorities for recognition of their collective identities.”⁹ While the oppressed must seek recognition, those in privileged positions must make efforts to reduce the tension. Therefore, the church is the best place to start because it contains love, inclusivity, compassion, and empathy principles in its theology and narrative.

While the terms CRCC and multiculturalism did not exist in biblical times, Methodist theology affirms that this was God’s intention for the church. Theologically, the church is made of diverse children of God who calls them to be relational, to reconcile, and witness God’s love. Christians are called to be multicultural, to go and become missionaries, to receive and be hospitable. In the following pages, we will examine seven reasons that support the existence and creation of multicultural churches and CRCC appointments.

We are all Children of God

The UMC practices CRCC ministries based on the theological foundation that God created all people in God’s image.¹⁰ In its constitution, “the United Methodist Church proclaims the value of each person as a unique child of God and commits itself to the healing and wholeness of all persons.”¹¹ CRCC affirms every individual’s dignity and fundamental value from the Creator’s perspective. From a theological perspective, Methodist Christians believe that we all, in our unique way, are the image of God. Rev. John Edgar, the founder of the multicultural and multiracial Church for All People Ministries, said, “a multicultural community better represents the inclusive body of Christ because Christ is seen better when the church is more diverse.”¹² Since each individual is

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Genesis 1:26-31; Acts 17:24-26, NRSV.

¹¹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶5.5.

¹² John Edgar, Oral presentation during Church for All People Conference, 2018.

the image of God (in their diversity), the church looks more like God when it is more diverse.

Affirming Differences

The Christian faith affirms God's gift of diversity, where everyone must accept each other as having the same worth and sacredness.¹³ One interpretation of the stories of the Tower of Babel and Pentecost depicts God as warning against ethnocentrism.¹⁴ In the book, *Many Faces One Church*, Ernest S. Lyght writes, "If cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are not supported, the notion that a particular race or group who live in one particular geographical location of the world hold a monopoly over the Gospel of Jesus Christ is perpetuated."¹⁵ In contrast to the notion that one group possesses a superior culture, CRCC ministries uphold the idea that individuals have different gifts and that all can learn from one another.

The Church is Relational

Cross-racial and cross-cultural ministry practices follow the theological and biblical foundation that the church is relational.¹⁶ CRCC appointments and multicultural ministries intend to establish communities that pursue wholeness by promoting unity and peace among diverse people. The church is a gathering place for people of different backgrounds. *The Book of Discipline* states that the church "affirms the worth of all humanity and the value of interrelationship... We are called together for worship and

¹³ Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2, NRSV.

¹⁴ Eric H. F Law, *Living the Gospel of Peace: Tools for Building More Inclusive Community* (Presbyterian Peacemaking Program 2014).

¹⁵ Ernest S. Lyght, Glory E. Dharmaraj, and Jacob S. Dharmaraj, *Many Faces, One Church: A Manual for Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 17.

¹⁶ Acts 17:22-34, NRSV.

fellowship and the upbuilding of the Christian community. We advocate and work for the unity of the Christian church.”¹⁷

Witnessing

Healing the wounds of racism and xenophobia must be an essential spiritual practice for each United Methodist member. The local church has a prophetic call to witness not only to fellow church members, but to society in general. In his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, Walter Brueggemann explains that “the task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.”¹⁸ Out of this alternative consciousness, the church moves towards a healing imperative by assuming the role of public advocate and creating public and inclusive dialogue.

How a local church appears sends a message to society about Christian spirituality. Jennifer Harvey explains that, "separate worship must mean we are still resistant to difference and hold negative views of those whose racial identities are distinct from our own." ¹⁹ Even when this is not the intention of church members in monoracial churches, at least that is how it looks from the outside. Yancey notes that homogeneous churches have “the appearance of elitist groups” that perpetuate exclusionary sentiments.²⁰ In contrast, when people see that Christian institutions model racial healing, living together, and loving each other despite differences, they will see the Christian faith in action.

¹⁷ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶124.

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 50.

¹⁹ Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 19.

²⁰ Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit*, 47.

Reconciliation

The United Methodist Church proclaims “the value of each person as a unique child of God and commits itself to the healing and wholeness of all persons.”²¹ With these ideas in mind, CRCC ministries can contribute to healing endeavors by bearing with one another in love and grace. A multicultural church can help alleviate racial alienation by being “a natural extension of racial reconciliation [and] a mechanism that can help produce racial reconciliation.”²² In this case, “reconciliation is the overcoming of alienation, estrangement, hostility, and enmity through the Spirit of Christ.”²³

Hispanic pastors are crucial for transforming the American church positively. Elizondo's analysis of the Christian Hispanics living in the United States led him to develop the "Jerusalem principle." This theory notes that oppressed people have an advantage “to confront, transcend, and transform everything that the oppressive society diminishes and that destroys the fundamental dignity of nature.”²⁴ In this view, oppressed Hispanics are critical for the transformation of our society. Their model is the work of Jesus, who transformed the world as a member of an oppressed group. Elizondo argues that the fact that even though Hispanics are minoritized, it does not mean they are passive; instead, Hispanic bicultural skills are a blessing to the church and become a “bridge between the oppressor and the oppressed.”²⁵ Understanding that the ultimate task

²¹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶5.

²² Yancey, 43.

²³ HiRho Y. Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence: How to Lead Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Churches* (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2018), 7.

²⁴ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 103.

²⁵ Eduardo C. Fernandez, *La Cosecha, Teología Hispana Contemporanea en Estados Unidos, (1972-1998)* (México DF, México: Buena Prensa, 2009), 95-96.

of theology is liberation, Hispanic clergy in CRCC appointments serve as a bridge between Euro-American communities and minoritized groups wherever they serve.

Reaching Multiracial Communities

Multicultural churches and churches with CRCC appointments have better chances of reaching multiracial communities and interracial families. Crossing boundaries confirms Christian readiness to “go into the world to make disciples.”²⁶ *The Book of Discipline* states, “We commit ourselves to crossing boundaries of language, culture, and social or economic status. We commit ourselves to be in ministry with all people, as we, in faithfulness to the Gospel, seek to grow in mutual love and trust.”²⁷ In theory, Methodists have a steadfast commitment to “cross boundaries;” thus, they are responsible for putting that into practice by supporting CRCC appointments and multicultural ministries. However, research shows this is not so. There are minoritized people and clergy who endure expressions of prejudice and discrimination in local churches. Yancey says that if churches are not ready to receive “such individuals,” people in minoritized communities may choose not to participate.²⁸

Receiving Missionaries

The purpose of the church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”²⁹ The commandment to “go into the world” implies that others will have to “receive those who are coming.” Going into the world (carrying the Gospel) is as vital as receiving those sent to carry the Gospel. For many years, the Methodist movement has sent missionaries to share the Gospel in other countries. Still,

²⁶ Matthew 28, NRSV.

²⁷ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶125.

²⁸ Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*, 42.

²⁹ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶120.

the church has experienced a new paradigm shift in the last few years. The American church's responsibility has changed from sending to receiving. The time has come when American churches need to receive missionaries from other parts of the world. Thus, for the Great Commission to be realized, going is as important as receiving.

As we have seen, the church's vision is an invitation to embrace the multicultural and diverse field of work. The writers of the Gospel depict Jesus as one who receives people from other parts of the world.³⁰ In his childhood, Jesus received the wise men.³¹ He received outsiders like Greeks, Syrophoenicians, and Samaritans throughout his life. When the majority group refuses to accept people (and their gifts) who are different, they contradict their Christian foundations.

Needed Commitments: Hospitality, Empathy, Lament

In order to transform our local churches and society, research demonstrates that three commitments are necessary: a commitment to hospitality, empathy, and lament. This section will explain such commitments.

Hospitality

Christine D. Pohl notices that churches are not generous about sharing their friendship, companionship, understanding, or appreciation—what she calls their “best resources.” She says:

Churches have generally done better with offering food programs and providing clothing closets than with welcoming into worship people significantly different from their congregations. Because we are unaware of the significance of our friendship and fellowship, our best resources often remain inaccessible to strangers. But it is also the case that building friendships across significant social differences can be challenging. Churches have the material, social, and spiritual resources to practice vibrant expressions of hospitality, yet the sad testimony from

³⁰ Matthew 8:11, NRSV.

³¹ Matthew 2, NRSV.

a number of practitioners of hospitality is that the people they welcome often do not find welcome in local churches.³²

Hospitality is an ancient virtue practiced by many cultures and by the followers of Jesus. When Christians care for strangers, they respond to the theological and biblical vocation to be hospitable. Scholars, like Charles Foster, speak of the need to embrace others as if we could not do without them. Foster writes, “Embrace is a movement to create space in oneself for the other: while communicating that we do not want to be without the other in his otherness.”³³ Embracing occurs when individuals have opportunities to familiarize people who are from different in places where intercultural relationships are celebrated, such as the local church. Any congregation that wants to embody the great commission will be compelled to embrace racial and cultural diversity. Hospitality is critical for worship and congregational life because it moves church members to reach out to those who do not look like them, thus moving them closer to embracing diversity and creating channels of reconciliation and liberation. To understand hospitality towards others, first, we need to understand hospitality towards God.

People are always attracted to those who look and think like them; the familiar feels safe and trustworthy. However, God is not like us. God is, in some ways, vastly different and mysterious. In being not like us, God is strange. How does a community of faith trust and receive the divine if God is a stranger? Such a community practices hospitality. Arthur Sutherland argues that hospitality is the main component of God’s plan because God will always be a stranger to us. Receiving God is receiving a stranger,

³² Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 160.

³³ Charles R. Foster, *Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1997), 1-2.

someone different from us.³⁴ Rowan Williams writes, “Because Christ’s life is catholic and unbounded, he is never fully absorbed by any human context. He is both ‘native’ and ‘stranger’ to all social locations.”³⁵ In the incarnation, Christ crosses the boundary of space and time to live among people and with people.³⁶ The incarnation is the coming of the stranger. Receiving God, therefore, is an act of faith, and so is receiving the other.

The theological concept of hospitality helps congregations, especially Euro-Americans, recognize the differences in foreigners and provide a generous and friendly reception. Welcoming the “other” can mean taking a risk and experiencing a sense of danger.³⁷ The risky practice of hospitality requires receiving someone different from us, whether God or clergy from another race. Hospitality is particularly challenging and edifying when the stranger is selected to lead. Pohl argues that Christian hospitality has a subversive and counter-cultural dimension different from the hospitality industries we find in hotels or other businesses.

One story that illustrates the importance of hospitality is found in Matthew’s gospel, in the parable of the judgment of nations.³⁸ In this parable, Jesus tells his disciples that the king thanks his people for taking care of him when he was a stranger.³⁹ The king’s people seemed confused since they did not remember doing that. Then the king reveals, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”⁴⁰ One interpretation of this narrative is that Jesus is the

³⁴ Arthur Sutherland, *I was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 206.

³⁵ Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2012), 64.

³⁶ John 1:14, NRSV.

³⁷ Pohl, 12.

³⁸ Matthew 25:31-46, NRSV.

³⁹ Matthew 25:35-38, NRSV.

⁴⁰ Matthew 25:40, NRSV.

king disguised as a stranger. The lesson is that every time Christians receive a stranger, we receive Jesus. Pohl writes that Jesus was dependent on the hospitality of others and was a host in words and deeds. The early Christian church tried to emulate St. Paul's teachings to welcome others as Christ had welcomed them.⁴¹

This risky, costly, and intentional endeavor of receiving a stranger is how modern-day Christians will fulfill God's reign and realm in the world or the beloved community. Rowan Williams writes, "In Jesus, we meet God not as someone safe and familiar, but as a stranger."⁴² Due to the issue of race, most individuals in this country tend to gravitate toward people of their race despite the increasing racial diversity.⁴³ Hospitality requires Christians to go out of their way to reach others. This is risky but necessary to build a community of faith. Thus, the development of the beloved community does not only require waiting for the stranger to come but being deliberate and purposeful about inviting them in. Gutierrez explains that my neighbor "is not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, I approach and actively seek."⁴⁴ Therefore, there must be courageous interaction between members of different races for healing and transformation. Pohl states that "hospitality is more complex than welcoming 'those people into our church' or 'making room at our table.' In the church, especially, it is not our table to which we welcome people; it is God's table to which we come as equals."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Pohl, 157.

⁴² Myers, 34.

⁴³ Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid, Segregation and the Making of Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. 1993), 50.

⁴⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 25.

⁴⁵ Pohl, 157.

I believe the practice of hospitality is, in many ways, an act of reconciliation and healing. When people encounter God, they realize their separateness and brokenness. In this encounter, they are reconciled with their stranger God, healed from their separation and brokenness. Since hospitality to God is found in reconciliation and healing, encounters with people of different races can be an act of restoration. Through the interaction with people of other races and the creation of multicultural experiences, Christians may be able to help alleviate racial alienation through racial reconciliation.⁴⁶

Jesus, as a Jewish person, was proactive when he interacted with the Samaritan people of his time. Second Kings 17:24-41 states that Samaritans were multiracial. The Gospels also describe how religion and race created conflict among Jews and Samaritans. In the Gospel of John, Jesus responded to this challenge by trying to minister to the Samaritan woman. Given this example, are not all called to do the same and be intentional about reaching out to people from other races in hopes of the eventual development of racial harmony? In recent years, the American racial divide has become so intense that overcoming it may seem impossible. However, I think when churches develop multicultural styles of worship and learn to engage in conversation with people of different races, they promote healing by reducing racial tension rather than increasing separation. While hospitality speaks more to actions, empathy speaks more to emotions.

Empathy

Empathy is a key to hospitality because it attempts to understand how another person thinks and feels; it can move people to action. Empathy enables people to imagine

⁴⁶ Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice, *More than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 50.

what it would be like to be in the stranger's position and respond accordingly.

Unfortunately, "strangers" are not always seen as "angels from God." Jesus was rejected: "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his people did not accept him."⁴⁷ People did not accept him because he was different. Derrick Hodge writes, "Because of both sin and well-intentioned error, the differences that God intends to be a source of new wisdom become barriers to it."⁴⁸ Jesus' vision was not welcomed, it was a barrier. The church will benefit from seeing these "differences" as a source of "new wisdom" and promote intentional empathy development. Empathy is sometimes explained as walking a mile in another person's shoes. If they let the strangers' suffering touch their souls, they will begin to overcome cross-racial anxiety. Pohl explains that "understanding the church as God's household has significant implications for hospitality. More than anywhere else, when we gather as a church our practice of hospitality should reflect God's gracious welcome. God is the host, and we are all guests of God's grace."⁴⁹ If put into practice, our attitude towards others could change our churches, communities, and society for the better.

Lament

In his book, *Mirror to the Church*, Emmanuel Katongole describes Rwanda's genocide and the work of reconciliation as a mirror to the church. He noticed that before the genocide, most of Rwanda were Christian on both sides: Hutu and Tutsi. In the aftermath of the genocide, the work of healing and reconciliation was slow but necessary.

⁴⁷ John 1:10-11, NRSV.

⁴⁸ G. Derrick Hodge, *Learning from Strangers: Best Practices for Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Ministry in The United Methodist Church* (The United Methodist Publishing House: 2016), 8.

⁴⁹ Pohl, *Making Room*, 157.

Katongole was convinced that the restoration of the church must begin with lament.⁵⁰

Lament is done privately or collectively and has to do with confessing sin, mourning pain, shame, and complicity, and asking God to intervene and change things. This work is challenging for people in the west because their ideals are inclined towards success and victory. Lament does not fit our culture well since people are accustomed to an immediate return on our “investments” with the least possible expense. Soong-Chan Rah says, “The American church avoids lament. The power of lament is minimized, and the underlying narrative of suffering that requires lament is lost. The absence of lament in the liturgy of the American church results in the loss of memory.”⁵¹ However, the first response should be to lament in the face of pain and hurt. The Bible recommends a period of sorrow, mourning, and regret before working on reconciliation. From there, people can move towards hope.

To be consistent with the Christian faith and values, Euro-American churches must lament the exploitation of black people and other minoritized communities. Kim and Hill believe that people should lament “the abuse of basic human rights; and systemic injustice, expressed in policing, judicial, educational, economic, social, and other systems and structure.”⁵² If we look at American history, we will find that there are many reasons to lament, but there are also reasons to celebrate as our collective understanding of diversity and inclusion becomes clearer. In this final section, we will review some of that history.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Katongole, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith After Genocide in Rwanda* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 20.

⁵¹ Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament, A call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 20.

⁵² Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill, *Healing our Broken Humanity, Practices for Revitalizing the Church and Renewing the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 44-48. Here, Kim and Hill provide a lament list and a structure for how to lament based on the Book of Lamentation.

Historical Precedent for Racial Reconciliation

This section will give a brief historical introduction to Euro-American Methodism. Understanding the struggle against racism and xenophobia in Methodist history will help us to understand the roots of prejudice and discrimination in today's CRCC racial issues. Today's issues of race and culture did not just appear in a vacuum but are the results of dramatic events during the formative years of the United States.⁵³ The denomination's constitution admits that the "sin of racism" is destructive to the church's unity throughout its history.⁵⁴ While the United States' past-historical issues of oppression created contemporary racial alienation, some Christians struggled to eradicate these kinds of cruelty. This section will briefly examine the history of Methodism and its challenges with racism from its beginnings, before exploring how the United Methodist Church is currently attending to this issue.

Wesley and Emancipation

John Wesley, the father of Methodism, arrived in America in 1736 and worked extremely hard to eradicate slavery. He urged his followers to meet and teach enslaved people the Christian doctrine and practices. Wesley planned to travel to plantations to educate enslaved people, but colonial planters prevented him and his followers, fearing the ramifications of educating enslaved persons.⁵⁵ Fortunately, his followers did not give up on this endeavor. By the late eighteenth century, more than twelve thousand Methodists in the U.S. were African Americans.

⁵³ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). According to historian Nathan O. Hatch the country faced dramatic issues such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the displacement and genocide of Indigenous people, the annexations of Mexican lands, and its notions of racial hierarchy.

⁵⁴ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶5.

⁵⁵ Charles Yrigoyen Jr., *John Wesley: Holiness of the Heart and Life* (New York: United Methodist Church, 1996). 49-51.

In 1773, Wesley printed a pamphlet titled “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” in which he opposed the sin of slavery.⁵⁶ He even cast out Methodists who dealt with enslaved people unless they were engaged in emancipation efforts, and required Methodists who owned enslaved people to free them within five years. Wesley expected the clergy to keep these members accountable. Those who did not comply were expelled from the church. Methodists (and Baptists) on the East Coast welcomed African Americans as full church participants and condemned slavery as an institution.⁵⁷ This practice was not so in the Southern states, where many clergy persons were opposed to emancipation.

By the mid-eighteen centuries, the church was divided over the issue of racism. The first two Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, Francis Asbury, and Thomas Coke, were the targets of threats and violence as they preached against slavery in colonial America. Southern Methodist slaveholders did not observe Wesley’s antislavery mandate and many Methodist clergy faced persecution. Churches in the south considered black people to be property. However, black preachers without formal education gained authority as clergy, and even enslaved people with preaching skills were regarded as spiritual leaders. Such leadership opportunities were part of what Hatch termed the “democratization of Christianity” during the revolutionary era.⁵⁸ As time passed, churches began to grow and establish themselves as official organizations.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, African Americans began formalizing their religious practices in the north. One important instance was the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), in Philadelphia in 1816. In subsequent

⁵⁶ John Wesley, “Thoughts Upon Slavery,” Published in the year 1774, <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/thoughtsuponslavery.stm>

⁵⁷ Hatch, 102.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 154.

years, racism and slavery disputes began to cause intense economic and theological divisions in the Methodist movement. As an inevitable split was on the horizon, few, at that time in America's history, imagined that multicultural churches would arise where people of all races worshiped God in the same space.

Methodists Split Over Racial Issues

One of the oldest and largest Methodist denominations in the United States, from its founding in 1784 until 1939, The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), began to struggle due to threats of separation. Methodists developed a plan of separation in the MEC, allowing churches in slaveholding states to withdraw from the church, resulting in the creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church-South in May of 1845.⁵⁹ These actions are another example of early Methodists reshaping their faith and church practices in response to socio-cultural shifts.⁶⁰ During the next hundred years, African Americans were still not welcomed as companions in worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. During that time, African Americans had started new churches where they worshiped God freely. Despite all opposition, the MEC elected its first African American Bishops, Robert E. Jones and M. Clair Sr., in 1920.⁶¹

Historians consider the early nineteenth centuries as the high point of xenophobia in the U.S. With the Immigration Restriction League formed by members of the Harvard class of 1889, a message of xenophobia was perfected to influence policy.⁶² They

⁵⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "South Methodist Episcopal Church" accessed January 18, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/South-Methodist-Episcopal-Church>.

⁶⁰ Hatch, 16.

⁶¹ Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America: A History*, Vol. 1 (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 2010), 368.

⁶² Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2021) 114.

embraced scientific racism in eugenics that classified humanity into distinct races and argued that the white race was superior.⁶³ In 1916, President Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech titled “America for Americans,” in which he called the nation to pledge allegiance to a nationalized and unified America. That same year the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan promoted Roosevelt’s speech condemning the incoming of foreigners with a pamphlet of the same name. Four years later, eugenicist, Madison Grant, used the exact phrase, “America for Americans,” to promote that immigration was a threat and that only white Americans were “true Americans.” A Congressman, lawyer, and Methodist pastor, John C. Box, was one of the most effective spokespersons in the anti-Mexican campaign. Box denigrated Mexican Americans, saying that they were of mixed-race heritage, and therefore racially inferior. He wrote of “a dangerous cocktail of the low-grade Spaniard, *peonized* Indian, and negro slaved mixed with negroes, mulattoes, and other mongrels, and some sorry whites.”⁶⁴ Along with him, many other leaders spread and perpetuated a spirit of xenophobia against Hispanics with lasting effects.

Hispanic Discrimination

Historically there has been discrimination against Hispanics living in the United States. Lee says that every generation has charged them with the same crimes: “they are too many, their race is inferior, steal jobs away from white Americans, are poor and wipe out American welfare, and are criminals.”⁶⁵ However, one of the primary expressions of abuse based on race occurred during the Great Depression when white men targeted Mexicans for mass deportation. From 1929 to 1935, the government

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 148.

deported 82,400 Mexicans, twenty percent of the entire Mexican-American population at that time; sixty percent were American citizens by birth.⁶⁶ Mexicans became foreigners in their own land. They lost their property by “legal,” and illegal means, and a new “Juan Crow” racial segregation took place in the Southwest.⁶⁷ These acts disregarded the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which guaranteed that Mexicans living on former Mexican lands would receive American citizenship after the cession of Mexican land.⁶⁸

During the next decade, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, another group of immigrants would suffer white American xenophobic sentiments. Under the false accusation of national security, Japanese Americans, who lived on the West Coast, were forced to leave their lands and property, and were incarcerated in remote prison camps. The sentiments of xenophobia did not end when these events concluded; unfortunately, they still live in the imagination and spirit of America.

As the years passed, Methodists began taking a different shape and churches in America sought unification. At the 1939 Uniting Conference, the MEC reunited with two breakaway denominations (the Methodist Episcopal Church-South and the Methodist Protestant Church) to form the Methodist Church (MC).⁶⁹ However, this event did not signal the end of racial division in the Methodist movement; the MC was still operating in an institutionally racist fashion. Formal segregation was still accepted, and a passive-aggressive form of racial exclusion toward black Methodist members was evident. Despite these challenges, some Methodists did not give up.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 148-149.

⁶⁹ Richey, 373.

A New UMC and Its Efforts to Fight Racism

The Methodist movement has become more open and has worked harder to oppose racism in the last fifty years. In 1968, the MC merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church. As part of the union plan, the Central Jurisdiction was abolished and formal segregation ended.⁷⁰ Roy C. Nichols became the first African American to be elected Bishop in the newly formed United Methodist Church in 1968.⁷¹ That same year, the General Commission on Religion and Race was formed, with Woodie White serving (later Bishop) as the first African American to head a United Methodist general agency.⁷² The General Conference adopted a new Social Principles statement condemning racism and formed the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR).⁷³ In 1976, Mai Gray became the first African American president of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. By the time United Methodists commemorated their bicentennial in 1984, strategies and policies in favor of diversity became more evident, as seen with the election of Leontine T.C. Kelly as the first African American female Bishop, Elias Galvan as the first Hispanic Bishop, and others.⁷⁴

The following year, the Latino/a caucus, MARCHA, issued a vision document, "Hispanic Vision for Century III," where they lamented the little progress among Hispanics through the Ethnic Minoritized Local Church mission.⁷⁵ Four years later, the General Conference created a National Hispanic Ministries Committee.⁷⁶ In 2000,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 423.

⁷¹ Ibid., 451.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 453.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 511.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 523.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 511.

General Conference delegates participated in a service of repentance for racism within the denomination. Four years later, Minerva Carcaño became the first Latina Bishop. The General Conference celebrated the African American witness and presence within the United Methodist Church and recognized “those who stayed” despite racism.⁷⁷ Today’s Methodist movement looks quite different from its beginnings, with more representation and openness to racial inclusivity.

In this chapter, we reviewed two objections to CRCC appointments in the context of today's multicultural society. We saw how CRCC appointments may bring about a solution to the skepticism of multiculturalist efforts and bring about healing through integration. We learned about the advantages and benefits of multicultural churches and CRCC appointments as an effort to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our churches and embrace society's diversity shifts. This chapter presented the historical precedent of UMC’s racial issues in order to understand today’s struggle against racism and xenophobia. The following chapter will detail methodology used for this project.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 525.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY - HOW THIS RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practices used by the sample cohort I interviewed. Understanding their experiences will be the first step towards developing resources that will ideally help improve CRCC ministries. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What can we gain from understanding the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of the appointment?
2. What are the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service?
3. What has contributed to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last few years?

This chapter will present my theme-based research design, which includes the research questions and choices made to carry on the study, the research strategy, the sampling strategy, the data collection method, and the data analysis techniques. Lastly, this chapter will explore the limitations of the study.

The Research Questions

The following paragraphs will present an explanation of each research question and the rationale for their consideration:

- **Research Question #1:** What can we gain from understanding the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of the appointment?

To single out the first one hundred days may sound somewhat arbitrary and artificial; however, business and leadership consultants, like Heidi Davidson, believe that

the first one hundred days "set the tone for the remainder of [a leader] tenure. They require a delicate balance of confidence and action with listening and learning."¹ This question clarifies how clergy and congregations feel and respond to the appointments.

- **Research Question #2:** What are the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service?

This question will help explore Hispanic clergy challenges when leading Euro-American congregations. While most clergy/laity relationships are positive and productive, some experiences are not consistent with the mission and vision of the UMC. The issue of race causes misunderstandings, confusion, and tension in many Euro-American churches, especially those with CRCC appointments. This question will help clarify what kinds of behaviors, attitudes, and encounters exist in today's CRCC appointments in GNJUMC.

- **Research Question #3:** What has contributed to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last years?

This research question attempts to identify the factors that cause a CRCC appointment to be successful, when a Hispanic person is the congregation's leader. It points out areas of hope and success that can be repeated and perhaps institutionally implemented. We will see what practices were successful in CRCC appointments. This study also seeks to find areas of failure that current and future CRCC appointees can avoid.

¹ Heidi Davidson, "The First 100 Days: A Leadership Test," *Forbes*, March 4, 2021, accessed March 8, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/03/04/the-first-100-days-a-leadership>.

Research Design

This section presents the research choices made in order to carry out the investigation. These choices will help investigate the current situation of the Hispanic clergy in CRCC appointments. The philosophy of this research is interpretivism because it utilizes a qualitative method. Interpretivism is a dominant philosophical approach that can help “understand the social world by meaningful interpretations of the world inhabited by people.”² I chose this philosophy because it promotes the value of qualitative data as we try to understand social behavior. This research is based on an inductive method where theory is generated from collected data. This study is exploratory and it moves from specific observations about individual occurrences to broader generalizations and theories. The time horizon for this study is cross-sectional for practical reasons. All the data was collected over the course of one month through interviews of Hispanic pastors in CRCC appointments.

Research Strategy

The first phase of the research draws from a sample of clergy and congregations to account for the overall ministry experiences of CRCC appointments. Not all clergy agreed to be interviewed and therefore, the selection was based on a convenient sample. I interviewed six Hispanic clergy leading in CRCC appointments. They represent about forty percent of all Hispanic clergy currently leading CRCC appointments in GNJUMC. Their responses to the questionnaire produced data, which helped me to better understand their perspective regarding the appointment, and provided me with an overview of their

² Muhammad Faisol Chowdhury, "Interpretivism in Aiding Our Understanding of the Contemporary Social World," *Open Journal of Philosophy* 4, no.3 (2014):7.

whole experience. After these interviews with CRCC pastors, I also interviewed Euro-American pastors currently leading Euro-American churches in the GNJUMC as well as two District Superintendents.

Sampling Strategy

The instrumentation for this project was a researcher-designed interview questionnaire. These interviews aimed to assess aspects of the CRCC ministry experience and perceptions from the clergyperson's point of view. In all cases, qualitative interviews explored the overall experience of race, inclusivity, and church leadership. The first part of the project used non-probability sampling. I intended to interview all Hispanic clergy currently serving in CRCC appointments. However, I was only able to interview forty percent of them.

Fifty percent of the clergy interviewed identify as males, while the other fifty percent identify as females. They ranged in age from their thirties-fifties. Most interviewed clergy are highly educated; five out of six have graduate degrees. The length of time these clergy-persons had served at their current appointments ranged from one-eight years. The selection process integrated the characteristics of clergy gender, ethnicity, age, length of tenure in appointments, and educational levels representative of each GNJUMC district.

I followed several steps in collecting and analyzing this data in order to protect the anonymity of individuals, their roles, and any incidents mentioned during the interview. I explained the purpose of the study to all interviewees and the participants' volition to complete or not complete the questionnaire. All participants in the pastoral interviews gave their verbal consent to be interviewed. I informed the interviewees that I

would personally notify them of the project results after the formal approval of the study. During the interviews, I refrained from interjecting any personal and leading statements. I only spoke when I needed to rephrase a question for clarification and recorded only the remarks the pastors offered in response. Finally, I used all the data collected and analyzed it within the context of this study.³

Data Collection Methodology

This research project used a qualitative collection method. The qualitative collection method was an in-person collection that involved Hispanic clergy as interviewees. The qualitative interview created the space for Hispanic clergy to discuss their experiences, beliefs concerning faith and cultural sensitivity, and desirability of future appointments as current CRCC ministers. The interview method enabled them to discuss in-depth their experiences, beliefs concerning faith, cultural sensitivity, and their congregations' desirability of future CRCC appointments.

I contacted all Hispanic clergy who lead Euro-American churches in the GNJUMC and asked them to be part of the research project. There are currently fifteen Hispanic clergy in CRCC appointments leading Euro-American congregations as of January 2022. I wanted to interview all of them with the expectation of having the most accurate findings for this project. Most of the clergy were willing to participate in my research, except for some who did not respond or openly chose not to participate in the project. After many weeks of preparation, only six members (40%) were ready and willing to be interviewed. I scheduled video conferences via Zoom. The interviews were supposed to last one hour, but most lasted a one and a half and extended even to two

³ See Appendix A.

hours. I had a questionnaire to guide our conversations. The individuals did not know the questions in advance, but they knew the topic of discussion. Most of the interviews were scheduled at night in January and February of 2022.

At the beginning of the Zoom interviews, I explained the nature and purpose of the interviews, the anonymity of the participant, and the confidentiality of the interview. The interviews were recorded in a field research notebook. Free-flowing questions from the questionnaire helped the participants to supply pertinent data. Categorization of data under the headings of the four research questions followed the testimony of the participants. Interviewees one through three were male Hispanics leading Euro-American congregations, while interviewees four through six were female Hispanics leading Euro-American congregations.

Data Analysis Techniques

After the interviews, all data collected was transferred to a word document. Once the interviews were over, all data was organized separately by the name of the interviewees. In this way, I kept an organized record of each person for further reference. Once all the data was put into writing, I began coding the paraphrase text, giving labels according to the themes and subthemes listed in Appendix 1. Four themes were identified as the main topics: vocation, prejudice, transformation, and healing recommendations. Most paraphrased sentences coincided with one, two, or three of these topics. They will be reported in the following chapter.

Methodological Limitations

For different reasons, I could not interview all current Hispanic clergy serving Euro-American congregations in the GNJUMC. I only interviewed forty percent of all

subjects of this study and only a cross-sectional time horizon. Due to time constraints, I was not able to have multiple interviews in two months. More interviews may have brought more accurate results. Despite these limitations, Hispanic clergy were able to respond to the questions and tell of their experiences. This chapter has detailed the thematic-based research design and explained the research choices made to carry out this study. This chapter encapsulated the research strategy, the sampling strategy, the data collection method, and the data analysis techniques. Lastly, I pointed out the limitations of the study. In the next chapter, we will look at the findings of this thematic-based research.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS - COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading local Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practices implemented by the selected cohort studied. The research questions will help us to better understand their experiences. These questions include:

1. What can we gain from understanding the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of the appointment?
2. What are the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service?
3. What has contributed to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last few years?

This section will describe four main themes from the data collected: vocation, prejudice, transformation, and healing.

Vocation

The first theme describes each interviewed clergyperson's call to the ministry, including their contributions, identity as pastors in CRCC appointments, and their different approaches to ministry. All Hispanic clergy interviewed believe they make a critical and unique contribution to both their local church and the global church. They think they are in a strategic position to bring their congregations to reach unreached groups of people, develop their congregation's faith and expand their cultural awareness. They believe their ethnicity is indispensable for this job. Interviewee number five said, "If I were white, I would not be able to add that personal background experience and

tradition. Furthermore, my interpretation of the scriptures is different."¹ The Hispanic clergy see their diversity as a blessing to the congregations where they are appointed. All interviewed Hispanic clergy leading CRCC congregations believe that while serving in a prejudicial and racist ministry is painful and challenging, they are also forerunners, breaking barriers and transforming the communities they serve. Interviewee four said, "I am always the first female pastor and first ethnic pastor in every church that I have served."²

Expressions of prejudice and discrimination do not happen often, but they are painful. The participants handle these issues with a sacrificial and abnegate attitude. They choose to endure microaggressions from the congregations they are called to love. For instance, interviewee three said, "God called me to serve this congregation, and that's what I will do whatever it takes."³ Another clergyperson explained that prejudice and discrimination reveal a deeper problem than the offense itself. Along with other Hispanic clergy, she believes that the problem is not only on the offense itself but on how a clergyperson responds to the aggression. She explains:

When I first joined the church, one of the members was trying to be funny to break the ice. He called me pastor quesadilla and my daughter, taco. When I heard it, I knew that it was so wrong. But I also understood that he was not trying to be racist. He was trying to call me in a Hispanic way he knew about, trying to use my language to relate to me. I laughed because I knew where he was coming from. You see, they don't know that you may find this offensive. So, I laughed but I told them not to say that again, because that was considered offensive in other circles. I also told him, "Please don't call me like this in front of others. They will be offended. And please don't do that to anybody else because that is inappropriate." The thing is that they don't have all the tools, so I help them understand what is offensive and what is not. I won't take this in an offensive manner or get back at him. They don't know what they are doing.⁴

¹ See Appendix A, pastor #5, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

² See Appendix A, pastor #4, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

³ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

⁴ See Appendix A.

Prejudice

Five out of six interviewed individuals declared that there is still racism in their local churches. However, Hispanic clergy serving Euro-American congregations believe that the problem is more severe than Euro-American church members believe. This section will describe the theme of prejudice from the perspective of the Hispanic clergy interviewed. All interviewed clergy have stories of being abused and discriminated against by their congregation members.

The pastors involved in this project have experienced racism from the members of their congregations at one point or another during their appointment. Five out of six Hispanic pastors interviewed said that their appointments were challenged from the beginning. Interviewee six said, "The first week of my appointment, a member sent a letter to the District Superintendent saying they didn't want Hispanics. They were afraid that they would be changed. They were asking if the pastor knew what she was doing. Other pastors were asked to provide their social security cards or green cards to prove they were not 'illegals.'"⁵

Four out of six interviewees declared that some members of their congregations made racist comments and jokes and speak in a racially hierarchical demeanor. Interviewee four declared, "I was abused in many ways. My congregation mistreated me emotionally and spiritually."⁶ Interviewee five said that while things are hard for her, it is harder for others, and she shared with me an experience about another CRCC pastor:

Not all Hispanics have the same experience because we are very diverse among ourselves and our churches are different. I know of another Hispanic pastor who is Afro-Hispanic, and he and his family are experiencing more

⁵ See Appendix A, pastor #6, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

⁶ See Appendix A, pastor #4, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

discrimination. He is a Democrat, and the church he was appointed to is very Republican. I heard that a member of his congregation walked around the parsonage with a confederate flag expecting that he would resign. He has a worse experience than mine.⁷

All local churches have issues, but CRCC appointments have particular ethnicity issues. This study indicates that there is still an element of willful blindness and prejudice in Euro-American congregations when it comes to racial or ethnic difference.

Transformation

The third theme is transformation in CRCC ministries. These experiences can be divided into three parts. First, Hispanic clergy speak about the blessing they are to their congregation and the community where they live and the importance of building trust among the members. All interviewees said that the first time they received their CRCC appointment, they felt such an appointment held a different meaning to their call to ministry because they knew they would promote racial and ethnic healing among the congregation and communities. It was hard at first, but they noticed a change in the people they served after some years. All Hispanic clergy stated that they made a big difference in the church to which they were appointed. Interviewee three said, "After three years of work, I feel loved in my church and I feel that my church has my back. My people feel that they count on me. And that this community feels that I am here for them."⁸

The neighborhoods where they were appointed also experienced transformation. They were sent to these churches because new people of Hispanic backgrounds lived in these neighborhoods. These new community members did not have a church and some

⁷ See Appendix A, pastor #5, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022. The other pastor did not consent to be interviewed.

⁸ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

did not speak English. Hispanic clergy built a bridge between the community and their churches. Interviewee two said, "With my presence here, our church can give people from other cultures the opportunity to feel welcomed."⁹ All surveyed Euro-American church members also confirmed that the presence of their Hispanic pastor helped the church connect with people from other races, not just Hispanics.

Only one out of the six Hispanic pastors interviewed said that they had requested a change of appointment due to issues of prejudice and abuse. However, that pastor was not moved to another congregation. While they all state that it was hard at first, those serving for more than three years indicated that they currently have a good and positive experience. They may not have been welcomed at first, but they were able to thrive after gaining trust. Two out of six interviewees led Hispanic congregations before their current CRCC appointment. These clergypersons said they took a different leadership approach in their current CRCC congregations. Interviewee four said, "I didn't come here to tell them what to do; I came here to build *familia*. It does not mean that I put aside my culture and roots, but I understand that I am here to give and serve, not to impose."¹⁰ *Familia* means family in Spanish. "*Vamos a hacer familia*," is a Spanish expression that means building trust and collegiality among a group of people. Pastors said that once their congregation experienced the clergy had their best interests at heart—all resistance went down. The Euro-American community became more open and receptive to receiving them.

⁹ See Appendix A, pastor #2, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹⁰ See Appendix A, pastor #4, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

All interviewees told many stories of transformation through building *familia*. They engaged their members, bringing their transformation experience to fruition. These pastors also gave some recommendations for future appointments in the next theme.

Healing

All interviewees recommend prayer, a solid spiritual life, maturity, and the confidence not to take things personally. They also encourage building relationships with different people and gaining more self-awareness and cultural education. Interviewee one said, "Pray that God creates unity between them." They also recommended a deep understanding of white culture and focusing on building bridges with forgotten communities. Interviewee two said, "An efficient pastor is a pastor who can engage with the community. This position is an opportunity to lead with the community and you can lead this congregation into ministries that they have never been before."¹¹ Interviewee six recommended that education and coaching be required for the CRCC appointment. Interviewee five said, "There has not been any coaching or training on leading CRCC appointments. To ensure a positive outcome, there must be more intentionalism to make this appointment work with the pastor and the congregation."¹²

All interviewees were asked what they would do if they could choose the next pastor for the congregations they are currently serving. They felt that another Hispanic clergy or a person from a minoritized ethnic group would be the best healing option for their Anglo congregation. Interviewee two said, "If I were the District Superintendent, I would like that this church to be appointed a pastor of another race, a woman or both."¹³

¹¹ See Appendix A, pastor #2, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹² See Appendix A, pastor #5, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹³ See Appendix A, pastor #2, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

Overall, they feel another CRCC appointment will continue benefiting their church members.

Conclusions

The theme of vocation demonstrated that Hispanic clergy currently leading Euro-American congregations see themselves as providing a significant contribution to their local congregations and the whole church, by breaking barriers, and transforming the communities where they were appointed. The theme of prejudice speaks to how they still suffer from different kinds of prejudice and discrimination from the congregations they serve. Regarding transformation, the data showed that the interviewees noticed a positive change in the congregation members towards accepting new members into their community. Finally, Hispanic clergy also gave recommendations for healing congregations, appointing officials, putting new pastors in CRCC appointments recommending prayer, promoting more education, and increasing self-awareness. In the next chapter, I will interpret and explain the meaning of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION - REIMAGINING THE CHURCH

“A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer.¹

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and to explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practices implemented by this select cohort of CRCC pastors. The research questions used to collect the data are as follows:

1. What can we gain from understanding the experiences of Hispanic clergy in the first one hundred days of the appointment?
2. What are the implicit and explicit cultural and racial challenges of CRCC appointments observed after three years of service?
3. What has contributed to the success of cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in the last few years?

The Meaning of The Findings

Emmanuel Katongole writes about how the process of reconciliation following the Rwandan genocide can help American churches today; He says that people of faith are people “on pilgrimage together, a mixed group, bearing witness to a new identity made possible by the Gospel.”² The church is supposed to be diverse under Christ, embracing distinct qualities and contributions. Local Methodist churches are in the right place to witness the world’s healing, reconciliation, and unified community.

This section will describe the themes that emerged from the data collected, derived from four main themes: vocation, discrimination, transformation, and healing. I

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York, NY: Harper One, 2009), 86.

² Emmanuel Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 1.

will explain how the findings help answer the research questions and the aims of this study.

Vocation

As the world becomes more polarized, it threatens to secularize Christians, tempting them to join a culture of separation and conflict motivated by personal and cultural identities different from their new humanity in Jesus Christ. However, I believe that God calls laity and clergy to have a new identity in Christ, an identity of love, grace, mercy, compassion, peacemaking, forgiveness, and reconciliation. God calls them to be healers and peacemakers in a world of separation and imagine ourselves anew.

Individuals are not primarily white or brown, instead, they all bring contributions to a new humanity in Christ. Their faith calls them to be a different kind of people and to put Christ at their center above all other affiliations. This idea is not what they are supposed to aspire to be but their own core identity. Said another way, “The church does not have a social strategy; the church is a social strategy.”³

The first theme of vocation describes the Hispanic clergyperson’s calling to ministry, their contributions, their identity as pastors in CRCC appointments, and their different approaches to ministry. All Hispanic clergy interviewed believe that they are making a critical and unique contribution to the local church and influencing society. Despite their difficulties, one reason for their success in CRCC appointments is their call to ministry. The interviewees’ responses are consistent with the literature research where

³ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Residents Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 43.

clergy see themselves as forerunners, and as building bridges for liberation.⁴ This call strengthens their endurance in challenging circumstances. They are strategically positioned to help their congregations reach out to unreached groups of people, develop their faith and expand their cultural awareness.

CRCC appointments can build relationships with members of other marginalized communities. All CRCC clergy reported that their presence in the church changed the makeup of the ministry in the community. People from other ethnic groups and races began attending the services. Interviewee six said, “When the neighbors learned about the new pastor, some folks came out of curiosity. Later, people from other backgrounds felt comfortable worshipping in our church.” Another said, “Some became members, and others did not, but we had more visitors from other races.”⁵ Another reported that a congregation member told him, “You helped us see groups of people who were invisible to the congregation until then.”⁶ These declarations help to answer the third research question regarding the success of CRCC appointments. Hispanic clergy think their ethnicity is an asset; they are breaking barriers and transforming the communities where they serve. This is consistent with our examination of the literature where Fernandez argues that Hispanic vocation moves Hispanic leaders towards transformation.⁷

These testimonies relate to question two, which addresses the implicit and explicit racial challenges of CRCC appointments. One aspect that requires attention is their response to challenges of prejudice and discrimination. When these situations take place

⁴ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 103.

⁵ See Appendix A.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eduardo C. Fernandez, *La Cosecha, Teología Hispana Contemporanea en Estados Unidos, (1972-1998)* (México DF, México: Buena Prensa, 2009), 95-96.

the sampled cohort of interviewees seemed to take these issues with a sacrificial and surrendering attitude. They endure microaggression from the congregations they are called to love.

While self-sacrifice can be a Christian concept, abusive situations must be evaluated in considering mental health standards. Four out of six interviewees said they were aware of the implications of spiritual and emotional abuse. For instance, interviewee three said, "I do not have the attitude of a martyr. I know other pastors do, but I don't. If church members hurt my family, I would leave the appointment. I would quit."⁸ Regardless of response or attitude all interviewed pastors still dealt with prejudice and discriminatory behavior. They also confronted their members in a respectable and healthy manner. In the former chapter, a clergy member explained that feeling offended did not depend on her, but rather on how she responded to the abuse. After the incident, the pastor talked to the person and asked the member not to speak like that again in front of other people or to any other clergy because such behavior was inappropriate and dangerous. This church member realized his prejudice and discrimination, regretted his behavior, and asked for forgiveness. This Hispanic, female clergyperson was convinced that since Euro-Americans often do not interact with Hispanic people, they are not aware of their racist comments. She believes that Hispanic clergy must be an example of compassion and understanding. Racism always causes wounds on both sides, on the victim and the attacker sides. People tend to focus on those who are hurt, the receiving side of the wound, but not so much on those who are hurtful. For those at the other end of the wound of discrimination, a theology of unwavering love can be an instrument of

⁸ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

healing. As Sales states, it is not about being angry about injustice, but more about loving the idea of justice.⁹ In response to research question three, this attitude of endurance through adversity contributed to the Hispanic clergy's success in their ministry. These pastors acknowledge that while this situation brings about transformation, it does take a tremendous amount of maturity and spirituality on the part of the clergy to reach a point of acceptance. Five out of six interviewees gave similar responses regarding this theme and how they closed the gap through compassion.

All Hispanic pastors interviewed declared that at least one person left because of the pastoral change. This phenomenon is not unusual every time a church changes pastors, but is concerning when a church member leaves due to the pastor's ethnicity. The pastors reported that some members of their congregations considered leaving the church because they assumed the new pastor could bring more Hispanics into their church. This expression of discrimination relates back to research question three, because it is a unique experience that clergy in majority groups do not typically experience.

Hispanic clergy also learned to deal with their prejudice and became more compassionate in their communities. Interviewee three declared, "I was so hurt at first that I felt like asking for a change, but I realized they didn't know better. I had to repeat as a mantra, 'I am not the pastor they want, but I am the pastor they need.' After some time, they got to know me and dropped their harshness, and I got to know them and learned to appreciate them."¹⁰ Clergy and laity who chose to stay through the struggles of the first year learned to appreciate each other's culture and customs. These experiences

⁹ Ruby Sales, "Where Does it Hurt?" On Being Podcast, last modified January 16, 2020, accessed June 1, 2021, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ruby-sales-where-does-it-hurt-aug2017/>.

¹⁰ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

answer the third research question about what contributes to the success of CRCC appointments. Both clergy and congregations grew spiritually from the things they learned from each other. The CRCC experience led them to expand and stretch themselves and their ideas of Christianity, and multiculturalism and give them a better understanding of God's reign. They had to learn to focus on what they had in common.

Prejudice

All the interviewees told stories of being abused by their congregations, and that church members were not aware of their behavior. Willful blindness involves conscious avoidance of the truth. It attempts to avoid responsibility for a wrongful act by deliberately failing to assess it.¹¹ Some Anglo congregations engaged in acts of discrimination based on race but seemed not to be aware that such behavior was unethical. All Hispanic clergy interviewed declared that some Euro-American laity and even clergy still perceive CRCC appointments as defective or less ideal solely based on their ethnicity, despite the stance of the UMC that a race or ethnicity does not determine a clergy's effectiveness or failure. These testimonies relate back to research question two because these were explicit challenges based on race.

One clergy also reported an issue of colorism. The pastor said that she felt accepted by the congregation during the interview because she had a light skin tone and looked like a Euro-American person from a distance. She said that her congregation was open to having another Hispanic clergy in the future as long as that person does not have

¹¹ While willful blindness is a legal term, this project will use it when referring to "white blindness" or willful blindness regarding race and discrimination. An example of this is when Euro-American people do not notice institutional racism or subtle discrimination against minoritized clergy and their family or pretend it never took place or that it was "unintentional."

an Afro or Native appearance. She said, “They would accept one with light skin, but if the new clergy has dark skin, afro, or native features, they will not be happy.”¹² This behavior further demonstrates that there are racial challenges in local churches. The same clergy declared, “The lighter the skin tones, the more chances my congregation will not reject them.”¹³ Interviewee three said, “If my church had another CRCC pastor, they would prefer to have an Asian pastor because Asian’s skin tone is lighter.”¹⁴ These statements are demonstrative of expressions of racial discrimination that relate back to research question number two.

In a similar vein, a pastor told a story that demonstrates an example of willful blindness:

A Euro-American clergy shared an example when given a sermon. The pastor said to her congregation, “Imagine that a mother has two twin babies. The first baby was healthy, but the second one was sick. Would you think that caring for the sick baby indicates a sign of unfairness?” The clergy concluded, “This is what ‘Black lives Matter’ (BLM) is all about. Caring for the suffering community does not mean that our community is less worthy.” The Euro-American clergy reported that this example helped the congregation understand the meaning of BLM and helped them reframe their understanding. However, I think my congregation would respond differently, “That example may work in her congregation, but the members of my congregation would have interpreted the same illustration differently. They would have said that the mother is mistaken, that the one that is hurt is the first baby, the one who is not receiving any attention. They would fail to see the truly hurting child. They would have thought the mother was caring for the wrong child.”¹⁵

One additional concern in CRCC appointments is communication. There is an assumption that a CRCC pastor will not have the language skills to communicate with the congregation. The most common report is that Hispanic clergy’s accents make them

¹² See Appendix A.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹⁵ See Appendix A.

appear as if they are unintelligent and ignorant. All Hispanic clergy reported that their congregations challenged their accent, even those born in America whose first language is English. All Hispanic clergy reported that during the initial interview with SPPRC some church members expressed concerns that the Hispanic clergy would not be able to speak English. Interviewee five said, “A couple of members were afraid that they would not understand my English. After some months, they adapted to my accent, and now they even laugh at my jokes.”¹⁶

Often, there seems to be a potential for discrimination when a congregation hears that their next church leader’s native language is not English. The monolingualistic ideology in American churches can lead to severe weaknesses such as racist and biased attitudes towards clergy and church members that speak in other languages or have noticeable accents. Interviewee one asserts that this is the main fear that a receiving congregation expresses, “Will we be able to understand the clergy?”¹⁷ Andrea Sterzuk, professor of language and literacy education, believes that race and language are intertwined and confirms the clergy’s experience regarding congregations who demand the use of “standard English” in the church.¹⁸ When other languages are introduced in an organization, most cultures find that as an advantage and an improvement; however, the experience of Euro-Americans is different. Interviewee two said, “Some congregation members told me that they wanted a pastor who spoke standard English.”¹⁹

¹⁶ See Appendix A, pastor #5, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹⁷ See Appendix A, pastor #1, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

¹⁸ Andrea Sterzuk, “The Standard Remains the Same: Language Standardization, Race, and Othering in Higher Education,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 36, no. 1 (2015): 55. Sterzuk reminds us that “standard English” is a controversial concept rooted in Euro-American settler’s notion in “Euro-American property.”

¹⁹ See Appendix A, pastor #2, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

It is not only an issue of people of a different race. People who speak non-American English are also at risk of discrimination. Language becomes an issue when prejudice and discrimination intersect with disabilities. Therefore, the local church must grasp the differences in dialects utilized by laity and clergy; multilingualism is an asset, not a deficit. Most researchers believe that Euro-Americans have a hegemonic view of the English language; as one surveyed church member said, “English is the best language in the world.”²⁰ These ideas are detrimental to clergy and congregations in which English is not their native language. It devalues their linguistic skills and multilingualism by creating insecurity about their communication skills. Multilingualism should be embraced, normalized, and encouraged in all congregations.

The interviewees also expressed concern about the issue of preaching and teaching their congregations. Five out of six Hispanic clergy declared that members of their congregation asked them not to preach on a specific topic, including race, immigration, and Black Lives Matter. Interviewee three said, “My SPPRC chair confronted me after one service for leading a prayer for healing of the Black community.”²¹ Interviewee two said, “They have never told me, ‘Don’t talk about this,’ but I have been cautious about not touching on race and politics. I don’t want to get in trouble.”²² Speaking or not speaking on such prescient social topics from the pulpit will affect the pastor’s goals; and might lead to fear of losing the congregation’s trust—and fear of losing his/her job. In the first instance, some pastors do not think that the issue of race is as important as building trust with the congregation. Once pastors lose the

²⁰ See Appendix A.

²¹ See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

²² See Appendix A, pastor #2, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

congregation's trust, their leadership becomes diminished. Strategic pastors must know where to focus their attention. To win on one side, they must choose to lose on another. So "fear of getting in trouble" means being afraid to lose that trust for an issue that is of less importance to the pastor. On the other side, the fear of losing their job can be a priority for the pastor. One pastor assumes the following:

Usually, young, single pastors without children or older empty-nesters are less afraid to speak about controversial issues. Pastors who have family and children in school are less prompt to touch on controversial issues for fear of losing their position as pastors because they may risk financial security and the location of their children's schools.²³

This statement is only an opinion, but it reveals real sentiments of what could motivate a pastor not to speak about controversial issues in their churches. This experience helps answer research question three, regarding the success of the CRCC appointment. However, it is essential to mention that such success is achieved at a very high price in this case.

Transformation

United Methodist members must understand themselves together anew in the face of injustice and division in faith communities and society. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes, "The church's first responsibility is to be the church...the church does not have a social ethic-the church is a social ethic."²⁴ Through careful reflection and self-examination, each local church can redefine itself. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook speaks of "redefining congregations" made of people who intentionally evaluate all aspects of their

²³ See Appendix A.

²⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1988), Chapters 1-2.

congregational life to ensure that people of every culture and race can participate fully in worship, service, and leadership.²⁵

The interviewees shared stories about how their CRCC appointment helped alleviate racial alienation by being “a natural extension of racial reconciliation” and “a mechanism that can help produce racial reconciliation.”²⁶ Pastors observed that the congregation, in time, became open to them and to new diverse members. Congregations began serving and meeting neighbors and moving from being a space of distrust to a place of openness and opportunity.

These examples of transformation are consistent with research that argues that Hispanic clergy are the best suited to serve in changing communities and that their presence will be vital in reaching out to members of such communities.²⁷ *The Book of Discipline* states, “Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and its leadership.”²⁸ One pastor said, “When I became the pastor of that church, not only Hispanics joined the church but people from Jamaica, Trinidad, and African Americans.”²⁹ In these cases, the clergy from a minoritized group opened the door not only for Hispanics but for people from other marginalized communities.

This paragraph responds to research question three regarding the success of CRCC appointments because what contributes to the CRCC ministry’s success is the

²⁵ Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *A House of Prayer for All Peoples: Congregations Building Multiracial Community* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 2002), 21-22.

²⁶ George A. Yancey, *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 43.

²⁷ HiRho Y. Park, *Develop Intercultural Competence: How to Lead Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Churches* (Nashville, TN: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2018), 8.

²⁸ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶425.4.

²⁹ See Appendix A.

capacity of the pastor and the congregation to build rapport and trust. Hispanic clergy expressed that their usual response to racial challenges is to develop one-on-one inclusive relationships that encourage trust and reciprocity. They list characteristics such as fellowship, sharing of stories, community, humor, Christian love, and servanthood as integral to building trust. Four out of six Hispanic clergypersons who reported conflict at the beginning of their appointment also noted that as they interacted with members of their congregation and “built family,” they were accepted. These clergy witnessed how some biases and prejudices disappeared before their eyes. Interviewee six said, “time is your best friend.”³⁰ Interviewee one said, “I remember a lady who gave a tough time at first, but she began to come around after months. These days, she always says ‘hi’ after the service to tell me how much she liked my sermons.”³¹ Hispanic clergy celebrate that their approach to the ministry of mutual learning and reciprocity contributed to breaking barriers and arriving at a place of collaboration, leaving behind distrust and prejudice. The stories of transformation outweighed the challenges. All interviewee pastors shared the blessing they were to their congregation and the community where they were appointed. Through building *familia* they engaged and gained their members’ trust, bringing their transformation experience to fruition.

Healing

To bring healing a congregation needs a willingness to try something new and be open-minded. As a researcher, I divided all the healing ideas into three sections: recommendations for congregations, the Bishop and the appointive cabinet, and new Hispanic clergy in CRCC appointments. In response to research question three, clergy

³⁰ See Appendix A, pastor #6, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

³¹ See Appendix A, pastor #1, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

believed that what helped reduce friction in their appointments was respect, openness to trying something new, deep listening, open-mindedness, and an open heart.

Three out of six interviewees recommend not to change things at first, but to observe and learn the dynamics of their new appointments. Interviewee three recommended that if he were to do this all over again, “I would not change anything the first year, just observe and learn. Being a pastor of a different race is a lot of change already for the congregation.”³² One pastor commented on a laity report, “A member of my congregation said, ‘at first, I didn’t like having a Hispanic pastor, but I decided to give the pastor a chance and said to myself, I was going to wait for a year and see what happened. After a year, I realized that I got so used to our new pastor that I would not like another one.’”³³

Hispanic clergy prepared the ground for the next generation of CRCC appointments. They broke glass ceilings and opened doors. The data showed that churches are more open to second and subsequent CRCC appointments after the first one. The following appointments had a better experience than they did the first time. The pastors prepared their congregation to be more accepting of new diverse pastors. This kind of healing will be possible with the help of the conference appointing authorities.

All interviewees were asked what they would do if they could choose the next pastor for the congregations they are currently serving. One of them said, “If I were the District Superintendent, I would like this church to be appointed a pastor of another race again, a woman, or both.”³⁴ They feel another CRCC appointment will benefit their

³² See Appendix A, pastor #3, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

³³ See Appendix A.

³⁴ See Appendix A.

church members. I believe that this sentiment comes from great care from the pastors to their congregations. They want the best for the people they lead and are convinced that having a pastor of another race or a female pastor will make a big difference. These recommendations also suggest that local congregations still have room for growth.

Finally, one way of healing and bringing about transformation in GNJUMC churches with regard to prejudice and discrimination is to support churches in CRCC appointments. This is perhaps the most common reason in favor of CRCC ministries that coincides with our research literature and Methodist doctrine.³⁵ Interviewee five voiced one common idea when she said, "We need to push our chance of growth. If we don't mix, our church will be extinguished."³⁶ If local churches do not become more inclusive, they will disappear. If they do not open their doors to multiculturalism, they will have to close their doors.

³⁵ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶425.4.

³⁶ See Appendix A, pastor #5, interview by author, Bordentown, January 2022.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION - STIRRINGS OF HOPE

This chapter will conclude the study by summarizing the key study findings related to the research aims and questions. It will indicate how this study can contribute to the United Methodist Church's efforts to fight the sin of racism. It will relate its findings to the existing theory and practical contributions to society. Finally, it will review proposed opportunities for future investigation.

Overall Findings

This research project aims to assess the experiences of discrimination against Hispanic clergy leading local Euro-American congregations in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (GNJUMC) and explore solutions to these racial issues by analyzing the ministry strategies and practice implemented by this select cohort of pastors. The findings show that discrimination still exist in local churches and that the Hispanic clergy's vocation can bring about transformation and healing in racially homogenous congregations and communities.

The findings indicate that despite suffering different forms of prejudice and discrimination, the Hispanic clergy who participated in my research seemed to adapt to these challenges, build trust and, ultimately, effectively lead their congregations. Despite the skepticism of some Euro-American laity and even clergy, my research has demonstrated that Hispanic clergy have a strong vocation to lead Euro-American congregations and communities towards courageous transformation. CRCC appointments are possible and can be effective in bringing transformations in inclusivity, hospitality, and reconciliation in unique ways.

The data demonstrated that Hispanic clergy displayed a high level of self-awareness, compassion, and love despite the challenges of prejudice and discrimination they experienced in their Euro-American congregations. Hispanic clergy helped members of their congregations expand their hospitality convictions and skills and include unreached neighbors of the communities they serve. Hispanic clergy contributed to the appreciation and inclusion of diverse people from minoritized communities. They helped people develop a new appreciation for diversity and Hispanic culture. Further findings illustrate that CRCC appointments allow members of congregations to reveal their true feelings regarding prejudice and discrimination that were previously concealed. These church members could only move towards repentance once these consciously or unconsciously held sentiments were exposed.

Contributions

This study has the potential to meaningfully contribute to the United Methodist Church, especially to the GNJUMC. My research confirms and reveals prejudicial behavior in local churches. It shows how clergy faced challenges and provided healing and reconciliation. And finally, this study illustrates how changing the power dynamics between lay and clergy leaders can bring about transformation in the entire congregation. This study confirms and sheds light on how prejudice and discrimination are still practiced in local churches. This finding is consistent with the theory that traditional cultural competence education has not produced the expected results of reducing prejudice and discrimination in congregations. In addition, it reveals the complex challenges that Hispanic clergy face in CRCC appointments, and that their experience is different from Anglo clergy.

This research showed that education about cultural competence is usually avoided, ignored, and does not produce significant change. Exaggerated antiracist attempts tend to divide people rather than bring about reconciliation. However, what worked in CRCC ministries was building relationships, experiencing life together, worshiping and serving on the same side, and learning to adapt to each other. Living and working together created an opportunity and an environment where they could face each other, think creatively, and develop mutual accountability. The study demonstrated that a determined, courageous leader and an open congregation willing to support and befriend church leaders who look different best helped diverse communities thrive.

This study shows that CRCC appointments create opportunities to challenge colorblindness and bring about healing. The presence of a Hispanic pastor in a leadership position exposed people's prejudice and discrimination by triggering deep-seated, perhaps dormant, racist attitudes. This triggering would not occur in a non-CRCC situation. A congregation that does not experience a CRCC appointment will not have the opportunity to face such a life experience in which they can observe and challenge their own implicit or explicit biases. CRCC appointments differ from secular encounters with minoritized populations because the setting also includes religious sentiments. One's relationship with a pastor is, in part, a relationship with God. This research shows that congregations behave in ways they were not aware of without the presence of a person of another ethnicity as their leader. This research suggests that transformation is possible in CRCC communities. The data illustrates that even well-intentioned congregations display microaggressions towards people who are different. Hispanic clergy's challenging and painful experience shows that self-awareness, forgiveness, and healing are possible.

The research revealed that Hispanic clergy uniquely connect to their neighborhoods and are committed to crossing boundaries. Crossing boundaries confirms Christian readiness to “go into the world to make disciples.”¹ Therefore, I contend that multicultural churches and churches with CRCC appointments have better chances of reaching multiracial communities and interracial families. Hispanic clergy fulfill the call to ministry with all people in faithfulness to the Gospel and seek to grow in mutual love and trust. The Hispanic clergy that participated in my study brought about reconciliation with forgotten minoritized groups in the neighborhood where they served. Hispanic clergy contributed to healing, and confronted injustice, exclusion, and fear. They helped alleviate racial alienation by being a natural extension and a mechanism that helped produce racial reconciliation. They advance efforts to alleviate racial alienation.

Further findings showed that clergy could deal with power tensions and may bring about the solution to pluralists’ skepticism. This action was possible due to a solid theological foundation and a call to ministry. However, some of them had to pay a high price at the expense of their families and personal comfort. Even though discrimination towards minority groups is still prevalent in society, the dynamic changes when the minoritized person is in a leadership position. This issue is even more complex when such a position represents God. When a person of a marginalized group is appointed to a position of power, it changes the organization's dynamic. In some cases, discrimination comes to the surface, and racist feelings and/or sentiments cannot be avoided. A Euro-American community that has a Hispanic pastor as its leader has the chance to practice

¹ Matthew 28, NRSV.

mutual accountability. The community is pushed not only to think about what is best for them but also for their Hispanic pastor.

As we saw from the literature, multiculturalism has been challenged for fear that minoritized culture may vanish. This skepticism is motivated by the claim that congregation leadership is still white while the congregation is open to diversity. The argument explains that when we rush marginalized groups to integrate with Euro-American faith communities, the non-majority group risks being assimilated, thus losing key aspects of their cultural specificity. This fear is reduced when the power shifts with a Hispanic pastor in charge of a diverse congregation. This study shows that such practice helped people in minoritized groups become more confident in joining Euro-American congregations. This concept is significant for the future of the GNJUMC in the context of an increasingly multicultural society. From a missional and strategic point of view, CRCC appointments can become the solution to the missional problem. They can be the seed for future generations.

This research demonstrates that Hispanic clergy prepared the ground for the next generation of CRCC appointments. They broke glass ceilings and opened doors. They are precursors in the church of the future. The data indicates that churches are more open to second and subsequent CRCC appointments. These appointments have a more positive experience than their predecessors. The pastors prepared their congregation to be more accepting of new diverse pastors.

The Importance

This study is relevant and significant given the lack of standard evaluation of CRCC ministries, pastors, and congregations. These evaluations are done privately, at the

appointing official's discretion. While pastors share their victories and disappointments privately, I did not find any document that speaks of their experiences and challenges that was accessible to the public. It is necessary for the healing of our church that the public understand the experiences of Hispanic clergy that lead Euro-American churches. It took great courage for Hispanic clergy to speak about their challenges and victories as leaders; it will take the same courage to witness and interpret the meaning of this data. I hope that this study explains the painful and joyful events that take place in CRCC appointments.

Relating to Existing Theory

The voices of the pastors illustrate that the traditional methods of education, such as cultural competence, are insufficient to stop racism in local churches. This study is also consistent with the General Conference of the UMC's call for inclusivity to transform the world. Despite professionals who argue against CRCC appointments, the research shows that the theological commitments of healing, inclusivity, and multiculturalism are possible through CRCC appointments.

Harvey's theory

This research confirms Harvey's theory that a reconciliation paradigm is insufficient to bring about reconciliation.² Christian doctrines of equality and teachings that we are all children of God obstruct recognition that we are also different and need different resources. The traditional theological commitments of equality will not accomplish what it desires. This study shows that traditional theology reinforces the color blindness paradigm.

² Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans's Publishing Company, 2014), 19-20.

Yancey's theory

This research is consistent with Yancey's theory about mutual accountability. Yancey believes that the competition between color blindness versus antiracism will not bring about reconciliation.³ The ideas of antiracism proposed by many liberation theologians such as Delatorre and Kendi will not provide the result expected, only more division. The data is consistent with these failures, anticipating that the confrontation will never end. Their experience of living together and practicing mutual accountability tends to be more effective than any rhetoric of competence training, which seems to divide communities along ideological lines.

Practical Contributions

- Knowing the challenging situation for people in CRCC appointments, we can develop new strategies and educational methods to prepare congregations. Providing concepts and narratives of successful CRCC appointments might also help to make new CRCC appointments more successful and reduce the adjustment period.
- This study can help denominational leaders train more CRCC Hispanic pastors and help to prepare Euro-American congregations to face the missional challenges of the future, more diverse American churches. Also, this study can be used to prepare congregations who have never had CRCC appointments.
- Pastors and church leaders can use this research for preaching and teaching Bible studies and worships about race, inclusivity, and hospitality. Methodist Christians need to be committed to cultural competence education in the local churches to

³ Yancey, *Beyond Racial Division*, 90-91.

help church members recognize fears and biases. These forms of education can occur through sermons, Bible studies, prayers, liturgy, retreats, Sunday schools, workshops, forums, and other ways of Christian education. A clear understanding of “we” must be taught from theological and biblical perspectives. The church is not “my church,” and God is not “my God.” The church is “our church,” and God is “our God.” Christianity is not just a personal experience but a communal experience.

Recommendation for Future Research

In my research project, I was surprised to discover the myriad of subjects this research could explore in the future. I was unable to explore these topics because they were not directly related to my research questions and because I lacked the space for this project. But, I am hopeful that these topics might be of significant interest to other researchers. Some of the tangential research topics that arose during my research are as follows:

The Experiences of Children of Clergy in CRCC

Another area to explore for further research is how prejudice and discrimination affect the pastor's children. The experience of pastor's children in CRCC appointments is a noteworthy area of investigation, although I was not able to commit to this subject due to the focus of my study and interviews. This research shows many stories where members of Euro-American congregations commit prejudice and discrimination toward Hispanic clergy's children (in most cases, minors). Consequently, these children lost their faith in the church and even in God. They had to sacrifice their church experience for their parent's call to ministry. Children suffered the consequences of their parent's

decisions and faced discrimination from church members. In most cases, their congregation members were the only Christians they knew. In my research, interviewed pastors expressed how difficult it is for their children to adapt to having a pastor as a parent; this is further complicated by being in CRCC appointments.

Experience of Church Members of Local Congregations in CRCC Appointments

Another area of study is racism and discrimination in congregations. This study focused on the experience of Hispanic pastors leading Euro-American congregations. A study that focuses on the members' experience within a congregation may bring new insights to this study. This would allow for the opportunity to analyze the socio-cultural reasons individuals and groups behave with prejudice and discrimination.

Spirituality as it Relates to Inclusivity and Racism

Another area of study must be spirituality related to prejudice and discrimination. This area of study can bring a new understanding of Christian spirituality. All of the interviewed pastors shared that spirituality is closely related to race and inclusivity. Still, they believe their congregations are unaware of that. Three out of six interviewees also declared that their congregations believe that church and politics should not be mixed and that race and Christianity are two separate issues. One clergy stated that he was rebuked for praying about Black Lives Matter because that belonged to the realm of politics and not the church.

Intersectionality Challenges

While prejudicial challenges are real and require attention, other issues like age and gender are also challenging. For instance, the challenges of Hispanic female clergy were amplified compared to male Hispanic clergy. All surveyed female Hispanic clergy

members stated that they faced greater abuse for being a woman than for their identity as a Hispanic pastor. They believe that if they were men, even Hispanic men, their Euro-American congregations would respect them more. In one case, this intersectional challenge was intensified because she was the first Hispanic and the first woman to lead that particular Euro-American congregation.

Aside from resistance to accepting them as authoritative figures, two Hispanic female clergy members who wore their hair in natural styles received criticism from their Euro-American congregants about their hairstyle. Interviewee six (female Hispanic clergy) reported hearing a laity person attending a CRCC appointment say, “Why don’t you fix your hair? It is distracting the men in this congregation.” In this situation, the clergy’s hairstyle became an object of shame rather than an expression of her cultural heritage.

In this final chapter, I pointed out the key study findings related to the research aims and questions. We have seen how this study can contribute to the United Methodist Church’s efforts to fight the sin of racism. It conveys its findings to the existing theory and practical contributions to society. Finally, it reviews opportunities for future investigation.

Last Words

The lack of racial diversity in local United Methodist churches is a problem. Because of this persistent problem, I wanted to explore and assess the disparity between denominational leadership’s claims of inclusivity and the opposition of CRCC appointments that occur in the GNJUMC. The research findings demonstrate that despite issues of prejudice and discrimination, the surveyed Hispanic clergy adapted to the

challenges, built trust, and effectively led their congregations and communities towards courageous transformation in inclusivity, reconciliation, and healing in unique ways. For example, Hispanic clergy helped members of their congregations expand their hospitality skills, which resulted in people from minoritized groups becoming more confident in joining Euro-American congregations. The findings also reveal that CRCC appointments could be the solution to embracing the increasing multiculturalism in our churches. This project makes no pretense of having answers to all the challenging questions that the study raises. Still, I hope that the work contained within this research project can be helpful to improve cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments.

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY DATA

This appendix includes paraphrases of the interviews conducted with Hispanic clergy serving in local churches of the GNJUMC during the months of January and February of 2022. The transcripts were coded and divided into themes and sub-themes for clarity of analysis:

Theme A: Vocation
 Theme B: Discrimination
 Theme C: Spirituality and Inclusivity
 Theme D: Recommendations

Theme A: Vocation

Clergy's Unique Contribution to the Church

I can teach them about a different culture.
 I help them experience that any person can be loving.
 I cooked things for them that they never had, and fortunately, they found it delicious.
 Now they look forward to my food.
 They liked that I brought Hispanic things.

Identity: Breaking Through

Being in a CRCC appointment is a painful and challenging process of living together with others while keeping my culture without being absorbed.
 I am always the first female pastor and first ethnic pastor in every church that I served.
 My contribution is to embrace and celebrate.
 I don't see myself as a Hispanic pastor or a white pastor, I am just a pastor.
 If I were white, I would not be able to add that personal background, experience, and tradition. Furthermore, my interpretation of the scriptures is different. I will not express it in my way.
 I have struggled in terms of leadership, not so much for being Hispanic but for being a woman. I have many leadership struggles, more for being a woman than being Hispanic.
 she sees herself as a pastor but will prefer to lead a white church breaking barriers
 I feel called to make the way like Moses. If we don't allow them to grow, they will vanish. How can they grow if we don't give them a chance?
 It hurts.
 I want God to use me to change and bring new perspectives to churches.
 I didn't tell them what to do; I came here to build "*familia*." It does not mean that I put aside my culture and roots, but I understand that I am here to give and serve, not to impose.
 I like the opportunity to grow and change my perspective.

Experiences of Conflict: How to Not Take It Personally

When I first joined the church, one of the members was trying to be funny to break the ice. He called me pastor quesadilla and my daughter, taco. When I heard it, I knew that it was so wrong. But I also understood that he was not trying to be racist. He was trying to call me in a Hispanic way he knew about, trying to use my language to relate to me. I laughed because I knew where he was coming from. You see, they don't know that you may find this offensive. So, I laughed but I told them not to say that again, because that was considered offensive in other circles. Also, please don't call me like this in front of others. They will be offended. And please don't do that to anybody else because that is inappropriate. The thing is that they don't have all the tools, so I help them understand what is offensive and what is not. I won't take this in an offensive manner or get back at him. They don't know what they are doing.

I won't take this in an offensive manner. Even if they didn't have all the tools, I would not be offended. They don't have all the tools, so I help them.

Sacrifice

I would leave this congregation if they did not give me space to grow for my family and me.

I do not have the attitude of a martyr. I know other pastors do, but I don't.

If church members hurt members of my family, I would leave the appointment."

Theme B: Prejudice

Responding to Unintentional Prejudice and Discrimination

It is not that they want to be racist but that they don't know what they are doing or don't have the tools to understand when they are offensive.

I am not racist, but I hate this.

I wouldn't call it discrimination or racism but judgment.

The first week of my appointment, a member sent a letter to the DS saying they didn't want Hispanics. They were afraid that they would be changed. They were asking if the pastor knew what she was doing.

There is a conservative movement that makes people not talk about race.

I experience discrimination. Some told me that she didn't want a Hispanic pastor to go to her house. When she died, she didn't want me to do the funeral. one of the members told me that she is well known for doing that. I don't want you to feel bad. This person did not want to go to doctors of color or restaurants of other ethics.

The congregation thinks we go to their churches to make them Hispanics or are afraid that we will bring a lot of Hispanics in their building to become the majority and kick them out of their church."

Experience of Prejudice and Discrimination

On Sunday, a black person came into the church, and one person in the back said this out loud.

Hello, welcome. We have never had a black person in this church. After that Sunday, the person didn't come back, but she filled up a welcome card, so I visited her. She said, with all respect, I appreciate that you are coming to visit. But did you see the color of all those people in the church? I didn't know what to answer, and I said I am sorry that you feel

that way. Give me one reason why I should be in that church so that I can attract other black people.

Once I invited a preacher who was a native English Speaker to preach in my church. At the end of the sermon, a member shouted, in a way that everybody in the room could hear, "O finally, a message that I understood totally."

I felt marginalized in the church.

Many people left because I came to that church.

When my family and I first came here, they didn't give us a chance. They would give the whole family a hard time.

Hispanic pastors are more judged than other pastors.

I was abused in many ways. My congregation mistreated me emotionally and spiritually.

Some people ask for a green card. They wanted to make sure I was not "illegal."

"Can you speak so that we can make sure we can understand you?"

There were stereotypes that Hispanics cook using much grease.

Many left the church before you arrived without giving you the chance to get to know you.

There is the issue of accents just because they are not used to hearing accents.

Many people have a misconception that they think that you will start a Hispanic service.

The perception is that they expect that you are there to change them. They are afraid that you will change their culture. They are not too open. There are misinterpretations and fear.

They are afraid of what they don't know and lack education and exposure.

They think they don't need to learn about race because we are not all the same. I will treat you the same so that I don't have to open myself to new ideas or concepts. We are all the same. Those issues don't exist. It's not that they don't want to but that they don't know.

They try to minimize it. It is not an issue, so they don't have to deal with it. They don't have an idea.

I don't think it is resistance; they lack exposure and education.

They never left their native land where they had the privilege and did not allow them to be exposed.

Experiences of Bias or Willful Blindness

White people do not want Hispanics as their leaders.

People in white churches do not want to talk about race. They don't like the subject.

I preached about race, and some left: "I am leaving the church because I don't want to hear about racism."

"Maybe, the Bishop is racist, but we are not racist. Why do they call us racist? We are not racist."

They don't see discrimination or racist expression, but we Hispanic see it.

They made very offensive comments, but they didn't know they had been cruel.

Even talking about cultural competence is offensive because they feel they are not incompetent.

They say they are not racist, but they treat different white and black or other Hispanics.

They are pro-Trump's idea of deporting all Mexican back to Mexico.

Colorism

They may be open to receiving a Hispanic pastor with light skin color. They would oppose a Hispanic pastor with native features or dark skin like an Afro Hispanic.

Significant Experiences of Discrimination

After some time, we all understand, but at first, we take this personally and feel offended. One thing is to have you as a member of your congregation, and another thing is to have you as their leader and "big boss."

Not all Hispanics have the same experience because we are very diverse among ourselves. I know of another Hispanic pastor who is Afro-Hispanic, and he and his family are experiencing much discrimination.

He is a Democrat, and the church he was appointed to is very Republican. I heard that a congregation member walked around the parsonage with a confederate flag expecting that he would resign. He has a worse experience than mine.

They are polite but not loving. They were scared of me, and I was scared of them.

Fear

Some say that they fear that if their church keeps on growing in diversity, they feel they will kick white people out of their church.

They are very territorial. White people are scared that another group will come and take over what was theirs.

Discrimination in Preaching

I have challenges in preaching because they are Republican and very conservative. They don't understand my progressive and Democratic perspective.

My SPPRC chair confronted me after one service for leading a prayer for the healing of the Black community.

They have never told me, "Don't talk about this," but I have been cautious about not touching on race and politics. I really don't want to get in trouble.

I have to be very careful about what I say.

There are things in the congregation they don't want to listen to.

If you preach, they label you as a democrat.

Theme D: Transformation

They can feel that I connect with them. I connect with them on a personal level.

I have to train myself not to take things personally.

I don't tell my congregation, "You should learn." I say, "I celebrate this."

I don't tell my congregation what they need to learn but show them who I am.

On the one hand, we say you should learn to talk to us. On the other hand, we say we need to learn not to be offended by your words.

You need to become a family first. Jesus came, and he became one of us. He walked with us. He came to understand us first. He did not try to impose, but he became one of us.

How Trust was Built

One of the trustees did not like me from the start. After his wife passed away, I brought him meals and tried to comfort him.

He realized that I was there for him when his wife passed away. And in time, he apologized that he gave me such a hard time when I first came to this church.

What worked for me was my willingness to try and be with them. Showing my culture created curiosity and increased their open-mindedness.

The issue of trust is theirs. It is not my problem. They see you as Hispanic, and they feel you are not good enough to serve them.

Good Experiences

I feel loved in my church and that my church has my back.

My people feel that they count on me. And that this community feels that I am here for them.

There are people from other ethnicities that are coming to my church. When people of color look at the church windows, their first impression is, "These people do not represent me." Even with all that (the worship experience, the building set up), the way people make her feel made a difference.

Time Helped to Heal

They were not welcoming when I came, but now that they know me, they have expanded their capacity to accept others.

What kept me going was thinking that I could seriously make a difference in this church and this neighborhood.

Welcoming Minoritized People

Hispanic pastors allow our church to receive people of other races.

With my presence here, our church can give people from other cultures the opportunity to feel welcomed.

One Hispanic who began attending our church said, "I can relate to you because we speak the same language."

When I became the pastor of that church, not only Hispanics joined the church but people from the Jamaicans, Trinidad, and African Americans.

Theme E: Healing

General Recommendations

Every church and every pastor must experience a CRCC appointment.

All must strive to build good relationships before judging. At first, people gave me a hard time. Many left before I arrived and did not even give themselves a chance to know me.

Now it is better because I know them and love them. It can happen because now there is a relationship.

Recommendations to the Bishop and the Appointive Cabinet

CRCC appointments are at a disadvantage. There has not been any coaching or training on how to do it. There must be more intentionalism to make this appointment work with the pastor and the congregation to make sure there is a good foundation.

Coaching is needed.

Why would you put a gay pastor in a red church? Republican.

Not every congregation is ready to have multiculturalism forced on them.

If I were the District Superintendent, I would like my church to be appointed a pastor of another race again, a woman, or both. This congregation needs to grow and reach out to the changing community.

Recommendations for Congregations

They need to learn to love each other

They need to see themselves not as superior to Hispanics

Don't be afraid to receive someone who looks different because they can strengthen the ministry. The church will learn new skills to welcome different people. The church will be better.

God desires to teach them something and put them in that situation so that they can grow.

They would have never put themselves in that situation, but God put them there.

Be open without judgment of what or who is best.

The community is the essential part.

We both learned from each other.

The demographics of this community is proved to be more Hispanic or Latino. As a community, you have the opportunity to share your gifts with a community that desires to grow and be a part of the faith family. and show them the statistics and ask them to be in ministry.

We learn more about the community than we learn in the pews.

The church has to learn that the body of Christ is different. If I am only exposed to my group, we are stuck.

We need to grow more, and they must learn that the best way is CRCC ministries.

We need to push our chances of growth. If we don't mix, our church will be extinguished.

It is necessary, but it is risky. It may not work, but it is needed.

They need to be more culturally competent to go to the next step.

If you are not exposed, you cannot take the next step.

There is a mestizaje in our churches. You have to dig deep because no one is entirely white. There is also a mix in their life.

I would bring another Hispanic pastor for their next appointment. Maybe someone with darker skin than mine, perhaps an Afro-Hispanic.

It will be best for them to have another pastor from another minority.

Maybe they will need a Hispanic pastor or another ethnicity because the demographics change. A woman will be best for them. I don't want to be a hic-up.

We need to walk by their side.

It is not about them and us.

It is about being humble like Jesus; they never imagine that they will have to follow a Hispanic pastor.

They need to grow in love, acceptance, and diversity.

The church does not belong to them but to everyone.

We need to open the circle wide.
They need to grow in diversity,

Recommendations for Hispanic Clergy in CRCC Appointments

Pray that God creates unity between them.

Don't take things personally. If you don't take it personally, always communicate, don't be afraid of who you are, don't mold yourself to them, be you.

This is an opportunity to lead with the community, and you can lead this congregation into ministries that they have never been in before.

This is the most significant opportunity, take it and lead them into this and see what Jesus sees, experiment with other cultures and develop another vision and how to see life from another perspective.

Read and learn as much as you can about the church you are about to serve.

Be self-aware of your prejudice because we can be tempted to be racist.

First, focus on building bridges between you and the congregation.

An efficient pastor is a pastor who can engage with the community.

The goal is to have the congregation engaged with the least of these. When that happens, a clergy is effective.

Theme C: Spirituality and Inclusivity

The further you are from God, the less forgiven you are.

Your spiritual life reflects your relationship with God. It determines how deep it can be or how superficial it is.

Spirituality is connected to talking to people with compassion and equity. We are supposed to love each other. Therefore, discrimination is not spirituality.

I can't separate the spiritual from race, politics, and religion. Politics and religion are close to each other. For them, if you don't support their political point, you are not religious.

Additional Themes

Women Clergy Leaders

I worked hard to get respect from them. I am not only Latina, but I am a woman.

They are more afraid that I am a woman than a Hispanic.

They mistreat me because I am a Latina and a woman.

Because I am a woman, the church members did not call me pastor.

When I was first appointed to this church, my hair was curly. At the first Church Council meeting, someone told me that my hair was a distraction to the men in the church. They asked me to do something with my hair, so to avoid conflict, I started strengthening my hair so that I was not a distraction to the men in the congregation.

My congregation looked at him as if he were the leading pastor, not me. My husband does not have a religious education or any interest in becoming a clergy. I never changed my last name when I married him, but the congregation insisted on not calling me by my last name. They called me by my husband's last name.

Men and women are more attached to male pastors. So, it is not about being Hispanic but about being a male.

It is hard for my family. My wife and family members do not speak English well. They are limited to sharing the ministry. Worship is different.

Family

Positive

CRCC positively affects my family.

My mom does not speak English, but she knows that she is loved in this church.

Negative

It is hard for my family. My wife and family members do not speak English well. They are limited to sharing the ministry. Worship is different.

My children wanted to have a pet, but the congregation did not want to. However, the former pastors were allowed to have pets.

When she went to college, no one reached out to her. She left the church.

This church and my former church influenced her to lose her faith.

She used to be a very devoted Christian, but she did not understand why my congregation did not support her or me as she grew up.

People made fun of her for singing in Spanish.

My daughters have grown up in white churches.

Church members have hurt them. They made fun of my daughter's hair. My daughters told me they didn't want to come back to church. I had to have many conversations with my daughters to be understanding and compassionate with my congregation.

Since my daughters have grown up in the church, they are used to being treated differently. And that the members will say racist statements once in a while.

She finds other services online when she finishes with our service and worships there.

She supports me with her presence. She had to "die to herself" and adapt to this white way of worship.

My daughter never connected to white churches. She has closed herself. She is liberal and very open-minded, so my conservative church has not been the best.

It has to do with how Hispanic children see Anglo children. They already have resistance.

I am disappointed that my children do not have a good place to go to church. If I was not the pastor, I might not bring my children to this church.

APPENDIX B

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HISPANIC PASTORS SERVING IN EURO-
AMERICAN CONGREGATIONS**

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Have you ever participated in a study or training session about systemic racism, diversity, equity, inclusion, or race and reconciliation?

Is this your first experience leading in a CRCC appointment? If not, how many other times?

How long have you served this congregation?

What do you like most about your appointment?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

To what degree do you believe churches should strive to be racially/culturally inclusive communities?

When choosing a pastor for a church, do you believe that the clergy should be of the same race as the congregation? If so, why?

Do you think your Euro-American congregation is hesitant to accept cross-racial appointments? If so, how?

Do you think UMC congregations prefer not to speak about race or immigration during worship time?

Do you think that racism exists in the United Methodist Church?

CHURCH

Does your ethnicity affect the way you connect with your congregation and community?

On a scale of 1-10, how important is racial inclusivity in your church?

Not important 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Very important.

In which ways does your church need to be a more inclusive faith community?

PERSONAL

What is your contribution to your church as a Hispanic person?

How does being in a CRCC appointment affect your family?

How supported do you feel by the Conference or fellow Euro-American clergy?

Do you experience discrimination by members of your congregation?

Do you look forward to being in a cross-racial appointment again?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Would your church benefit from another cross-racial appointment in the future?

Do you think your church should be more educated to prepare its members for future cross-racial appointments?

What kind of education, support, or resources do you think you need to better serve your cross-racial appointment?

What suggestions do you have for making your cross-racial appointment more successful and effective?

What recommendations would you give to incoming Hispanic pastors and Anglo congregations receiving a first-time CRCC appointment?

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Except for the concepts stated in *The Book of Discipline*, most of the terms below do not have a uniformly agreed-upon definition in the academy. For clarity and ease of reading, I have provided a glossary of terms, which will function as a primer on the subject.

Appointment

An appointment in the UMC is an assignment of ordained clergy made by the Bishop and appointive cabinet to a local church or another context of ministry. According to *The Book of Discipline*, “appointments are to be made with consideration...to congregations and institutions’ needs, characteristics, and opportunities.”⁴ For this project, I use the term appointment, referring only to the assignment of a clergyperson in a ministerial position in a local church. There are also other kinds of appointments, such as extension ministry appointments.

Culture

Culture refers to a person or community’s values, goals, instincts, beliefs, myths, conventions, social practices, and religious behaviors. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits [shared by] a racial, religious, or social group” in a place or time.⁵ The dictionary also says that culture is “the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.”⁶

⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, ¶425.1.

⁵ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “culture (n.),” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>.

⁶ Ibid.

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness allows individuals to see their own biases, prejudices, and judgments. It begins with self-awareness and defines values, beliefs, and perspectives. Adler and Gundersen believe that “the more culturally self-aware we are, the more able we are to predict our behavior’s effect on others.”⁷ Since cultural awareness defines personal worldview, we must understand one’s worldview before trying to understand another’s. Without self-awareness, it is difficult for a person to respect, understand, or engage in other cultures.

Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointment

The Book of Discipline defines cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments as “appointments of clergy to congregations where the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergy person’s own racial/ethnic and cultural background.”⁸ Some clergy argue that every single appointment is a cross-cultural appointment because most clergy do not grow up in the same culture where they are appointed. Most clergy have to do some cross-cultural work wherever they are sent. In the case of Hispanic clergy, the element of ethnicity and immigration adds to the equation, affecting the relationship between clergy and congregation.

Ironically, race alone represents only an essential but small part of what a person is. Therefore, the weight that “race” creates to the appointment is more due to the congregation’s focus, bias, and prejudice about looks rather than a clergy’s effectiveness

⁷ Nancy J. Adler and Allison Gundersen, *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior* (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2008), 81.

⁸ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶425.

in ministry. Other variants also add to this equation, such as gender, age, and theological persuasion, which are perceived as complications.

Technically the term “race” does not fully apply to Hispanic people since Hispanic is not a race but an ethnicity. For practical reasons, this project assumes that CRCC appointments also include “cross-ethnic appointments.”

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to identifying a group “based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a ‘people;’ this distinctiveness is believed to be expressed in language, music, values, etc.”⁹ Hispanic is an ethnicity and not a race. They are brown, black, Euro-American, yellow, and others. Some Hispanic people have ancestors who lived in the U.S. before this country was colonized. First-generation Hispanic immigrants have extended families of a wide diversity of backgrounds.

Among Hispanics, white Hispanics are culturally the dominant group. It is relevant to mention that Hispanics come from a long history of racial divisions and power dynamics that benefit the dominant caste—similarly to Anglo culture. Black Hispanics and Native Hispanics suffer racism, segregation, and marginalization. These power dynamics also play a role in Hispanic churches. Later, this paper mentions issues of colorism, like how some interviewees reported that skin color made a difference in a local church's openness to a CRCC appointment. However, this paper does not focus on the study of internal racism in Hispanic circles.

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “ethnicity(n.),” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnicity>.

Microaggression

Sometimes people of privilege make comments or behave in certain ways that make people in minoritized groups feel inferior or discriminated against. Sometimes, when marginalized people experience these aggressions, they cannot explain why they feel offended or hurt. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines microaggressions as “verbal or behavioral slights, generally subtle and often unintentional or unconscious, that communicate a stereotype or negative attitude toward a person of color and thus indicate an implicit bias based on race.”¹⁰ The article “Basic tenets of critical race theory” indicates that “the common occurrence of racial microaggressions is indicative of the pervasiveness of racist attitudes even among people who consciously reject racism, and their cumulative effect on people of color can be psychologically devastating.”¹¹

Minoritized

Some people view the term “minority” negatively because it suggests that people in this group have less or no representation and power. From a Christian theological point of view, no group of people should be considered minor or lesser because all people are equally children of God. The term “minority” results from a social construction imposed on people, leaving them vulnerable to face stigmas and prejudices. This term is used to describe people who have been made a minority in the United States. However, they are a majority in other parts of the world. For instance, Hispanics make up most people living in South America, but they become minoritized by the majority when they live in the

¹⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “microaggression,” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic>.

¹¹ Ibid.

United States.¹² When referring to Hispanic people living in the U.S., this project uses the term “minoritized” instead of the more common “minority” to name people of color, other races, or ethnic groups that live in the U.S. and are not Euro-American. I do not use this term to identify other people who are also categorized as minoritized, such as women, undocumented immigrants, people with disabilities, people in the LGBTQI community, and others.

Open Itinerancy

The Book of Discipline guarantees the appointment of clergy based on gifts and graces and encourages the practice of open itinerancy. Open itinerancy is the UMC’s practice where appointments are made “without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age.”¹³ While some still believe that white churches should have white pastors and Hispanic churches, Hispanic pastors, according to *The Book of Discipline*, the UMC must practice appointment decisions based on a clergy’s gifts and needs rather than race or ethnic background. In the same paragraph, *The Book of Discipline* also points out the responsibilities of the Annual Conference regarding open itinerancy. It states, “annual conferences shall...prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age.”¹⁴ *The Book of Discipline* affirms open itinerancy by

¹² Virgil P. Elizondo, “Mestizaje as a Locus of Theological Reflection,” in *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective*, ed. Arturo J. Banuelas (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 7-27. Some theologians such as Virgil Elizondo go further and use the term, “conquered” to designate Hispanic people living in the U.S.

¹³ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶425.1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

affirming that “the United Methodist Church promotes and holds in high esteem the opportunity of an inclusive church with the formation of open itinerancy.”¹⁵

Euro-American

The terms Euro-American, whites, or Anglo-American are interchangeable words in this project. They refer to United States residents who can trace their ancestry to Western European people. In this paper, I refer to Euro-Americans when referring to white Euro-Americans compared to Euro-American people who are also minoritized groups such as brown Euro-Americans, black Euro-Americans, Asian Euro-Americans, and others.

Hispanics

The terms Hispanic American, Latino/Latina, Latin American, or Latinx are used interchangeably in this project. These terms refer to United States residents who can trace their ancestry to Hispanic Americans, people from Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, or any other person born in the U.S. but who consider themselves of Hispanic ethnicity.

Image of God

The theological concept of the Image of God helps understand human essence and beginning, direction, and end. In the Hebrew Bible, the author of the Book of Genesis states that God created all humans in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). From a theological perspective, all people are made in the image of God; this is human essence and beginning.

¹⁵ Ibid., ¶425.3.

In another sense, the image of God must be the church's direction and end. Theologian J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen says that the Image of God is realized when people love.¹⁶ Though we may think of love as a property of character, this love is not located inherently in individuals or their capabilities. However, it occurs as people grow in love for God, and others. A theology that sees God's image as beginning and end and as a way of life in a community opens our minds to multicultural possibilities.

Understanding the perfection of God's love has always animated Christians from all generations. For example, John Wesley, the father of Methodism, thought of the image of God on a relational basis—in the act of receiving and reflecting on God's grace, which is love.¹⁷ Theologian Jan-Olav Henriksen portrays the image of God as something that realizes and improves. He believes that the paramount quality of the image of God is love for God and others in an evolutionary process.¹⁸ The Image of God is then present and future. By default, every human being is worthy and sacred because God created people in God's image.

Racism

Professors of sociology Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis define racism as “individual- and group-level processes and structures implicated in the reproduction of racial inequality.”¹⁹ Racism occurs when bias translates into action and can happen through individual or corporate actions. *The Book of Discipline* states,

¹⁶ J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans), 147.

¹⁷ John Wesley, Sermon 141, “On the Holy Spirit,” accessed June 15, 2021. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-141-on-the-holy-spirit/>.

¹⁸ Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Life, Love, and Hope: God and Human Experience* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

¹⁹ Matthew Clair and Jeffrey S. Denis. "Sociology of Racism," edited by James D. Wright. *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 19 (2015):857-863, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/matthewclair/files/sociology_of_racism_clairandenis_2015.pdf.

Racism, manifested as sin, plagues, and hinders our relationship with Christ, in as much as it is antithetical to the Gospel itself. In many cultures white persons are granted unearned privileges and benefits that are denied to persons of color. We oppose the creation of a racial hierarchy in any culture. Racism breeds racial discrimination. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the Church and in society based on race or ethnicity.²⁰

There are four levels of racism: internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural. Internalized racism is the expression of Euro-Americans' superiority and inferiority in minoritized people. Marginalized individuals experience internalized racism as internalized oppression, while Euro-Americans experience it as internalized racial superiority. Interpersonal racism occurs when individuals' beliefs affect their interactions. Institutional racism is the unfair and discriminatory treatment based on race within organizations and institutions. It produces inequitable outcomes for minoritized people and advantages for Euro-Americans. Structural racism occurs when the cumulative and compounding effects of public policies and institutional practices reinforce and perpetuate racial inequity among institutions and society through culture and history.

Two dimensions of racism are overt and covert racism. Overt racism involves intentional hate speech, racial profiling, and others. Covert racism is subtle, unspoken, and challenging to discern. One example of this can be microaggressions—which are exchanges that send denigrating messages in subtle ways. It can be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional; also, a perpetrator can be cognizant or not of causing racial discrimination. The victims feel exploited, rejected, marginalized, or silenced.

²⁰ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶162.

Racial Hierarchy

A racial hierarchy is a system of social stratification based on the belief that some racial groups are superior to others. Racial hierarchies have appeared in societies at various points in time, often being formally instituted in law. However, in most cases, racial hierarchy is subtle and unconscious. Those who support racial hierarchies believe themselves to be part of the ‘superior’ race and base their supposed superiority on pseudo-biological, ethical, or religious arguments. *The Book of Discipline* states, “We affirm that no identity or culture has more legitimacy than any other. We call the church to challenge any hierarchy of cultures or identities. Through relationships within and among cultures, we are responsible for learning from each other.”²¹

Race

These days, the word race is filled with connotations that get in the way of constructive dialogue. However, the word race only explains a person’s apparent physical aspects, such as skin tone, hair texture, lip thickness, and eye color. It is a social construction changed with emotions and meaning. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines race as “an attempt to categorize peoples primarily by their physical differences.”²² People are not just their race; other aspects of their personhood include culture, ethnicity, and worldviews.

²¹ Ibid., ¶161.

²² Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. “race(n.),” accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human>.

Separation and Segregation

In the struggle for justice, we must not confuse separation with segregation because it can result in profound injustices. Separation is a privilege of those in power to choose to do and procure their advantage. In contrast, segregation happens to oppressed people, victims of those in power. Malcolm X best explains the difference between these two concepts when he said:

Segregation means that which is forced upon inferiors by superiors. A segregated community is a Negro community. But the white community, though it's all white, is never called a segregated community. It's a separate community. In the white community, the white man controls the economy, his own economy, his own politics, his own everything. That's his community. But at the same time while the Negro lives in a separate community, it's a segregated community. Which means it's regulated from the outside by outsiders. The white man has all of the businesses in the Negro community. He runs the politics of the Negro community. He controls all the civic organizations in the Negro community. This is a segregated community.²³

Systemic Racism

Systemic racism happens when a particular group of people with power carry out processes that affect individuals in the same group and other groups. Systemic racism is part of American history in the cruel treatment and discrimination of non-Euro-American people through slavery, colonialism, and Jim Crow laws. Euro-Americans who did not directly practice such atrocities remained silent due to their learned biases and to protect their safety. Even today, silence is one of the most powerful actions that nurture privilege along with displacement and discrimination.

²³ Malcolm X. "The Race Problem." African Students Association and NAACP Campus Chapter. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. 23 January 1963. Columbia University accessed February 22, 2022, <https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/speeches/mxt14.html>.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is a form of racism that dehumanizes immigrants and considers them as racially inferior and, thus, undeserving of equal treatment. Immigration historian Erica Lee posits that xenophobia is the promotion of irrational hatred, fear of immigrants, and people considered foreigners on the premise that foreigners are a threat to the nation and its people.²⁴ Born from a restricted and exclusive definition of who is American and who is not, it likens immigration to “an invasion of hostile forces requiring a military response.”²⁵ However, not all immigrants are considered equally threatening. For instance, poor immigrant women have been considered an economic threat on the assumption that they would become dependent on welfare. While many factors determine which foreigners are targeted for xenophobic discrimination, race is the most important. Northern and Western white Europeans are favored above other groups. Lee argues that xenophobia has helped American capitalism and democracy thrive.²⁶ Xenophobes have used eugenics and “science” to “prove” white American superiority over other races and lobby for immigration controls based on race.

White Privilege

White privilege may cause resistance and indignation in some Euro-American people, including church members. The words “white” and “privilege” contain an abundance of meaning. In a New York Times article, journalist Emily Bazelon points out that white people who are not aware of their race but understand themselves as “normal” may feel discomfort by the term “Euro-American people.” Furthermore, the word

²⁴ Lee, 7-8.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶ Ibid., 14.

privilege may seem inappropriate for Euro-Americans who feel marginalized or live in poverty because it suggests that they do not have struggles.²⁷ Euro-American privilege does not mean that Euro-American people do not suffer. Many do not have food security, healthcare, or affluence. Euro-American privilege does not suggest that Euro-American people have not worked hard to accomplish what they have. The challenge here is distinguishing between an individual's effort or income level and an individual's built-in advantage in contrast to the rest of non-Euro-American people. People in minoritized groups do not have the same access to resources and power as Euro-American people do. Euro-American privilege is unconsciously enjoyed. Euro-American people live in the world assuming they will always get in front of the line, while people in marginalized groups know and resentfully expect their needs to receive attention second, third, or last. Euro-Americans benefit from it as a byproduct of racism. They are not aware of it or choose not to look at the disproportionate access to privileged treatment. This privilege results from conscious choices made by Euro-American people in power today and in the past. Research shows that only forty-six percent of Euro-American Americans think they benefit from blessings non-Euro-Americans do not enjoy.²⁸ Most white people do not acknowledge that Euro-American people in power make conscious decisions to uphold such privileges.

A Hispanic clergy said that after the attacks on Capitol Hill in 2021, the clergy invited members of the congregation to have a forum to share their thoughts about the

²⁷ Emily Bazelon, "White People Are Noticing Something New: Their Own Euro-Americanness," New York Times (New York, NY), accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/13/magazine/Euro-American-people-are-noticing-something-new-their-own-Euro-Americanness.html>.

²⁸ "The Black Euro-American and Urban-Rural Divides in Perceptions of Racial Fairness," Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/28/the-black-Euro-American-and-urban-rural-divides-in-perceptions-of-racial-fairness>.

incident. To the surprise of the Hispanic clergy, members expressed that the damage was not as significant compared to what Black protestors did in the months following the killing of George Floyd. White privilege is not only a subconscious idea that the world exists to serve white people as “normal,” but the power to reject or ignore any form of protest or confrontation against white privilege. Euro-American privilege can decide when to speak up or stay silent. It is the assurance that white people will be safe in the end.

Worldview

Worldviews help people determine their presuppositions and values even when they are not fully aware. People learned their worldviews from caregivers and communities. One traditional illustration is that a worldview is like an iceberg with a concrete reality that is mainly hidden underwater. The practices of a congregation’s worship style, music, and dress code are only the tip of the iceberg; what we do not see under the waterline, such as values, myths, misconceptions, instincts, and fears, are ninety percent of the cultural iceberg. In their first years of life, most people unconsciously develop a worldview in line with the context where they were raised—and it stays with them for the rest of their lives. Another typical illustration of worldview is that it is like a pair of lenses through which people see the world. Each one wears different pairs, and each sees different things.

Since worldviews differ from culture to culture, different people define “normal” or “standard” differently. Therefore, cultural constructions and ideals may not represent ultimate truths for all. When individuals from diverse cultures interact, their worldviews are challenged. The tendency is to contrast one’s worldview against another and rank

some better than others. Individuals frequently assume that their own culture is "better" or "normal." Communities with privilege and power will make assumptions about other (not so privileged) groups. Their power and privilege are false evidence that their worldview is "the best."

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