

HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS LEARN THE ROLE OF MINISTRY

by

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(Under the Direction of TALMADGE C. GUY)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the learning of African American pastors, specifically how they learn their roles and the means to fulfill them. A qualitative approach was employed as the methodology to gain insight from the perspective of the pastors themselves. The focus of the interview questions were the means of the pastors learning and were conducted at the pastor's churches. The pastors were asked what roles they learned in their jobs, and how they learned the roles. The influence of the governance structure of their denominations was important to the learning and contributed to a support system for the pastors as well. The pastors were asked what role socio-historical context may have on their learning. Context was believed to play a very important part in learning according to the pastors. Finally, the pastors were asked how they learned their roles. Interviews were conducted with ten pastors from Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches. Follow up questions were asked and visits were made to the pastor's churches to observe a service. Based on the data from the interviews and field notes, this study describes how learning takes place and makes suggestions for helping pastors learn their roles.

The findings of the study revealed the importance of experience, structure, and history in the development of roles as well as the pastors' learning of the roles and how to fulfill them. While formal education was important to the pastors, they believed the actual roles that were most important to the church they discovered in the action of doing the job. Situational learning, specifically workplace learning, was employed to contrast the learning of the pastors and other professionals. The theory help describe the process of learning that the pastors describe in their interview. Through personal interaction with other minister, mentors, and doing the job itself, the pastors learned what the spoken and unspoken roles were and mapped a strategy for fulfilling those roles. The pastors learned to navigate through the interpersonal issues in churches to discover their roles.

INDEX WORDS: ADULT EDUCATION, ADULT LEARNING, AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS, AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH, COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE, INFORMAL LEARNING MENTOR, TRADITIONAL BLACK CHURCHES, WORKPLACE LEARNING

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DEDICATION

To my father who taught me to laugh at life and my mother who taught me finish the job. I wish to acknowledge the many African American men and women of faith who gave hope to generations who could not see that promised land. And to the many teachers I have learned from in my life that saw potential in me when I saw none. And finally to the One in whom I live, and move, and have my being.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The African American pastor has served the black community as a central leadership figure from the time of slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and through today. During the dark days of slavery and Jim Crow seven denominations were formed that comprise the major historic black Protestant churches: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA Inc., the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). As a professional who serves a valuable and unique function for the community, the pastor and the means by which he or she learns professional skills has not been adequately researched.

A difference of opinion exists in the literature on the influencing factors, such as acculturation and oppression, which contribute to the African American pastor's learning the skills needed in the community (Price, 2001). Some researchers have questioned if a difference actually exists between white and black churches which delineates a difference in the expectation for the respective pastors (Price, 2001). Franklin believed the history and culture of the African American community, particularly slavery, played the predominant role in developing the expectations the pastor works from to fulfill his or her role to the community (Franklin, 1990). Walters and Smith (1999) state that while differences exist in the community expectations, the roles of pastors in black and white churches are not radically different (Walters & Smith, 1999).

For this research the focus was placed on the African American pastor, defined as the chief administrator of a church, as a professional learner and on his or her perceptions of the influences which have contributed to the learning. The purpose is to understand the African American pastor as an adult learner and his or her perspective on learning to accomplish the expectations of the parishioners in the church. The researcher does accept the premise that culture and race are factors in the formation of the African American pastor's identity, but does not seek to focus on resolving the debate of other disciplines. The premise will only serve as a platform to get at the questions of the pastor's perception of learning.

Historical development of the black church

The traditional black Protestant churches, that is, the African Methodist Episcopal, the AME Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, National Baptist Convention USA, National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Baptist Inc, National Baptist Missionary Convention and the Church of God in Christ, developed in the United States out of European Protestantism. These churches developed the practice of their Christian faith differently from the white churches with their European orthodox influence. The leadership role of the African American pastor in the black church has been shaped by several historical factors, including the adaptation of African symbols and language that remained with the community in America, the influence of slavery, the Jim Crow era, and the fight for civil rights (Herskovits, 1958). Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) believe that while the general structure of beliefs, rituals, and organization of black churches remain the same as white churches, black Christians often give different nuances and emphases to their theological views. For example, the "paladin God" of deliverance, a common expression use to describe the relationship between God and the black church, is given a prominent role in black worship practices. Black worship and religious experiences are in

general also much more ecstatic, emotionally expressive, and enthusiastic compared to those of whites.

The practices of the black church, as well as the role of the African American pastor, have been forged from the shadow of slavery and Jim Crow with the disenfranchisement of individuals and dehumanization of African American Christians by a dominate white culture. The experience of slavery constructed an identity of common suffering and struggle for the African American community (Paris, 1982). The identity developed the hermeneutical concept that identifies the community as a spiritual Israel suffering in this world with the pastor as the Moses leading the people to the Promised Land (Felder, 1995). Historically the pastor of the African American church has been defined by the culture which has threads of leadership from African culture, borrowed from white churches and developed from the immediate needs of the community (Harris, 2004; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Barna and Jackson (2004) identified the strength of community that many African slaves brought to the continent as helpful in bringing the community together to endure the suffering of slavery. The Preacher-King concept from Africa was identified by Du Bois as an extension of the culture into America. The concept identifies the respect for the pastor in the early black church and contributes to the community expectations of a strong group dynamic (Wimbush, 2000). The Preacher-King, or Priest- King as it is referred in anthropological studies (Herskovits, 1958), drew all the needs of the community to the central control of the Priest. The extension of the African priest to the early pastor developed the concepts of strong community, centralized leadership, and the involvement of the pastor in the immediate details of an individual's life. Drennan (1996) also identified the pastor with the chiefdoms of Africa. The communal relationship that was central to many of the tribes

of western Africa was brought to the colonies through the Atlantic passage as they adapted to the new world and their conversion to Christianity with the pastor taking a lead role.

The church was the stabilizing institution to emerge from slavery which gave individuals identity and worth (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). While the slaves often worshiped with the owners, when the African American community developed their own churches in the 19th century, beginning with Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, differences in worship, preaching and moral action began to materialize. The African American church began to bring together different slave cultures in the community through worship styles that were in some respects different from those of white churches and carried some subtle African nuances with the pastor as the premier leader of the community. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Christianity dominated the African American culture, and the pastor of the church was established as the preeminent leader for both the Christian and non-Christian community alike. In the early formation of the church, the pastor developed the need for strong skills in organization and ministry that differed from those required in white churches. The skills of the African American pastor focused on meeting the needs of individuals, carrying out the task of preaching, and addressing the concerns of the community in a segregated society (Kolchin, 1993).

After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the pastor of the African American church continued as the most visible office of leadership in the black community. With the end of slavery and the rise of Jim Crow laws, the Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court decision sanctioned the continuing segregation of the black community from society, and thus the need for pastors to lead congregations and meet the immediate needs of the congregation and community grew (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). New voices arose in the clergy like Henry McNeal Turner, an AME pastor, along with Rev. WW Colley and Rev. E.C. Morris both Baptist

ministers. These leaders began raising the consciousness of the African American church and calling for social justice from the pulpit. At the turn of the 20th century, new leadership arose to rival the office of pastor of the traditional churches. Booker Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois led the charge for education to become the source of equality. The rise of violence against African Americans in the early part of the 20th century and a growing activism in the community reshaped the role of the pastor and his duties by centering much of the community's political and economic planning in the black church.

In the view of some scholars, the African American church became a weapon against Jim Crow and segregation in the early movement of civil rights and continues today as a means for equality and dignity (Chappell, 2003 and Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The pastor in a prophetic role began describing in biblical terms the dignity of the black race and the need to rise to the challenge of demanding the freedom of God's people in non-violent demonstrations. The most visible pastor to fill the role of prophet in this manner was certainly the young Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr. During this era, the church and the pastor became "political" in that the practice of ministry was broadened to include the social and political needs of the congregation and the community (Chappell, 2002). The role of the pastor, which was broad to begin with because of the specific needs of the black community, was enlarged to include the skills of negotiation and resolution. Not all pastors rose to these challenges and some used their role to benefit personally. To counter the growing influence of the African American community, the pastor was also used by the segregationist to keep congregations in line with the desires of the white society and not joining into the political cause (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988). The pastor's leadership could rise to great heights of courage, or drop to the depths of self-centeredness and personal power. Du Bois (1903) described the African American pastor of his day and likely

today as well: “The Preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a “boss,” an intriguer, an idealist - all these he is...” (p. 134).

Historians have argued that the movement for civil rights has existed since the beginning of the nation’s history. Many of the Quaker and Congregationalist churches of the 18th and 19th centuries insisted that freedom included the African American population (Thurmond, 2003); many other historians identify the civil rights movement becoming a national movement after World War Two (Lincoln, 1984). By that time?, the African American pastor had taken center stage as the leader of the community and was viewed by many whites as the spokesman for the community, but new leaders in the field of entertainment, education and politics began to assert themselves as a rival to the traditional pastor (Smith, 2003). Since the 1950’s the black churches confounded the sociological classification of religion as an “opiate” of the masses (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988) as the southern African American pastors, predominantly from the traditional African American churches, organized marches and preached of the Promised Land that was to come. Religion became the catalyst for change and did not have the numbing effect that many had believed it would for the community.

Post civil rights era

Since the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the black pastor has relinquished some prominence in the office of leadership for the community (Harris, 1991). Business, entertainment, politics, and education supply many of the leaders for the community. However, the pastor still holds an important place in the community, meeting a unique role that has been defined through the history of the African American community and church. While many of the administrative duties of the African American pastor resemble those of the white pastor, the

differences are related to the development of the culture under the shadow of the dominant society and can be traced to African nuances as well (Harris, 2002).

The culture in which the African American pastor serves as a professional caregiver shapes the direction of the pastor's personal expectations and the expectations of the community of faith (Harris, 1991). The pastor is expected to meet the needs of the individual, family, and community at every level of existence whether it is spiritual, physical, or financial in nature (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988). From the founding of the traditional Protestant black churches in America, the pastor has taken a role of leadership which effectively focuses on the needs of the people and advocates the causes of social, civic, and economic equality for the people of their congregation and the African American community at large. Harris (1991) described the context of the pastor in service to community as follows:

The poverty, joblessness, illiteracy, and economic disparity that exist in the black community should not be accepted as the norm. A theology of church administration that seeks to transform this reality will bring about a cataclysmic change in the nature and structure of the black church community and the larger society. The church and community are intertwined, interconnected and intermingled. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., the church and community are "tied together in a single garment of destiny". (p. 73)

Harris was describing the role of the pastor from a historical perspective of what has been expected from the community, the church, and society. The African American pastor has served from a perspective that the all the needs of the individual and the community are the domain of the pastor's ministry.

The social environment in which this attitude of pastoral ministry is practiced places the African American pastor at the forefront of social activism and holistic ministry to effectively meet the expectations of the congregation, community, and denominational leadership. Today, the professional context in which many of the African American pastors within these traditional churches work has been shaped by a socio- historical perspective resulting in a more community active, politically active, and service-oriented community of faith in contrast to the typical white church (Walters & Smith, 1999). The pastor remains a role model for many in the black community today and sets an example of effective spiritual leadership that is centered on responding to the needs of the people and community. In order to meet the needs of the congregation in the black church, the role of pastor requires a high level of “professional skill and knowledge” to perform the multiple tasks that are expected from the denominational leaders and congregations (Wimberly, 1991). In the black church, the skills needed by the pastor must adequately address a wide range of the immediate social and personal issues in the community such as racism, drug abuse, child care, health welfare, housing, counseling, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, and other issues that require personal contact and a wide range of knowledge of resources (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

The role of the pastor, designated in this study as the senior administrator and minister of a church, in the traditional black church is consistent with the white Protestant church from the aspect of administrative duties and expectations. Yet the roles of pastors in traditional black churches functions differently in a social and civic context. As a community shaped by slavery and oppression, the pastor’s role in the black church has been defined by the immediate physical and spiritual needs of its people and its community (Chinula, 1997). From the beginning, the Protestant black church has succeeded under the effective leadership of ministers such as

Richard Allen in the 19th century (Mathews, 1963) to Adam Clayton Powell Sr., the charismatic pastor of a large urban church in the early 20th century. Within the plantation culture the authority over the slaves and the leadership role was reserved for the white owner, but the African American pastor held the role of a spiritual Moses leading the people out of bondage from spiritual Egypt to the Promised Land (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The church, led by the pastor, became the first independent institution for slaves which allowed the black community to develop a sense of purpose and identity. As the church became the first social organization of the slave community, the role of pastor expanded to cover a multiplicity of tasks to meet the needs of the community, and the expectations continue today (Walters & Smith, 1999). The church is still a central social organization for many in the African American community and continues the community focus that began with the original churches.

The study of the African American pastor and the acquisition professional knowledge has not enjoyed the proliferation of research and popular attention that other professionals in human services have experienced in recent years. The need for pastors to develop professional knowledge and skills for ministry is critical to the continuing spiritual development of the African American Church (Harris, 1991). Now, leadership is accessible to the community outside of the church through politics, business, and education, and the importance the pastor once held as the preeminent leader is decreasing as the majority of the African American community becomes more middle class (Walters & Smith, 1999). Yet, the role of the pastor as the visionary leader in the community today continues to be vital even though it has changed since the days of the civil rights movement and the visibility of the pastor is no longer the central focus of the community at large (Barna & Jackson, 2004). The pastor continues to fill a critical role in the community and must learn the important skills and knowledge necessary to become

an effective minister who meets the expectations of the community of faith. The skill the pastor acquires and the expertise mastered in fulfilling the role assigned through the community and the respected denomination positions him or her as a professional. The professional must meet determined requirements and levels of competence in order to be recognized as such. For the African American pastor, professional certification is bestowed by a sponsoring denomination through ordination.

The multiplicity of roles for the pastor and the skills needed to master these roles are unique within the context of the black church and shape the professional learning of the pastor. In order to fill this professional role, the pastor of an African American church assumes the role of educator, advocate, and counselor for the community and congregation (Wimbush, 2002). At present the pastor remains a foundation for the black community, bringing value to the black experience regardless of the changes in today's complex society (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The pastor remains a central fixture in the black community, and the development of the black pastor as a strong and skilled professional is as relevant today as in the past. The basic roles of the pastor can be broken into two categories with each having sub-categories. The first category is preaching, which is communication from the pulpit or before audiences in other contexts. While on the surface the role of preaching would seem similar to that of white Protestant pastors, actually the preaching of African American pastors is different in its style and end goal. As a preacher, the African American pastor has a distinctive message (Sandidge, 1992) that has been shaped throughout the history of the traditional Protestant churches. From the standpoint of some, preaching, for the African American preacher, should promote social change and community transformation (Harris, 2003; Mitchell, 1970). Building self-esteem has also historically been the goal of preaching for the African American pastor (Sandidge, 1992). The

methodology of the African American pastor has been to evoke emotion and response from the congregation by speaking in cadences and calling for responses from the audience, which may reflect a continuation of the African culture and the priest/pastor leadership (Herskovits, 1958).

The second category of roles of the African American pastor is administration, which is directly tied to the church business. Harris (2002) described several administrative expectations of church members for their pastor that reach beyond running the organization of the church, according to research that he conducted. The expectations that were not directly tied to day-to-day operations of the church included speaking to social issues, organizing programs to help the poor and oppressed, involvement in community issues (such as education issues), fighting for minority needs, opposing immorality in the community, speaking about political issues from the pulpit, and visiting the sick and home bound. Understanding the role of the African American pastor is to understand the dichotomy between spiritual expectations that pastors must meet and the community needs which are imbedded in the history of the black church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988). Scores of writers and researchers have attempted to define effectiveness through pastoral leadership studies, church growth, and other means.

Professional preparation of African American pastors

Historically, the African American pastor, unlike his/her white counterpart, has not had many opportunities for education. Richard Allen and other early leaders understood the value of education for African American pastors to meet the needs of the growing free slave community. Several colleges, such as Wilberforce College established by Bishop Payne, were established in the north to educate the clergy (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Today, education through Bible colleges and seminaries is open to pastors to learn ministry skills. According to recent surveys, the majority of traditional rural black church congregations do not see formal education as a

primary qualification for their clergy (Harris, 2002). According to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) only 41 percent of clergy in rural churches had a college degree or beyond. It should be remembered that of the 41 percent, not all of those with a degree had education that was specific to ministry.

Many of African American pastors are not educated through formal means to fulfill the specific roles of the ministry. Their learning is rather by means of non-formal educational activities such as seminars or continuing education classes as well as self-education through personal studies. Many pastors, regardless of whether they are educated formally or informally, are learning the valuable skills within the profession itself. Adult education literature informs the profession through experiential learning such as community of practice and workplace learning. Dewey (1933) described life experience as crucial to learning. Adult educators have acknowledged the value of learning through the processes that are experienced and the knowledge gained. Beckett and Hagar (2000) used the term “workplace learning” to describe the learning that professionals do in the process of fulfilling a vocation and developing the appropriate skills to accomplish what is expected within the community of the profession. While workplace learning can be formal or informal, the premise of workplace learning is that experience is the best teacher and takes place in a process. Workplace learning also examines learning in a defined community of professionals and the roles in which professional must succeed. Built on the work of Donald Schön and David Kolb, workplace learning understands professional knowledge as an ability to understand and frame professional roles and characteristics beyond a tacit knowledge (Beckett & Hagar, 2000). The literature on professional learning for pastors as adult professionals is weak and the literature on African American pastors

even weaker. Many African American pastors have learned to perform the expected roles of ministry through the experience gained in the position.

Since the area of African American pastor learning from the perspective of experiential learning has not been adequately researched, it is necessary to look at professional learning literature in related human service areas to gain an effective understanding of this particular context. Literature in the areas of other social services such as social work, teaching and nursing contains strong research material in the area of experiential learning. The context of the job, the pastorate, provides the environment in which the learner acquires specific skills to meet the needs of the community or organization. The approach of adult professional education seeks to understand the interaction between the learner and the social context. In discussing professional learning for educators, Taylor identifies professional learning as developing knowledge and skills that are applicable to the context in which the teacher works. These skills are forged on the experience learned in the context of the environment (Taylor, 1998). The study will use the literature of workplace and experiential learning to guide the discussion of professional learning.

The pastor and the church remain a central institution in the black community, and an effective pastor with strong skills is as relevant today as in the past. According to Jones (2001), the effectiveness of the pastor continues for the following reasons: (1) they aid the community in sustaining its identity; (2) they identify and sustain group support; (3) they perceive, nurture and promote the values of the community. The definition of effectiveness is shaped by the community (rural or urban) and the expectations of the individual members of the congregation. Harris (1991) understood pastoral effectiveness in terms of three tasks: administrating the church, leading worship and preaching, and building self-esteem. Yet, the skills required by the job go beyond these administration and liturgy skills that are traditional in the African American

church. Forgotten in some circles of education are the human skills that are part of the pastor's role in ministry and are judged by the parishioners. Conflict resolution, maneuvering through power struggles, and developing community "vision" are skills that are neglected in the classical formal education of the pastor (Morgan & Giles, 1994).

Statement of Problem and Purpose

The literature on the professional learning by the pastor of skills and knowledge specific to African American pastors in leadership roles has not been significantly researched from the perspective of the perceptions and experiences of the pastors themselves. The African American pastor continues as an important figure in the black community; therefore, understanding how pastors learn their roles as professionals is important for developing future learning methods that may guide their learning in a more systematic manner. Pastors in black churches must develop multiple skills in order to fulfill the expectations of the church and community. This study assumes that professional roles of black pastors develop within a socio-historical and institutional context unique to the black church. The experiences of the pastor, which serve as a reservoir of knowledge, should not be ignored in the development of the professional skills the pastors acquire in their continuing education. The purpose of this study was to understand how African American pastors learn the skills to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community.

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are the central roles that African American Pastors learn in the Black church?
2. How does context shape the roles of the African American pastor?
3. How do African American pastors learn these central roles?

These questions were used to guide the researcher to an understanding of the pastors' perceptions of their experience as they develop the skills and knowledge base for successful ministry in the context of their community of faith.

Significance

The study of African American pastor's roles in traditional black Protestant churches is important for exploration in order to understand how they learn to become effective pastors in the practice of ministry. A theoretical perspective on self-described learning by the pastor would give denominations a systematic understanding of the important roles of the pastor that lead to effective ministry and would also give them the opportunity for systematizing a learning design. Understanding skills needed to be effective pastors gives educational institutions or denominational leaders a foundational point to begin educational outreach to ministers in practice. Identifying perceived skills would help in designing educational planning and curricula for denominational leaders.

Second, discovering the African American pastor's means of learning effectively can lead to a strengthening of the role of the pastor in the community and church. The African American pastor is a vital person in the community. Many people depend on the pastor for guidance through the stages of life, crisis management, and spiritual and moral guidance. The study can lead to the development of a more effectively guided education process for the African American pastor to learn the necessary skills to lead a church or community. The community will benefit from a pastor who is well-educated, whether through formal or informal education, and who understands the means by which he or she can best learn the skills of effective leadership.

Finally, gaining knowledge of African American pastors' learning process toward effective ministry skills and understanding its importance would add to the theory base of adult

education and professional learning. The practicality of understanding the pastors' perceptions of their learning of expected skills would strengthen the pool of knowledge in adult education for professionals, particularly African American pastors, who seek to enhance their learning within the vocational role. Adult professional learners in people-centered vocations can benefit from the knowledge acquired. Presently, there is not adequate research in the area of African American pastors and their learning.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to seek an understanding of how African American pastors learn the skills to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. The literature review focused on the historical context that has shaped the role of the African American pastor, the roles of the present day pastors, and the professional learning that applies to the learning of the pastor. The study focused on the learning of the pastor in the context of the profession and the historical context that has shaped the role.

The literature search was conducted by organizing the topics and searching through the religious and cultural material in the University of Georgia. The search term of black religion yielded the most number of articles. After a group of articles were secured, 45 in the beginning, the authors of the articles were searched to find secondary literature. Eventually, by using this strategy, the searches lead to Howard University, Duke University, and the University of Virginia. I was able to access these databases through Endnote program.

The chapter is organized through a chronological historical perspective. The first section is the discussion of cultural religious practices and the continuation of those practices through the African American religious experience in America. The literature begins with the examination of the debate in the work of Herskovits and Frazier. Next, the literature looks at the historical contest of the African American pastor and the factor that shaped that role. The colonial and pre-Civil War period and the events where explored. The civil war and post war developments were explored along with the development of the modern traditional African American churches. Modern developments were analyzed as it led to the civil rights era. The Civil Rights era was

reviewed with special attention to Martin Luther King as the central figure of the era.

Contemporary issue explored next as the chapter moves toward the modern roles of African American pastors. The review of literature then moves to the changing circumstances and demands on African American pastors. The chapter ends looking at professional development for African American pastor.

Cultural Continuity and the African American Pastor: The Herskovits and Frazier Debate

Central to the understanding of African American religious culture is the acculturation of the community, particularly the religious community for this study, to the American experience as it has been shaped by religious practices from Africa. The discussion can be understood through the work of Herskovits (1958), who contended that threads of African culture and symbols were retained throughout the history of Africans and their descendants on the North American continent, and the view of Frazier and Price (Mintz & Price, 1992) that slavery completely destroyed any residual connection to former practices, symbols or language within the African American community.

In the context of this study, the position of Herskovits supports the argument that African cultural nuances were retained in the African American community as it was transplanted to the New World. The evidence seems to strongly present, from the perspective of African religion and associated practice in the early formation of the black church which continues today, that the threads of community practice, symbols and ontological understanding run throughout the history of the Africans' enslavement and importation to North America and is imbedded in the construction of their Christian community. Based on these suppositions, the role of the African American pastor today is shaped by some historical and sociological factors that are not a part of the white Protestant church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1991). Many of the traditional black church

practices are related to the association with white protestant churches from their shared past, such as preaching, teaching, administration and care for the elderly and sick. But, it is understood that certain aspects of the black church, particularly those related to the role of the pastor, are unique to the African American community.

The root of the pastor's role as the preeminent leader began before enslavement on this continent. Several anthropologists and historians have claimed that slaves brought to America symbols and language that continued to remain in the culture and were transferred to religious life (Herskovits, 1958). Drennan (1996) stated that many of the practices of the African American church developed in the African religion and culture and have continued as threads of culture into today.

Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) identified the traditional black church as a creation of the sacred black cosmos developed from the African and European American concept of Christianity. Other scholars, such as Prince (2001) and Drennan (1996) and historical writers echo Herskovits' presupposition that threads of African culture continue to exist in the black church today and are reflected in the role of the pastor, which has been shaped by historical factors, location and community expectations.

The Historical Context of the African American Pastor

The religious practices traditionally, religious practices in the Black church we see today are developed around a strong sense of community. In the African religious experience, the fate of the individual was related directly to the individual's relationship to the community. Parrinder (1976) stated further that the pastor continued the tradition of the chief or elder for the community in America. Parrinder (1976) related the community aspect of African worship that centers on the religious leaders and worship of their ancestors. While the understanding of God

on the western coast of Africa was not uniform, many of the beliefs were similar from tribe to tribe. The sense of connection to God through the community, both living and dead, is found in the ontology of many of the tribes. Several historians (Olupona, 1991) have identified African concepts of God that are preserved and transmuted into contemporary society. The sense of community in the experience of understanding God revealing Himself is central to African religion and can be seen in the early slave community of North America. The community is viewed not simply as the immediate community of faith, but includes the ancestors of old and future generations. The strong relationship with ancestors strengthens the view of African anthropologists to conclude that many of the views of Africans today have been shaped by those ancient views (Parrinder, 1976). The importance of remaining connected to rituals and traditions of the past was embedded into the philosophy of early African American Christians. Certainly, the persistence of those beliefs helped encourage the enslaved. The traditions are still evident in African Christian churches today and were transported to the New World through slavery (Olupona, 1991, Thornton, 1992)

Cultural differences between European Christians and African religious ideas about God led to very different orientation and practices and set the stage for understanding the religious practices of slaves of colonial America. One issue that should be expressed is that all Africans were not converted to Christianity after being taken into slavery. A small number of the Africans had converted to Christianity while in Africa or were familiar with Christianity before their transfer to the New World (Thornton, 1992). Herskovits (1958) identified ritual worship of Western Africans that was transferred into the religious life of Africans in the Caribbean and colonial America. The use of emotion in ritual and worship is evident in both places. The emotive quality is rooted in the belief of African religious culture that God is immediate and

revelation from God is always available. The early priests from Spain and Portugal had difficulty converting Africans to Christianity because of differences in understanding “revelation” or Divine communication. European orthodoxy taught that revelation was sealed in writing that was 1500 years old and had to be interpreted by a priest or the clergy. As Africans understood this, God spoke many years ago and had nothing new to say (Thornton, 1992). The African Christians understood God or Gods as speaking continuously and through a community that sought him through dancing, shouting and immediate experience. Divine infilling, rather than infilling by the Holy Spirit or a demon, is not the European understanding of being taken control of by the entity, but rather the idea that God gave immediate experience people to speak and illuminate (Herskovits, 1958). The communal aspect of the worship was directed by leaders who were “possessed,” bringing together the community in ritual.

African religion was led by an array of leaders that helped to mediate and channel God’s revelation to the community. Witchdoctors and priests led the community in searching for the gods’ message and continuing the community to the present from the ancestors of the past (Thornton, 1992). Also the king of the tribe was believed to be semi-divine and made decisions from a continuous revelation of God (Parrinder, 1976). Wimbush (2000) identified the relationship of the king of the African community as similar to the later relationship of the enslaved pastor with the slave community. Because of the relationship the king had with a Supreme Being which permitted him to interpret His revelation, the king held a dominating position for the community and in the minds of individuals as well. The king was central to solving community’s issues and would also lead the tribes in worship and ritual. In the early slave trading in the Atlantic World, the church sought to provide spiritual leadership for the conversion of Africans. Leaders arose among the slaves who continued the relationship with the

community as the leader dispersing the divine revelation. The rise of voodoo priests and mediums are examples in the Caribbean and Brazil slave communities where leaders emerged to take the place of elders, priest and kings in Africa (Thornton, 1992).

Colonial and Antebellum Era

In the formative early years of the black church, the practices of the clergy and the forms of worship were developed from the familiar African culture as they built a “new Zion” in this nation (Felder, 1991). Early slave communities began developing spiritual leaders that helped to continue many of the ritual and worship patterns they knew in Africa. The patterns of singing, clapping, dancing, and shouting were transferred to the New World and incorporated into the new religion of Christianity. Some historians support Du Bois’s contention of the preacher-king as a continuation of the king-priest role from Africa which brought immediate leadership to the role of pastor. While early scholars (Wimbush, 2000 and Drennan, 1996) were skeptical of Du Bois’s assertion because of a lack of anthropological and other social science research at the time he made these comments, later scholarship may have proven his ideas as correct. Considering the views of Du Bois as plausible, the concept may explain the historical perception of the African American pastor as the leader of the community and chief problem solver (Wimbush, 2000). Drennan (1996) identified the strong position of the African American pastor with that of the chieftain of the African tribe, which was transported to the colonies. The communal structure of Africa was transposed to the New World and adapted into the structure of the church as slaves developed their Christian worldview. Barna and Jackson (2004) identified the strong roots of community that Africans brought to the continent, roots that continue to influence the black church and the roles of the pastor in the black church. The theory also explains the broad expectations from the community for the leadership of the pastor that began in the formation of

the black Protestant church. Not all social scientists have agreed with the concept of “Africanisms”. Mintz and Price (1992) disagreed with many of the assertions of Hertskovits and noted the opinions of E. Franklin Frazier on the stripping of Africans from their culture through slavery. While both sides of the research present evidence of their position, it seems that some symbols, language, and religious practices were carried in to the new continent and adopted into the new Christian religion.

Slavery shaped the black church and continues to serve as a backdrop defining the role of the African American pastor. The pastor or “preacher” has been identified since the days of slavery as the primary leader of the community (Tucker, 1975; Wheeler, 1986). During the formation of the independent black church, the minister was identified as a spiritual leader by the community to meet the needs of the people. Pastors were used as an extension of power by the slave owners to control the temperament of the people (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988; Walters & Smith, 1999). It was in the context of spiritual leadership that Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner inspired Christian slaves to seek their independence through rebellion (Hamilton, 1972). Richard Allen established the framework of free education and met the needs of hungry freed slaves in Philadelphia, which became central to his ministry (Johnson, 1994). The pastor has served as the paternal leader of the people in the black church and the community at large, and the role of pastor became important to the concept of black identify (Hamilton, 1972).

Civil War and Post War Developments

After slavery ended, the church continued as the central social institution for the African American community. The continued participation of African Americans in the religious activities of the traditional Protestant churches indicates that this religious community continues to influence the black community as a social and religious foundation for its people (Chatters,

Taylor, & Lincoln, 1999) The religious environment of the African American church must be viewed through the lens of slavery and the expectation for them to develop an understanding of God through the lens of the European Protestant church (Johnson, 1994). Wilmore (1998) described the spiritual hermeneutic of the slaves, a black hermeneutic, as they sought to understand European Christianity and the authentication of the experience of suffering and struggle in this new land. The early African American Christians began to create the idea and belief that they were of an “American Israel,” that is, they were a typology of a people suffering and enslaved until God set them free from their bondage (Johnson, 1994; Felder, 1991). Henry (1970) described the black hermeneutic as one of freedom, including both spiritual and physical emancipation. The black hermeneutic is similar to the theology of Latin America and Asia but has existed much longer. The early slaves came from different cultures in Africa and the Caribbean, and as years passed, a strong sense of community grew out of the shared struggles. Different segments of the community embraced the notion of “a people of Israel” regardless of denominational preference or location on the continent of Africa where they may have originated. While the white community in America would continue to be identified by their origins, the black community was forged into a people under the banner of slavery as one people with one identity suffering dehumanization and in a spiritual Egyptian bondage (Kolchin, 1993).

Modern Developments

Following the Civil War the African American church began to develop a leadership role along with other government institutions, such as the Freedmen’s Bureau. Black churches placed a priority on education after war, particularly in the south. Many Sunday school classes that began teaching the Bible to former slaves in the basement of the church became the foundation for colleges and institutes of learning (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). White philanthropists, the

Freedmen's Bureau, and the American Mission Society began establishing schools with the help of established black churches. The education was predominantly adult education, targeting mainly those adults who had been denied any education where it was outlawed in the south (Neufeldt & McGee, 1990). While education became a central focus of the black church and clergy, social and political events affected the community for the following 100 years. Jim Crow laws separated the races and diluted the education and services provided for the African American community by the state and federal governments. The lack of social and economic opportunity led to the migrations of African Americans to urban, mostly northern, areas (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Black churches in the north and south made a rapid response to the changing social and economic influences that were occurring during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow period. In the south ministers and churches became involved in the political scene. The most notable of the members of this group was Henry McNeil Turner who organized the Republican party of Georgia (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The opportunity for African American participation ended in the south with the end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow laws. The church did remain active in local and state politics, and ministers added on the role of leader for political action. During this period African Americans began to move in large numbers to urban areas, mostly in the north. The migration had two effects on the black church. The first was the growth of congregations in the north who had greater power to organize and direct elections and service for its people. The second was the drain in the south of leadership and numbers to affect local elections. The exception was in southern urban areas where numbers increased, such as Atlanta and New Orleans, where the influence of the African American population began to slowly make

changes (Jones, 1983). The church again played a role in the changes by bringing leadership to the process.

The Twentieth Century and Civil Rights

The church and the pastor became the center of power and control for the African American community before and after the civil war (Jones, 1994; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). During the past century, new organizations have developed that supplanted the church in its preeminence as a political and social movement. Many of the founders of these organizations came out of the church and used the strong community emphasis of the black church as an organizational tool to galvanize support (Jones, 1994). Barna and Jackson (2004) identified the black church and African American community as continuing to develop strong ties that bind African Americans together today. Many of the symbols, uses of language, and values that exist today in the community are directly drawn from their experience of the church and were nurtured in the religious culture of the community. Organizations outside the church such as The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League began developing the leadership for the community and gained recognition from the sympathetic white community (Smith, 2003). Even with the rise of these social and political movements, the church has remained strong in the African American community, developing the leadership that articulated the vision for the community and stimulating activity in the community to address relevant issues. The church became a refuge from the oppressive Jim Crow laws that stifled the community and restricted “black Israel” from realizing the freedom envisioned after the Civil War (Chappell, 2003). The restrictiveness of the Jim Crow laws that energized the power of the African American pastor within the community became evident with the rise of the civil rights movement. The central figure of the movement was a young Baptist preacher by the name of

Martin Luther King, Jr. The young preacher galvanized the community toward common goals of equality and freedom that began with his emphasis on the Christology of Jesus' dignity for the suffering in the world. Michael Dyson (2000) viewed the ministry of Dr. Martin Luther King as a pivotal moment in the African American church and the religious environment that would grow from the advances of the movement as he became its transformational visionary leader. King offered the Baptist church as well as other traditional churches a vision of true Christianity that directed the push for equal rights:

Kings' belief in the revolutionary potential of Christianity contrasts sharply with the tenor of so much of contemporary black religion. The black church is too often mired in navel-gazing piousness and undisciplined materialism. But King's vision of social change was inspired by the radical remnant of the black church. Although he has been rightly associated with the genius of the black religion, he has not often gotten credit for challenging the conservative drift of the black church. He skillfully molded the moral energy of mainstream black religion into a prophetic stance against oppression. King represented black religion at its best even as he resisted the pressure to soften his radical positions. But King did not erupt from a vacuum. Although he was paradoxically in the bosom and on the borders of black religion, his revolutionary vision of Christianity took shape in a religions womb that was centuries old. To take full measure of King, we must understand the radical remnant of the black church. (Dyson, 2000, pp.124-125)

King's theology stands at the fulcrum of a shifting paradigm, where the pre-civil rights movement African American church, with its central place in the social organization of the black community and its suspicion of white Christians, was transforming into today's black church,

which resembles the white Protestant church and yet holds on to remnants of the past through focus on community and social activism. With the passing of Dr. King, the mission of many of the black churches went through a philosophical shift in the seventies and eighties (Garrow, 1986). Erskine (1992) also recognized the changing direction and focus of the black church with the death of Dr. King. King articulated a theology, adopted from Howard Thurman, rooted in a Christology that understands Christ's suffering as a spiritual connection with humankind who suffer and are disinherited by the dominate culture. The articulation of this Christology for the black church, as well as the white Protestant community, continues to excite a faith of action that continues in the community of the black church today. King developed this theology from his mentor Howard Thurman according to Erskine, and not so much from Gandhi, as some scholars have suggested. The belief was strongly rooted in the mind of King through his experience in the black Baptist church (Erskine, 1992).

Post Civil Rights Era

The current religious culture of the African American Church has retained remnants of the past while developing unique dimensions that are new and contemporary to society today. Four points of consideration concerning contemporary developments that have influenced the black church and the role of the pastor are the following: the decline of the church as the political center of the community, the organizational structure of the black church, the social and economic mobility of congregations, and difference that exists between black and white congregations.

For some black churches the influence of the pastor in the community has declined with the development of other avenues of leadership which have become available to members of the community. Some black churches are still socially active in the community where injustices are

exposed by the churches or pastors and there is a lack of action taken by officials (Gadzekpo, 1997). Williams (2002) described how the collective religious beliefs of the community helped to create the climate of political action that is associated with the civil rights movement and community movements today. As long ago as 1972, the church had lost partial control and preeminence as the center of political power in the community (Hamilton, 1972), but still today political candidates seek the pulpit of black churches for endorsements in order to make connections to the African American community. In many of the black Protestant denominations today, the view of women as leaders in the church is a continuation of the cultural image of women in the African hierarchy. While some churches have had Women in key leadership positions, for many women are not appointed to the higher offices of the church (McKenzie, 1996). The holistic belief of the black congregation, that is, the view of the church being involved in all areas of one's life, dates back to the time when the church's beliefs and political decisions were inseparable. The practice of the black church of making political decision-making inseparable from ethics inspired white churches and conservative Christian groups, such as the Christian Coalition, to become more active in politics (Dyson, 2000).

The second point of consideration, organizational infrastructure, begins with the view of the churches involvement in the local community and the global community. Black religious scholars (Calhoun-Brown 1998; Jacobson 1992) have explored the organizational structure of the African American church and its influence on political empowerment. The structure may support a church that sees itself as a partner in the bigger community and will therefore be more open to support activities that seek to change or strengthen connections through outreach and entitlement. The structure may support a closed environment that encourages members to look to rewards for actions in the future which are not immediate to the believer. The environment of

the individual church is viewed as both a positive and negative influence on African American culture and the manner in which the church influences the understanding of the pastor's role in the organizational structure. Calhoun-Brown (1998) expressed concern that the "otherworldly" orientation and emphasis on personal salvation in many of the traditionally Protestant churches may hinder some African American pastors from becoming involved in community renewal and issues of racial justice.

The third point addresses social and economic mobility. Jacobson (1992) noted the research correlating social and economic upward mobility and the secularization of the community's worldview, which is also observed in white religious culture. As a community moves in the direction of upward mobility, the influence of the church and religion may become less important. While Jacobson questioned this research, if true, the influence of upward social mobility could be important in the context of the black religious experience and the role the church will have in the future. Differences between rural and urban churches may create different role expectations of the pastor. In a rural area, economic mobility might be difficult and family groups are more pervasive in the church structure. In contrast, in the urban church, located where the opportunities for jobs and education are greater, there could be a gap between the role of the pastor and the expectations of the congregation.

The fourth point is the differences between the white Protestant church and the black Protestant church. Barna and Jackson (2004) reveal the differences in some preserved attitudes between the Protestant white church and Protestant black church which have notable influence on the expectations of the congregations of the two institutions. White churches seek to focus on how to become effective within the dominant culture. Black churches and their pastors define social influence as the mark of success. The black church seeks to offer alternatives to the

prevailing cultural norms instead of accepting culture norms and accommodating to the dominant culture. While these distinctions are over generalized, the differences can be seen in some of the churches and their pastors' role to make ministry successful in their culture.

As noted before, every influence of the religious culture on the African American community is not considered by scholars as a positive one, and the role of the pastor can be viewed as counterproductive to the progress of the community. Sawyer (1996) described the dichotomy that while the religious culture of the black church served as the catalyst for social change for the community, it also sought to hold women within traditional bounds and kept leadership control at status quo. While women were encouraged to support progressive change for African Americans in society, which the women of the church did support in larger numbers than males, women were not offered leadership roles in the church. This dichotomy led many of the women in the church to take their talents in leadership and organizational skills out of the religious community to direct social activism and reform movements. McKenzie (1996) identified the theological culture of the black church that continues to create glass ceilings for women in leadership roles. She identified the need for the black religious experience to identify a Christology that is inclusive to women and others marginalized by the community and church as well. McKenzie used Howard Thurman, identified earlier as an influence on Dr. Martin Luther King, as a role model from the black community to identify the struggle for equality in the black religious experience for women. Howard Thurman created a Christology that identifies the disinherited of society with the ministry of Jesus (Thurman, 1976). The powerful message of Thurman created a connection to the black Christian community's past struggle for equality with the issue of gender equality. McKenzie used Thurman to bring into focus the dichotomy of social action on behalf of the community with the barrier for women in some denominations.

In a recent study, Calhoun-Brown (Smith, 2003) reported on the external influences on politically active churches in correlation with the lack of attention to gender issues in the African American churches. She suggested that politically active pastors have led the church to become more open to gender equality. She concluded that black churches are influenced more by the degree of political activism on the part of the pastor than denominational leadership in seeking equality for women. Cone (1982) explored other types of prejudices that exist in the African American churches and identified the roots of those prejudices. Cone believed that racism, classism, and sexism (reflected in today's church by the community's opposition to homosexuality and women's issues) are interconnected and reflect the lack of a theological inquiry which addresses these issues and their importance to black liberation theology. Like Thurman Howard's identification of Jesus' concern for the disinherited, Cone identified all struggles, as the purpose of existence for the black church.

Using the setting of the African American church, politicians, educators, and entrepreneurs in the community have led the charge for community development and social change. Middleton (2001) identified the involvement of the African American church in urban school reform and the power of the church and pastors to motivate politicians and government. The church has served to bridge the gap between the public school system and the community. Pastors often become the intermediary for the community, the school system, and families in the church. Many pastors are advocates for school funding in districts, and act as politicians and advocates when the children of their church families are mistreated. Hodge (1997) identified the black church as the vocal minority in society working to improve the school systems in urban areas of the country. Many pastors in the black church, particularly in poor neighborhoods, are leading grassroots efforts to implement school vouchers for private education as an alternative to

failing public school systems. The African American church becomes the portal used by providers in which education flows to the community. Markens et al. (2002) described the use of the church as an educational platform for the distribution of information from health providers and the medical community. Health services providers found that the African American ethos, with its belief that God is active in earthly matters, supported the activities of education and social services in the community. The pastor was the key figure for the health groups to be successful in educational activities in the community. Other governmental agencies also use the influence of the pastor to reach out to the community. Winship and Berrien (1999) described the use of churches and the support of their pastors as a key element in communication for police and other city services that reach out to the community, particularly during times of discord and racial division. All types of activism, particularly political, are viewed as making faith real and relevant in the lives of the community (Barna & Jackson, 2004).

The traditional black protestant was defined, according to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), by the churches that were developed by African American clergy. The churches included in their research were the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA (NBCI), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). The traditional Protestant African American church and pastor has become a part of a changing landscape with mega-churches in upscale communities resembling white Protestant churches. The old message of hope in the midst of despair, which was actively preached by the African American pastor in the past, is slowly being eroded by more middle class sermons that promote values identified with white evangelical moral issues (Sanders, 1996). Sanders pointed to the message of the African

American pastor in the traditional churches as the voice of hope to the community opposing the black intellectuals and theologians who were the voices of despair. The lack of hope in the writings of these theologians and intellectuals led many in the African American community to the church to find a bright future in this world and the next. Brueggemann and Karp (2002), in an interview with Dr. H. Ward Greer, identified the need for the church to continue positive community building. He believed the African American community has made great strides in many areas of need for equality, such as education and minority hiring, but the job is not complete. The church is still in the best position to bring communities together to overcome the social and economic difficulties found in many neighborhoods; community building is more than simple activism. As a community of hope and faith, the church and its pastors can lead in developing awareness for the community and mobilizing a response. Pastors and their churches can provide social and physical help to unwed mothers and education for the population shut out of higher education. Job training and counseling are important services that the church provides to many without access to those services. Finally, as a portion of the black community becomes more suburban and affluent, the pastor can help the black individuals stay connected to the history and culture that has sustained them (Barna & Jackson, 2004).

The role of the African American pastor has begun changing in the years since the civil rights movement and the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blake (2005) documented a meeting in Atlanta between current young African American pastors and Civil Rights era ministers to discuss the role of today's pastors. The Civil Right era pastors, such as Gayraud Wilmore, identified justice and transforming political and economic institutions as the continuing role for the African American church and pastor. Wilmore identified the gospel of personal piety that many young African American pastors preach as a "slaveholder's theology." Bishop Eddie Long

of Atlanta's Missionary Baptist mega-church understood the emerging role of the African American pastor as one of holding onto the historical community aspect with a different focus. The black church should "forgive, forbear, and forget," racism and . . . help individuals obtain opportunity" (p. 1A). Other young successful African American pastors have identified economic opportunity in the larger context of middle class America, and not been limited to their own community. Dr. Frank Reid III pastors the historical Bethel AME Church in Baltimore, Maryland which was strongly entrenched in the civil rights movement in the 1950's and 60's. Since he came to the church in 1988, the church has held onto many of the community driven roles which have been a part of the church's ministry since Bishop Daniel Payne. The church has also developed many entrepreneurial outreach efforts that have characterized the new role of the African American pastor (Barna & Jackson, 2004). Smith (Smith, 2003) also identified the movement for many black churches and pastors to retain the community focus from the perspective of today's environment. The environment at large is now embracing and open to the African American community, whereas during the civil rights era and immediately after, the environment was considered hostile to the community. Today, it seems that for some African American pastors from the traditional black denominations, the role is in transition with cords still connected to the past, while new frontiers are being explored.

The changing circumstances and demands on African American Pastors

In his recent book, Harris (2002) identified the black church's expectation for the pastor's role to extend out from the walls of the church to the community at large. The expectation of black laity for their pastor is one culturally different from the traditional white Protestant church's expectation for their pastor. For the white pastor the term congregation signifies the members sitting with him on Sunday or those waiting to be evangelized from the community to

join the ranks of the congregation. For the black pastor, the congregation extends beyond the walls into the community and includes the nameless faces known as jobless, hopeless and fatherless (Harris, 2002). Walters and Smith (1999) identified the leadership role of African American pastors as having three components of ministry. The first is church-based, where the pastor is consulted on issues by community decision makers. The second component extends beyond the church, where the pastor is active in local electoral and group politics. The third, the “church-based programmatic,” is where the two are combined to attain economic and political power. Because of the need for the pastor to fulfill these components of the leadership role, education for the black pastor has been a concern for black church leadership since the formative days of the church. The church realized the importance of the pastor’s education to help him or her accomplish the many tasks expected by the community (Hamilton, 1972). Wheeler (1986) identified the desire of the AME leadership to secure education for the pastors after reconstruction in Memphis, Tennessee. As early as 1914, Kelly Miller of Howard University wrote that the talented tenth of the African American community should take over the churches in order to lift the race up; otherwise, “if the blind lead the blind, will not both fall in the ditch?” (Wimbush, 2000). Other African American churches have failed to establish education as important in the formation of the pastor’s learning of the skills necessary to serve the community. Charles Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, did not have an enjoyable experience with Bible school, and while he was not hostile to education, he was not a strong advocate for formal education for pastors of the denomination (Tucker, 1975). Many pastors understand education as the key to preparing themselves for the job of ministry. While the study of biblical history and theology is important for the African American pastor, knowledge of the

practical mechanics of ministry is vital to enjoying a successful experience in ministry (Harris, 2002).

Preaching is the centerpiece of the African American pastor's role in the church regardless of the location of the church. The ability to communicate the message of hope, faith, and love is the central expectation of the congregation (Philpot, 1972). Preaching, identified in the context of this study, is the communication that the pastor makes to the congregation from the pulpit. While the pastor is given many opportunities to speak to groups of people on a variety of subjects, preaching from the pulpit is the most recognized means of communication of the "good news." Some African American pastors have developed a characteristic practice in preaching that synthesizes the African culture and the model of the white Protestant church. The enthusiasm that is evident in black preaching and worship resembles the revivalist preaching of early white frontier preachers, yet differences are also recognizable between the two (Tucker, 1975). Many African American pastor uses cadence and song, emotional speech that emphasizes words, and the emotions of the black church reach back to the times of bondage and even before, to the customs of African religion. Early slave preachers were known for their powerful method of delivery of the sermon, impressing the white community as well with their ability to communicate the message of the gospel with such passion (Johnson, 1994). Johnson (1988) points to the use of preaching as the means of suppressing black discontent in the days of slavery and retaining status quo for the black community after the civil war, but the message from the pulpit was mostly about the spiritual aspects of life in relationship to the present condition of the community and the needs of the community. While the powerful sermons for change are often published and quoted because of their popularity, in reality, most sermons dealt with the

condition of the person and his or her responsibility to God. In this respect, the black church and white church share a focus on personal piety and salvation.

Henry Mitchell (1970) described the predominate style of preaching in the black religious as cathartic drama while white preaching tends to be cerebral. Barna and Jackson (2004) identified the preaching of the African American pastor as prophetic and passionate. The authors identified the similarities in white Protestant and black Protestant preaching in that both tend to be exegetical and hope driven. The difference is that black preaching is often inductive and narrative forms of preaching. Herskovits (1958) noted the culture of the black pastor and the emotionalism that was expected in the delivery of the message. It would be mistake to assign value to the difference between what is identified as cerebral preaching in white churches and the more emotional style of black preaching. These are merely culturally entrenched means of making meaning of valid religious experience. The African American pastor brings a sense of celebration and proclamation to the sermon that lifts the spirits of the black community despite their circumstances. The African folk and oral traditions are recalled in the preaching style of African American preachers. This type of communication has endured for generations, and the themes of family, life stages, and celebration are ingrained in the messages of the pastor (Wimbush, 2000; Mitchell, 1970). Preaching remains the important yardstick to measure the worth of the minister in black churches and is often the only contact pastors will have with the congregation if the church is large. Preaching is used by the pastor to build community standards and common goals for the people to follow.

A second pastoral expectation of the church is community building and involvement. As stated earlier, the community is vital to the African American experience, and the church has historically served as the center of building that community whether or not all the participants

are members of the local church (Smith, 2003). Often in today's society, an observer of the role of the African American pastor and the church and his or her relationship with the communities' development and activism is myopic. Often the observation is limited to the work of the pastor as a leader in the area of civil rights because this is the popularized role of the pastor (Williams, 2002). Lawrence Jones (1983) referred to the black church and pastor as the sustainer of black community and the values that have been shared in the community. The church has often been the key element in the aggregate of the black community that brings success or failure to the area. The beliefs of the church are carried from rural to urban settings and from the urban pulpits to the rural ones as pastors' move. Lincoln (1990) noted later in the decade of the 1980's that many pastors and churches still stress a "pie in the sky" attitude toward issues in the community (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Calhoun-Brown (1998) also referenced the primary influence of the theology of "otherworldliness," the view of heaven as the ultimate attainment for Christians, and the attitudes of the black church toward empowerment and community building as secondary.

Tension between the two points of understanding "God's Kingdom" highlights the difference in the roles of the pastors in rural and urban churches and the expectations of the congregation. The urban churches' pastors are typically more socially active and view God's kingdom as a function of what a Christian does in the community for other people. The rural churches' pastors often view God's kingdom as beyond this world and not directly tied to the actions of Christians. While these concepts should not be generalized to all churches, a disparity between the rural and urban churches is discernable (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Either of these divergent views can become a positive influence if the pastor and congregation view themselves as co-workers in the building of God's kingdom on earth or if the hermeneutics lends itself toward a sense of defeatism in this world with rewards being realized in the next world. Owens

noted the many activist churches, particularly in the urban areas that are engaged in building the community in which they live. The pastor is the point person in leading the endeavor and the parishioners expect their pastor to become involved in these issues (Smith, 2003).

Barna and Jackson (2004) identified the perception of many African American pastors that becoming an agent of positive change in the community where they serve is a ministry component of their role as minister. The depth and breadth of the pastor's involvement in developing community and addressing needs of the people differs from church to church. Urban churches are more inclined to be active in the development of the physical community, addressing issues such as economic and educational needs and leading the political and social engines that drive change (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). While some pastors become involved on a political level, others address immediate needs such as running soup kitchens and after school programs (Hodge, 1997). Wood (2001) and Winship, and Berrien (1999) addressed the tangible ways in which pastors became involved in the matters of police relations in Boston and city renewal. Markens, et al. (2002) related the intervention of the pastor and church in health programs targeting African American women, who have higher than average occurrences of health problems. McRae, Carey, and Anderson-Scott (1998) examined the means in which black churches and their pastors offered the community therapeutic and emotional support. The pastors in these systems of support become leaders in education, in emotional support systems including intentional groups such as Bible studies, choirs, Sunday school classes, in other church groups that help individuals connect with others in the community, and in crisis groups. The authors identified four aspects of this therapeutic environment, which the church and pastor help to create: first, a platform for the articulation of suffering; second, the identification of those who are the persecutors (human or civic); third, a place for acting out; and finally the validation of the

experience. McRae and Thompson (2001) continued the theme of black churches and pastors developing a therapeutic community in the sense of identifying with the community in which one belongs. This “belongedness” is rooted in the understanding of black consciousness and the strong connectivity that has identified the black church for centuries. The pastor is viewed by the congregation as well as those outside the immediate congregation as the key figure in creating this sense of community. His or her level of involvement indicates the expectations of the African American community, which has grown to expect the pastor to reach beyond the walls of the church. This heritage has been a part of the church since Richard Allen formed food distribution and education opportunities for freed slaves in Philadelphia (Smith, 2003). Churches have built community centers, senior centers, low income apartments and educational facilities to address the needs of the community. Many urban churches have aided individuals in achieving home ownership. The churches have not only provided education about the process of ownership, but may also have helped in securing loans for individuals (Smith, 2003).

A third role of African American pastors in traditional churches is to become mediator and emissary in personal and civic conflict resolution. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) identified the role of the pastor as mediator for the congregation and the black constituents in its relationships with community and political organizations. The pastor also serves as a mediator for individuals in the church, from the outside sources of conflict to internal conflicts with families or other parishioners. Smith (2003) identified the traditional role of the African American pastor and church in conflict resolutions and building relationship with white Protestant churches in the past. The role of the pastor extends into serving as a mediator for the families following the death of family members. This role will extend into the relationships between families in the church and the power struggles between economic classes in the church as well as between the well-

established families and the new members of the church. The pastor may also find himself or herself in a clash of age-related issues that will need to be mediated in the church (Hamilton, 1972). James Harris (2002) identified the expectation of the urban black church for their pastor to address the political and social issues of the community and become the advocate of the people who depend on him or her for a voice. The expectation includes a voice from the pulpit, but also a voice in city hall when the jails are overflowing with black young men and unemployment lines are lengthening.

The pastor becomes the default social worker for many congregations and has been historically viewed as the resource person for parishioners or people from the community to turn to in times of crisis (Smith, 2003). Much of the social work conducted by pastors on behalf of the community involves personal interaction and influence with social agencies. The platform used by the pastor of an African American church in working with agencies that interact with his or her parishioners is one of political action (Hunter, 1972). The pastor is seen by community leaders as the portal to the minds and hearts of the people in the congregation, and this position gives the pastor power to negotiate with city or county leaders.

The pastor also becomes the counselor for many in the church, which is a responsibility the black pastor shares with the white pastor. The difference is some in the African American community have distrust for the counseling/ psychology community. This mistrust often places the pastor in a position of becoming the counselor because he or she is unable to refer congregation members to outside professionals (Thompson & McRae, 2001). While the pastor may provide individuals with much-needed affirmation and a sense of “belongedness,” many pastors are not educated to diagnose and deal with complex psychological issues.

Professional Development for African American Pastors

In the tradition of most protestant churches, professional training for identities who become pastors consists primarily of Seminary training. This pattern of professional training is also typical within traditional black denominations. Many of the colleges and universities of today were founded to provide education for clergy to become leaders and spiritual guides for communities and congregations (Portman, 1972). Harris (2002) identified in the African American community the expectations of the laity in regards to the education of their ministers and how it pertains to the pastor's role from the congregation's point of view. The greater the advancement of education in the congregation, the more likely the expectation of the congregation will be that the pastor will be educated formally through a seminary or Bible college or through other means of education such as denominational continuing education or independent professional groups. The expectation from the laity of what the pastor's skills and knowledge should encompass also varies with their educational level. Churches with less formal education in the laity expect the pastor to have greater involvement in community matters which affect them directly, while the congregations with greater education expect the pastor to be involved in social issues and articulate in voicing moral direction (Harris, 2002). While education is often understood as formal education in a Bible school or seminary, many of the skills needed to successfully direct a ministry are learned within the experience of the job through reflection on how the knowledge gained directly impacts problem solving and the personal needs of the congregation.

Formal professional learning

Du Bois (1903) stated that 17 percent of African Americans, who graduated from institutions of higher education in 1900, including both male and female students, were men

entering the ministry. Du Bois continued with a discussion of the importance of African Americans entering professional jobs, including ministry, to heal the many needs of the community. The relationship between the pastors and educational opportunities has existed from the early formation of the traditional black church. The black pastors of the north believed education legitimized their ministry (Smith, 1999). Most of the African American pastors who received education did so in traditionally black colleges or seminaries until the 1950s (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Today, education is still important to African American pastors, and while many opportunities are available, many pastors are not continuing their education beyond high school. In discussing education for urban African American pastors, Harris (1991) identified the black church as a preaching-oriented organization and not an organization that understands education as a priority. He noted that seminars, Bible studies, and workshops are more popular among pastors than traditional formal education. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) surveyed African American pastors to find the level of education of the clergy. The percentage of pastors that did not have a college education stood at 47.8 percent with 28 percent of the number having only a high school education. The number of African American pastors that entered seminary was 35 percent.

The value of education for the pastor in meeting the expectations of the congregation was examined in the research of urban pastors by Harris (2002), who correlated the level of education of the parishioners with that of the pastor. The higher the education of the congregation, the greater the expectation for the pastor to be involved in civic and community issues through activity such as involvement in political, educational, and community boards. The more highly educated congregations also have an expectation for the minister to have advanced education, in college and or seminary. Their churches tend to be urban or suburban churches and not rural

churches. Rural churches tend to have less educated parishioners. Oddly, some denominations will place seminary graduates in the rural churches which have a greater expectation of more personal intervention. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) believe the future of the church will be in its ability to direct clergy into professional seminary education. The greater the educational level of the pastor, the greater his or her ability to fulfill the role of social advocate and community leader. The tendency of the denominations to place the seminary graduates in rural churches (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1988) has not helped the church or the pastor. Quite often the role expectations of the pastor in the rural church are very different from the expectations of the graduate. Lincoln's research was conducted through the support of the Lily foundation to evaluate the state of the African American pastor. He painted a bleak picture with the average age of the pastor in traditional churches at 60 years of age. Also, only 1000 pastors were enrolled in seminary at the time, showing the small number of pastors entering the ministry.

Informal professional learning

Learning in practice has enjoyed substantial research in the field of continuing and adult education. Groups of professionals may become a community of learners that helps to establish essential roles of the professional community and the skills needed to achieve goals. Community learning can be a very broad term applied to specific problems or goals. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2006) described a varied picture of community-based learning communities in churches, community centers and town squares. People come together to address issues that are important to the group. The self-directed learning in these communities helps many citizens to become knowledgeable in local government, zoning or other issues. Community learning can be more succinctly defined as a community. The community of practice helps to support professionals through dialogue and collaborative inquiry. The community encourages research

that is practice-sensitive and fosters the development of expertise in the profession (Mott & Daley, 2000).

Communities of practice are groups that share a way of doing things in the context of work or common goals (Wenger, 1990). The community of practice is where the knowledge and the mastery of the task are learned. Communities of practice are not defined by structure, size or length of service, but by the practice itself. The community of practice gives shape to the learning experience and mastery of the professional at the immediate level. The community of practice is able to maneuver the bureaucracy of the organization and to get things done (Wenger, p. 146). The community of practice is a naturally occurring phenomenon and not a legislated entity. The community of practice for the African American pastor is an informal body of practitioners whose roles are handed down through historically developed expectations, social need and community-specific prospects. In working with teachers in a community of practice, Schlager and Fusco (2002) identified these communities as self-reproducing and evolving entities that extend beyond the organizational structures. The communities develop norms, behaviors, and history as they draw together for social or professional reasons.

This depiction of communities of practice has some similarities with the learning of African American pastors as the pastors draw upon a historical outlook, community norms and church expectations to understand and learn their profession or craft. Parboosingh (2002) noted that professionals working in communities of practice cannot separate learning and practice. Learning takes place through dialogue, common problem solving and wisdom. Lave and Wenger (1991) also identified the learning in communities of practice as group problem solving, goal oriented, and relational. These communities develop language, artifacts and history that are shared among the group members and help to identify the commonality of their roles.

Communities of practice are understood as learning organizations that are driven by reflection and experiential learning (Wesley & Buysse, 2001) which are used to understand common issues and problems of the practice. Communities of practice inform adult education theory, which could help to explain how African American pastors may learn their role in the context of the profession. Communities of practice in the learning of African American pastors are focused on community interaction and shared learning. The perspective is helpful in the larger picture of learning as a pastor and the shared understanding of the office. The pastor, while certainly a part of a community, must understand and fulfill their role alone. As stated earlier, the differences between rural and urban churches, young and old congregations, and social and personal gospel, give each pastor specific problems to be solved which collective communities may not provide answers for. Communities of practice give a macro understanding of learning practice, but one needs a secondary theory to help understand the learning of specific roles within defined areas that are uniquely developed by geography, aggregate and community expectations.

Theoretical foundations for informal and workplace learning

One source of research from an experiential learning perspective that has strong cords attached to the learning process of the professional in the job is workplace learning. Workplace learning is recognized by many as informal learning (Billett, 2002) that takes place in the context or environment of a job. Billett questions this designation since there are intentions for the workplace, goal directed activities that are central to the organizational continuity and judgments about performance that are also shaped to those ends. To understand workplace learning only as “informal learning” gives a negative and ill-focused image to the theory. The community of learning in a workplace or profession may be very structured and intentional. For the pastor the environment is the process of “doing” the ministry for the community of faith and the skill set

expectations of the community. Workplace education is tied to the culture and environment of the vocation and the specific role of professionals to accomplish goals. The expectation of the work to be accomplished and the expectations of the customers (parishioners in the instance of pastors) are developed through the social context. Formal education can also be a factor in the processes of workplace learning and is a stimulus in the process (Winch, 2003; Beckett & Hager, 2003).

Davis and Sumara (2001) understood workplace learning as a learning community that encompasses a varied aggregate. The community is made up of people of different levels of education and skill. In drawing parallels between other professional groups that use workplace education and African American pastors, the structure of the community for pastors is not as organized and intentional as many. The pastor usually has a loose connection with the denomination or the fellowship of churches that serves as the learning community, but the organization does have defined roles and outcomes. The community does provide the structure for the learning organization that is characterized by Senge and others (Spencer, 2001). An important aspect for African American pastors is that the learning that takes place within this loose organization leads to individual learning and problem solving. Theorists understand workplace learning as a valuable theory of adult learning which takes place in the experience of the vocation. The individual's specific learning allows the professional to learn specific roles in the organization while contributing to the larger community (Beckett, 2000). Many African American pastors' education is acquired distributed by informal and non-formal means and regardless of one's level of education, the need for lifelong learning in this people-helping profession is evident. Williams (2003) suggested that many believe wrongly that workplace learning is a method of informal learning and is lacking a theoretical foundation with a pragmatic

focus and thin literature base. Williams also suggested that informal and non-formal learning is an important element of understanding people at work and their learning styles.

The theoretical base for informal learning and workplace learning is connected to research on Kolb's and Schön's theories of learning. In their theory, the practical knowledge that a professional develops is learned in the practice of the vocation. Practical knowledge is accumulated by professionals and is used to construct understanding by drawing on experience and prior life problem solving.

Research on experiential learning by David Kolb has been applied to other professionals and can be applied as well to the learning of African American pastors through workplace learning and community learning. Experiential learning exemplifies adult learning in two ways. First, it is intentionally creating experiences in a profession to give individuals a background to form and shape problem-solving or develop of a set of particular skills. Formal education uses experience through practice and student teaching to develop professional knowledge in budding teachers who lack the experiential base to understand the profession. Experiential learning is also very effective in professional development when coordinated intentionally to continue the learning processes of professionals. Second, experiential learning may not be intentional on the part of the professional but may develop as the professional works within the culture of the profession and develops skills from the expectations of the job and the daily problems that arrive (Beckett & Hager, 2000). While the theory of experiential learning has not been applied to the working African American pastor, the concepts have been well researched in other human helping professions such as education, social work, and medicine. The information learned in these other professions is transferable to the professional learning of the African American pastor in the experience of ministry within the culture of the black church.

The development of experiential learning theory as identified by Zorga (2002) begins with Kolb as the founder of modern experiential learning who built his theory on the work of Dewey and Wittgenstein. Kolb's work (1984) is identified as the foundation of adult learning theory in experiential learning. His work is referred to as a starting point in developing the foundation of theory for organizational and professional learning (Miettinen, 2000). It is widely used in formal education for management learning, leadership training, and research done in the area of cognitive processing styles. Also, the theory is informative in understanding the processes of learning by professionals in informal settings and the workplace. Winch (2003) also identified the work of Dewey as instrumental in the formation of experiential learning as an educational model of learning. Wittgenstein is identified for his emphasis on attention to the particulars, which are the foundation of context, and mental concepts as they pertain to the language of Kolb's work in experiential learning. Kolb identified learning as a process in which knowledge is created through the use of experience as a transforming vehicle. Experience alone does not suffice to produce learning. Learning must be developed, according to Kolb, through four activities. The first activity is the use of concrete experience by the learner to frame the experienced event. The second activity is reflection on the experience or thinking about it as a means of understanding it from the context of the environment. The third activity is the development of an abstract conceptualization or a search for the meaning of the experience. Often the learner will do this in connection to past experiences that share similar traits. The fourth activity for the learning is practical experimentation or doing a learned task in a different manner; which includes developing different patterns of behavior and planning new strategies. Learning through experience is identified by the new patterns of behavior and new strategies that

help the professional to understand the problems of his or her work. The learner then develops a different set of expectations and produces outcomes that result from the changes in behaviors.

According to Atkinson and Murrell (1988), Kolb identified four primary ways in which people develop and learn: affectively, perceptually, symbolically and behaviorally. The intersections of these variables influence the learning of professionals within the workplace (Beckett & Hager, 2000). Culture and environment are two of the most influential variables that are drawn from to inform and enlighten the professional. Researchers have identified an epistemology consisting of five characteristics of learning from experience. The first characteristic is that learning is contingent and not exclusively a formal, sustained or systematic study. The second characteristic is that it is practical and not exclusively theoretical. The third characteristic is that it is a process and not simply an assimilation of content. The fourth characteristic is that it is particular and specific rather than universal. Finally the fifth characteristic is that the learning is affective and social rather than purely cognitive (Beckett & Hager, p. 301). The knowledge gained through experience is often understood and identified by those in a profession as “common sense” because of the practicality and applicability of the knowledge to the immediate situation.

Zorga (2002) identified the use of experiential learning for counselors, teachers, psychologists, and social workers as important in that it helps professionals to acquire new professional knowledge and skills as well as personal insight through their experiences, which are merged with applicable theoretical knowledge. In this respect the formal education that one receives becomes practical in a new way when meshed with experience. Sugarman (1985) also identified experiential learning in the context of professional counseling as a major contributor to professional competency. He identified experiential learning in the context of structured

education to a professional group, using Jung's psychological types to structure learning. In contrast to the structured and intentional use of the experiential model, Sugarman also discussed the informal learning that takes place in the community of professionals as the environment, challenges of the profession, and expectations merge.

For the pastors as a community of professionals, both formal and informal learning contribute to the role they play in the community. As Sugarman identified with counselors, pastors may learn in structured environments such as seminary, Bible college, or seminars. The pastor also learns from the context of the environment of the community of faith (the Christian community), the community proper (where they live), the tasks of the ministry, which may be different from church to church, and the expectations of their parishioners and supervisors. From Sugarman's perspective, experiential learning as proposed by Kolb's theory helps professionals conceptualize the total learning process and allows professionals with different learning styles to learn from their strengths. Lashinger (1990) identified the value of experiential learning as a model of professional education in the field of nursing. Because the knowledge and skills needed in the profession change so rapidly, the use of experiential learning is congruent with the nurse's professional learning needs. Kolb's theory as a learning theory for African American pastors holds great interest because it is holistic, integrating experience, perception, cognition and behavior. The theory is relevant to informal learning and learning in the workplace as well.

Schön has received a great deal of attention in recent years for his research in adult learning for professionals. Schön introduced to professional knowledge the term technical rationality (Schön, 1983) Technical rationality can be understood as the response of professions to problem solving in a predetermined manner, such as the ivory tower of formal or front ended education gained through traditional means. Many educators in adult professional learning

believe knowledge gained through the act of “doing” and perfecting a craft or “art” is not professional learning and is not useful in professional practice (1983). Schön believed that this view is inadequate for understanding professional knowledge. The tacit knowledge needed for the context of professional knowledge is different from that of the “ivory towers” of research, as are the answers needed for problem solving in the context of the ill defined and uncertain world of professional practice (1983). He identified two ways of knowing that illustrate the relationship between the artistry of a profession and the knowledge need for executing it: knowing in action and reflection in action. Knowing in action is the practical knowledge that a professional draws on to make decisions and solve problems. Schön (1983) identified four aspects of knowing in action. First, in a profession, there is tacit knowledge that practitioners draw on to perform actions and make judgments. Second, this knowledge is not perceived by the professional, or in other words the professional does not know that he or she has this tacit knowledge. Third, the professional is not able to articulate the knowledge although he or she may be able to describe the outcome. Fourth, the knowledge the professional obtains may be applicable to research-based knowledge or may not be related to it at all.

Reflection in action takes the knowledge in action that a professional acquires and develops the learning on a second level. Knowing in action allows the professional to solve particular problems and gain professional knowledge in the course of his or her occupation. In order to solve these particular problems, the professional applies reflection in action. Schön identifies four ways of describing the use of reflection in action. First, the professional looks at new situations in the context of something already present in his or her pool of knowledge. Second, the professional frames the problem in the context of solving the problem through the knowledge found in the practice of the profession. Third, the framing of the problem is evaluated

by the professional through reflective questioning and allowing the problem to speak back, in a dialectic process, to the professional. Fourth, using reflective processing for the problem in this manner may result in a new reframing or reflecting on the problem. Professionals learn new ways of using the kind of knowledge they process to enrich their knowledge pool (Schön, 1983).

Schön believed that as the professional develops sources of knowledge to address problems, specialization takes place. The reactions of the professionals to problems that are encountered become tacit and automatic. Romer (2003) described Schön's theory in relationship to professional leaning and artistry. The use of framing to understand a situation is believed to be a part of "the art" and not an instrumental activity. The framing of the situation is related to John Dewey and what he referred to as the community of practitioners who share in the tradition of the calling. The key to the professional developing the language needed to frame the situation and gaining a useful understanding of the situation is grounded in reflection in action. Miettinen (2000) identified Schön's definition of reflection as the concentration and careful consideration of one's actions in a professional setting. This is not pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake.

The views of Schön can be transferred to the professional learning of African American pastors and the effective ways in which they may acquire knowledge. Schön and Chris Argris (1974) developed the theories of action to address the dynamics of leadership. What they developed, although not directly applied to pastors' learning of ministry skills, reflect the learning dynamics of professionals as they encounter problems in the "doing" of the job. While many pastors learn from the perspective of technical rationality through seminary, Bible College or denominational continuing education, the theory developed by Schön would suggest that much of what is learned is in the "doing" of a profession and then reflecting on the reframing of the problem through the use of language. Miettinen (2000) identified the use of reflective

practice as a theory grounded in learning theory. While Schön has popularized the theory in recent years, the theory is founded in Kolb's explorations of experiential learning. Kolb's theories were built on the work of John Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, a work which identified the integration of experience with reflection as a means of learning professional knowledge. Experience serves as a stimulus for understanding while reflection makes it possible to articulate the experience and learn from it. Without reflection, theories of actions do not influence behavior, and learning does not occur. Miettinen continues by identifying the dual purpose of reflection in practice. Professional learning implies that learning is not only developing new ideas, but also eliminating ideas that are not useful. When ideas need to be changed, they must first be identified. Reflective practice increases self-awareness, which in turn creates opportunities for continued learning in practice. Pastors meet new challenges in the act of practicing the profession. Schön's theory identifies the learning that takes place as pastors meet the challenges of their profession and develop skills to succeed through reflection and increased self awareness.

Summary of Chapter

The chapter evaluated the literature that supports the exploration of the question, "How do African American pastors learn the role of ministry?" The literature looks at the historical role of the pastor and the roles he/she performed in the past. The chapter also explored the literature on experiential learning as it pertains to the work of professionals in the area of human services, which is similar to the work of the pastor. Communities of practice and workplace learning are important theoretical frameworks to guide the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand how African American pastors learn the skills to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. The study seeks to understand how the African American pastor learns the roles of ministry and meets the expectations of both the congregation and the community at large. A qualitative design was used to investigate the learning experience from the perception of the pastor and to elucidate how the pastor makes meaning of that learning in the context of his or her vocation. This chapter describes the methodology from a qualitative perspective and how it applied to the study. The chapter will look at the researcher's bias, research design, sampling methods, data collection and analysis procedures, and limitations of the study.

Qualitative research seeks to understand the participants' meaning of an experience in the context of their environment (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative inquiry assumes that reality is constructed by the participants within the community in which they live and work. The researcher seeks to understand this reality from the constructs developed by the individuals in their endeavor to understand their world. Patton (1990) observed that qualitative inquiry requires the researcher to come to the research setting with an open mind. People engage with matter in order to construct meaning and the possible meaning of that interaction can have multiple interpretations. There is no way to determine a single, true interpretation; rather, there are many interpretations of the experiences of the individuals. Most often these interpretations are related to learned concepts that are passed on from one generation to another through community

interaction. Berger and Luckman (1966) have noted that “the same body of knowledge is transmitted to the next generation. It is learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality” (p. 67). The perceived reality influences the thoughts and behaviors of the individuals and their ordering of the world in their minds. The transmission of knowledge through culture, therefore, enables people to perceive meaning. However, it may also inhibit meaning by predisposing individuals to ignore certain aspects of the world (Crotty, 1998).

Qualitative research has characteristics that are fundamentally different from quantitative inquiry. Information is collected through the instrument of the researcher through varied means. Questionnaires, interviews, and field notes are means of recording and categorizing information for research. The inquiry also involves inductive research strategies that involve building understanding through observation and intuitive means (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative theory focuses on process and meaning; therefore, it produces a rich descriptive product that conveys meaning through words, pictures, and descriptive phrases.

In working from a qualitative perspective, the researcher discusses the term “meaning” from the perspective of the participants as they describe their experiences and the meaning they create. The researcher is intentionally aware of the need not to impose meaning onto the situation or experience when analyzing the data that is gathered from the participants’ experiences. The researcher of a qualitative study must take the point of view of the participants and understand their experiences from the words and terms that the participants use as they interpret them. This study of African American Pastors employed basic qualitative methods which are common in educational research (Merriam, 1998). Basic qualitative study employs data collection through interviews, field notes from observation and/or document collection (Merriam, 2002). The

researcher is the instrument that interprets the information using the participants' understanding of it. The design of the interview process for this study reflects the use of qualitative inquiry in asking participants to share both their experiences and their understanding of those experiences as African American pastors. I asked overarching questions and followed up the questions with the terms and words used by the pastors as they described the process they experienced in learning the skills of being a pastor. The desire was to allow the participants the freedom to shape the order and structure of interviews and the perspective of the meaning that was created from their experiences. One difficulty of the interview was asking follow-up questions that penetrated the religious language that pastors used to describe their experiences.

Participants

Sampling is used in qualitative research to generate information from a small number of cases that is purposefully selected (Merriam, 1998). The sampling strategy used for this study was purposive where the researcher determines whether or not a person fits the criteria for selection. (Huck, 2000) The type of sampling method employed was a combination of snowball and criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is a method of sampling used to identify participants who meet a predetermined set of criteria necessary to investigate the research questions.

Snowball sampling, sometimes referred to as chain sampling, is the process of using well-situated people to help identify prospective participants. Using African American pastors and denominational leaders in this role helped to expedite the identification of a pool of ministers that met the criteria (Patton, 1990). The sample for this study consisted of African American pastors who:

1. Had been identified by peers and overseers as effective in continuous ministry for more than 3 years.

2. Three pastors from an urban church, three pastors from a rural church, three pastors from a suburban area, and at least one female pastor who came from the rural subset.
3. African American pastors who had been identified by peers (i.e., church overseers and community groups) as effective pastors in their church and community.

The questionnaire that was used to determine this criterion was directed to ministers, community ministries and groups, and denominational leaders. Once the list of potential interviewees was established, participants were selected who fit the purpose of the study. The participants were from the southeastern United States, varied in age and experience, and were actively engaged in a traditional black church, that is the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA (Inc.) (NBCI), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), or the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) , as identified earlier in the study by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990). The participants had to have been in ministry at the church for more than 3 years to allow time for the participants to have developed an understanding of the community and its expectations. While the research does not explore gender issues, the sample consisted of males and a female. The sample included three urban pastors (in a large city in an urban area with a predominantly blue collar congregation), three suburban pastors (in a smaller urban area with a predominantly white collar congregation), and four rural pastors (defined by their non-urban community). The selection was sensitive to the economic strata of the community and the congregation with the pastors was associated. The research sought participants with different educational experiences, but looked most closely at the experience of working as a pastor. Surveying criteria were employed to identify the participants of the research. Participants were identified by a phone survey of the overseers or

superintendents of traditional black churches with an Episcopal form of government. The overseers were identified by the denominational webpage. Because Baptist churches are independently governed by the congregation, Baptist participants were identified by community organizations and individuals that work closely with churches, and specifically, pastors. The persons were identified by district offices that serve the Baptist churches. The desire was to identify pastors who had successfully pastored churches for more than 3 years and a series of questions were asked for the overseers and pastors to identify the pastors that might fit the sample.

Methods of Data Collection

The primary source of data collection used in this study was an in-depth, semi-structured interview. The interviews took place at the pastor's office or the church and lasted 45-90 minutes. The method of using in-depth interviews involves asking open-ended questions that were designed for participants to reconstruct their experiences and to explore their meaning (Seidman, 1998). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer begins with the interview guide which specifies a predefined range of topics to be addressed during the interview, but the format remains flexible, allowing the participant to initiate new topics or expand on topics that are important to the interviewee (Payne, 1999). There are several advantages to using interview guides. For one thing, they allow the participants to lead discussions and to respond to questions with extensive narratives (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). According to Patton (1990), the interview guide is helpful because it allows the interviewer the freedom to word questions spontaneously, establish a conversational style, and build a conversation within particular subject areas all with a predetermined focus. McCracken (1988) noted that the interview guide assists the interviewer in controlling subjectivity by including scheduled questions that may otherwise be forgotten. The interview guide is also useful because it allows the interviewer to focus his or her attention

completely on the participants rather than splitting it between the participants and the larger structure and objectives of the interview.

The interview guide uses broad, open-ended questions that are designed to open up the participants' responses and not restrict them to limited answers. Follow-up questions provide the participants with the opportunity to reconstruct their experiences from their own perception rather than being led to an interpretation (Seidman, 1998). In this study, the questions that followed directly from the participants' responses were asked to elicit clarification, details, and stories to illustrate. The participants were interviewed from one hour to one and a half hours. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. At the places in the interviews where the words were difficult to understand, I reconstructed the interview from memory or field notes. The data and analysis consist of tape-recorded interviews, interview transcripts, and notes, which will be preserved for three years. The pastors were also observed in a Sunday service or a function of the ministry to identify interaction between the pastor and the congregation. The researcher also took opportunities to ask questions of the pastors in informal discussions and spoke to congregation members. The information from those conversations was recorded in field notes.

I attended a service in each church the pastor's served. I would sit in the back and observe the service and the manner in which the pastor communicated. After each service I would speak to the pastor as well. At times I had opportunity to speak to parishioners as well. I include this information in my field notes.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, I used the process of inductive data analysis. Inductive data analysis is the use of multiple methodologies to understand and interpret the data. Although the

specific strategies and techniques vary from one researcher to another, inductive analysis as a process is data management by coding, categorizing and drawing relationships among themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 and Miles & Huberman, 1994). Inductive data analysis begins with the reading and rereading of data to familiarize oneself with the information. The researcher codes the data with words and phrases that mark patterns as well as topics covered in the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The method of coding reduces the data by allowing these items to be organized, managed and recalled. The process also operates as a tool to open the data to the reader to crystallize the data, raise issues with it, and generate ideas regarding the relationships among the data (Strauss, 1987).

Using inductive analysis allows the researcher to examine codes, grouping the information together into broader concepts. After coding the data and categorizing it, the researcher may move to interpret the information. According to Wolcott (1994), central to the process of identifying the relationships among the codes is the researcher's interpretive or theoretical frame. The researcher then places the information in subcategories, connecting them together. Understanding the linkages and relationships among the categories is the central purpose of inductive analysis. In the interpretation of these links, the researcher is able to move toward a process of generalizing the coherence in the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The analysis of the material for this study began once the interviews were collected and transcribed. After exploring several software options to help categorize the information, I used Microsoft Word to color code the information and the "find" key to help identify themes and common ideas. I also used field notes as a part of my information.

I keep field note for the moment I was speaking to the pastor, or a parishioner, and the recorder was not used. Often these notes were recorded on the walk to the car after an interview

or after a service. I included the information from the pastors in the field notes to the interviews at the end.

Validity

My schedule for interviews was set at times of the participants' choosing so it would cause less of an inconvenience for the pastors. I was able to accommodate the times of they chose. The location of the interview was to be convenient for them, and all but one chose their church or office. I arranged to travel and meet for the interviews wherever the needs dictated. Realizing I have a level of subjectivity concerning this study, I personally participated in a bracketing interview with a fellow pastor. In this process, another researcher conducted an interview with me using the same questions I planned to use in this study. This process afforded me an opportunity to face my own feelings and ideas surrounding my research questions and categorize the information in an orderly fashion. By having a peer researcher put me through my own interview questions, I gained a higher level of insight into how I might interpret the material collected, and the process helped me to anticipate the language the pastors used throughout the interview (deMarrais, 2001). Other safeguards to insure the trustworthiness and rigor of this study were the use of debriefing or member checks. After the interview data had been transcribed and analyzed, appointments for reviewing the findings were made for the participants to clear up any issues of meaning or phrasing which might be misunderstood. The member checks made sure the speakers' meanings were clear and the spirit of what was said was represented accurately. While some of the participants were able to participate in the member checks, others did not follow up to phone class made to the pastors (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher should have a high level of credibility. Wolcott (1994) made several suggestions to help the researcher achieve an optimal level of credibility. He pointed out that it is

important to refrain from speaking too much, and to focus upon doing a good deal of listening to what the participant is saying. The researcher should take down the interviewees' exact words and be clear and accurate in the recording process. This accounting should be done immediately after the conversation or while it is happening. Writing or transcribing should take place as soon as possible, and the documents should be shared with others who are aware of the particular setting or situation being researched. While analyzing and reviewing the data, one should allow those participating in the interviews to review the data generated and the analysis of that information. By doing so, the researcher will help control bias and misinterpretations of the data set. The subjectivities the researcher carries should be stated in the research process, but viewed as strength to the study, rather than a hindrance. The interviewer should return to the actual physical site or the initial field notes to reread the information in order to gain perspective throughout the process. Silverman also suggested that the data be written up accurately. Care should be taken to have internal consistency with regards to any generalizations concerning what is learned visually or heard. As a researcher, I attempted to be diligent in recognizing the subjectivity that I brought to the study. In order to control the possibility of bias in the research, I used the method of member check with most of my participants. Member checks give participants the opportunity to review the notes and transcriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I had each participant review the findings, and I asked if the interpretation captured their understanding of their responses. The members were invited to add to the research with additional comments, which were included in the study. The use of member checks is important in qualitative research, I believe, in order to guard against the subjectivity of the researcher shaping the conclusion of the material.

Researcher Subjectivity

As a pastor and Christian educator, I understood that in the process of evaluating the information gathered I had to use great care to view the information through the lens of the participants and that of not my own preconceptions. I have a great interest in the learning methods of pastors, particularly African American pastors. My interest began in college with my best friend, an African American ministerial student, and his father, who pastored a church in New Jersey. As our relationship grew and I began to see the importance of his father to the community, I began to understand that a difference existed between the expectations for an African American pastor and a white pastor. My friend's father became the counselor, lawyer, social worker and spiritual guide for the people in the church and community. He learned to handle multiple tasks in order to serve as a minister in his community without the advantage of higher education. His education took place in the doing of the job and learning in the process. The expectations on him from his community seemed much greater to me than what I had learned from my community and formal education. While my relationship with my friend and his family has been a long and rich one, I realize that I am outside of the community in respect to culture and race. Merriam (1998) referred to the emic (insider) versus the etic (outsider) perspective on experience and perceptions. I had to recognize my relationship as an outsider to the community and take caution to preserve the validity, covered earlier, of the research. Also, as a pastor who received training through formal education, college and seminary, I recognized the need to be careful interpreting experiences from the perspective of pastors who may not have had an opportunity for higher education. The outcome of understanding my subjectivity is to ensure, as a member of this professional group, that I did not confuse my thoughts, feelings, and interpretations with the research. My relationship with African American pastors as a colleague

gave me as a researcher an inroad into the community. Also, the language and symbols that are common among pastors established a common ground from which to launch a dialogue for the purpose of interviews and field notes. But this inroad did not set aside the differences from my culture that have been established in the African American community and the roles that have grown from that deep and rich heritage. The cultural differences are civic involvement, advocacy, and religious experience that are centered around the leadership of the pastor with an emphasis on community in the religious experience.

CHAPTER 4

PROFILES OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to seek an understanding of how African American pastors learn the skills to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. In order to understand the contextual history and environment of the community and church, literature on the religious history of the traditional black Protestant church was reviewed. The study uses Lincoln and Mamiya's research to identify the traditional black church which includes the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA (Inc.) (NBCI), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). The literature on professional learning theory, workplace learning and community of practice provides a framework for understanding the learning context of the African American pastor.

The description will consist of personal information about the pastor, observations of a worship service he/she conducted, and material about the church and its environment. All of the participants are identified by a pseudonym. The ministers range in age from 28 to early- 70's. Each of the participants is the senior pastor or co-pastor in the church. Three of the pastors have staff that helps them in the ministry. Four of the ministers have full time jobs outside of the church that support their families. All of the participants pastor in north Georgia or upper South Carolina.

Ten pastors participated in the study, as outlined in Table 1. The chapter will introduce the pastors in descending order of Table 1.

Pastor's Information

Name	Years of ministry	Formal Education	Setting	Church Members	Denomination	Form of church Governance
Richard	5	4 years college	Rural	75	Baptist	Congregational
Fred	34	High school	Rural	325	Methodist	Episcopal
Mike	36	High School	Rural	450	Pentecostal	Episcopal
Candice	6	Master's Degree	Rural	55	Baptist	Congregational
Harry	32	High School	Suburban	300	Baptist	Congregational
John	34	Master's Degree	Suburban	125	Methodist	Episcopal
Tim	12	High School	Suburban	90	Pentecostal	Episcopal
Art	32	Master's Degree	Urban	1200	Baptist	Congregational
Joe	31	Master's Degree	Urban	700	Methodist	Episcopal
Don	24	Master's Degree	Urban	2200	Pentecostal	Episcopal

The description will consist of personal information about the pastor, observations of a worship service he/she conducted, and material about the church and its environment. All of the participants are identified by a pseudonym. The ministers range in age from 28 to early- 70's. Each of the participants is the senior pastor or co-pastor in the church. Three of the pastors have staff that helps them in the ministry. Four of the ministers have full time jobs outside of the church that support their families. All of the participants pastor in north Georgia or upper South Carolina. Church governance is divided in two parts. Congregational is a form of governance that allows the church or leadership to hire and fire the pastor. The church is autonomous and

does not answer to a denomination or hierarchy. Episcopal governance is structured in a connective hierarchy that begins with bishops and elders. Pastors are appointed or candidates are sent to the churches that are approved by the bishops. The church and its property are controlled by the denomination and the appointments are also controlled as well. Individual churches are not allowed to fire a pastor but makes suggestions to the Bishop.

Richard

Richard is the pastor of a rural Baptist church in Northeast Georgia. The church was founded immediately after the Civil War by newly freed slaves. The church sits across from an old antebellum house that was once a dominant plantation in north Georgia and housed the confederate president Jeff Davis on his escape route from the Union Army. Some of the families in the church trace their lineage to the original families of the church. The congregation is respectful during their Sunday services and show great respect toward the pastor. The congregation is a mix of older members, young couples, and children. The congregation is predominantly African American, but inter-racial and white couples were present as well. Richard is ministering in his home county where he once was a track star in high school. He went to a traditionally black state university in Georgia where he continued to run track. Richard grew up in the church and stated, "I always knew I would pastor a church one day, but I avoided it as long as possible."

Richard lives roughly 25 miles from the church in another county and does not have standard office hours. When he started at the church, it met one Sunday a month. Now the church meets three Sundays a month. Sunday is the only day the church has services. Richard does his study for the Sunday services and church business at a table in his home. The service I observed was constructed around the deacons leading the worship for half of the service and the pastor

entering in the middle of the service. The practice of the deacons' conducting the service and the pastor joining the service later is a tradition at the church. Richard was at ease in the pulpit and a tremendous communicator. His preaching style was part singing and part rhythmic speech. The service ended with the congregation lining up to shake the hand of the pastor. Richard has made a personal decision to work fulltime so as not to lay a burden on the congregation. He believes the ministry of the church is the important issue and does not mind working to help its financial situation.

Richard understands the role of ministry to be a leadership/ advocacy position and has functioned in that manner. Richard stated,

The deacons help in the running of the church, but the pastor is the leader. I believe it is my job to give the people of my church direction and set the pace for helping the others in the community. The deacons and others make suggestions to me, and I listen, but ultimately I am the one who has the responsibility.

Richard has taken the responsibility to improve education in the county where he is a minister. The cause is very important to Richard and his congregation. He has volunteered to help recruit minority teachers for the local school system. He believes education is the key to confronting many of the ills in the community: "If you can't read you can't go far. Most important, you can't study the Word of God."

Fred

Fred is the pastor of a rural Methodist church in a sparsely populated area of Northeastern Georgia. The church is a modest-sized church in a remote part of the county. The area around the church is made up of mostly chicken farms and cattle farms. Yet the church boasts a large congregation of very active members. The church recently built a large family activity center to

accommodate the many activities that it sponsors. The church was founded in 1865 for former slaves in the area. There are four other black Methodist churches within five miles of Fred's, but it draws by far the largest congregation of any church in the area. The congregation is predominantly black with several interracial couples and a couple of white members. Fred was raised in a county adjacent to his church, and his wife is from the county.

Fred lives approximately 20 miles from the church, but in the same county where the church is located. Fred has a high school diploma and has continued his education through continuing education classes from Interdenominational Theological Center and personal self-directed learning. Fred does not have standard office hours at the church. He has an extensive library close to his office in the church that he uses for preparation. The service is very liturgical and conducted according to the Methodist Book of. All ministers, whether members of the congregation or visitors, are invited up on to the platform to assist in the service. Assistant ministers conduct most the service with the ushers helping on the church floor. In the service I observed, when the pastor came to the pulpit, everyone rose and remained quiet during the reading of the section of scripture. Fred was very polished in his delivery of the sermon, speaking in cadences. The stewards, assistant pastors, and some in the congregation spoke back to the pastor as he was preaching. After the service, the pastor called a church meeting and used the Book of Discipline to conduct the meeting.

Fred's understanding of the role of the minister is one of a shepherd that works with stewards and his bishop to meet the needs of the people in the community, not just his congregation. He wants a co-operative ministry and does not believe that a pastor is a CEO of the church, but rather a shepherd. He understands leadership as a means of modeling the behavior he expects from his congregation. Fred states,

The people of my church expect me to live out the things I preach about and what is in the scriptures. If I don't show them how to love how will they know? If I don't live like the man God wants me to be, how will they know how to live? My folks expect me to live what I preach and do it in my life.

Fred understands that he is accountable to his bishop and he is appointed once a year. He has been re-appointed to his present church for a number of years, which he reported was unusual for a Methodist minister.

Mike

Mike is the pastor of a rural Pentecostal church in Northeast Georgia. Mike has been a pastor of the church for many years and watched two generations of families attend his church. The church began in a small building in the country and later the congregation added on to the church as it grew. Presently, the church has moved to the outskirts of the small town in an abandoned Winn Dixie. The building has been remodeled with a large sanctuary, offices and education facilities. The services are well organized and orchestrated with several people employed in the service. The size of the congregation is surprisingly large, drawing parishioners from surrounding counties. The respect the congregation and the assistant ministers have for Fred and his wife, who does most of the singing in the service, is evident in their actions toward him and the words used during a time of testimony to describe him. The people of the congregation remarked that the church has prospered under Mike's leadership. Mike also serves as a bishop for the denomination and mentors many young pastors who work in his church and other churches in Georgia. Mike stated, "Training the next generation is the most important thing I do at this point in my ministry." He said that the first requirement he has for his young ministers is not to watch ministers on television because "it will make them think that ministry is

about them and not the people in the church.” The congregation of the church is predominantly black with a small percentage of white members. Mike referred to his church governance as Episcopal like the Methodist.

Mike lives 25 miles from the church and worked while he was ministering in the church until he retired from his job. Mike has a high school education and has continued his education with classes at Interdenominational Theological Center. Mike has a thorough knowledge of the historical context of the African American church and his denomination. He related stories about the founding of his denomination and used the stories as platforms for his understanding of and dealing with racial issues. Mike stated that he does not speak about race and doesn't allow his congregation to get caught up in racial discussions. He spoke positively about how the founder of his denomination, Charles Harrison Mason stressed making it an interracial denomination and how it was the white members who broke away to form the largest of the Pentecostal denominations, the Assemblies of God. Mike mused, “What could we have done if we had stayed together and showed the country what should be?” Mike also stated that he has learned from other ministers and pastors that he has worked with or discussed issues within informal settings. The church has a very excited and demonstrative style of worship. Mike sits on the platform with the other ministers while other ministers and his wife conduct the preliminary service. Mike's wife sings most of the service and the band responds instantly to her signals to them. Mike's method of delivery is measured and dignified. In the service I attended, his voice would rise and fall as he made a point in his delivery, and he was a very talented speaker. At one point, when the congregation did not respond in a manner Mike believed to be appropriate, he gently chastised the congregation for not participating. Mike used several elders and associates in the business of the church.

Candice

Candice is the co-pastor of a small congregation in a small southern community in Northeast Georgia. She began ministering the church while a student at college and continued while she attended seminary. Candice grew up in the Baptist church and has always considered herself a Christian and wanted to be a minister. Candice invested in a website to promote herself and her ministry because she believes, “technology is the new frontier for ministry.” She shares the ministry with an older minister that served as a mentor to her. He and his wife gave Candice opportunities that she did not have in other Baptist churches, and she was ordained in the church by her mentor. The church is a small church on a main street in the town. The church has a strong reputation in the community and is known for helping the African American families in the town. The church has been established since the turn of the century. The congregation is predominantly African American, but many students from a local college attend because of Candice’s influence. Many in the congregation are lower and lower middle class. As a student at a predominantly white college, she provided leadership to the minority population, and many students continued to follow her leadership to the church. Candice has many talents, such as singing and teaching that aid the church

Education is important to Candice because she believes that a minister must be prepared to meet the changing challenges of the culture, so she entered seminary directly after college. She attended a predominantly white traditional seminary because of the closeness of the seminary to her church. Candice recognizes the bias against women ministers in general, but particularly in the Baptist tradition. She doesn’t see herself as a trailblazer, but rather as a person who is serving in her church and who should be able to use her talents to their highest level. Candice has found herself in situations where she opened doors that had been closed before. She

was the first African American beauty queen of the college she attended, which got her noticed by Jet magazine. In college, she openly connected her strong Christian beliefs to the Democratic Party in a predominantly Republican community. She carried these strong beliefs and inner strength to her role of pastor. Candice is an emotional speaker and plans her thoughts in a logical fashion. While she is animated in her speech, she is not distracting in her emotion. She gets the audience to react to her in an interactive manner as she preaches. Candice stated that she understands she has a “double consciousness” as an African American pastor and a woman. Candice states, “The pastor is a servant leader helping people through this journey of life. The pastor leads people by example and by developing their talents as well.”

Harry

Harry is the pastor of a Baptist church in a southern city with a major university that dominates the job market and devotion of the citizens. Harry believes the university is a blessing and a curse. The church has been around since the turn of the century and is situated on a main road in town. Harry comes from a family of ministers and decided to enter the ministry on the night that Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. “My father and my brother are ministers, and that night I believe God said, ‘I will need leaders,’ and I made the decision and entered the ministry.” His other brothers have also followed in the steps of their father and entered the ministry. Harry has a high school education, but has continued his education through workshops and continuing education seminars. He also has an extensive library and enjoys reading and studying on his own. Harry has been involved in many community projects and believes the pastor of the church should reach out in the community in as many ways as possible. Harry described the problems of the community and the need for leadership from the church to

confront the issues faced by the African American community. He believes the pastor of the African American church is still in the forefront of leadership and must be involved in the community. Harry stated, "The African American community has come a long way, but there are many obstacles to people in our congregation." Harry has deacons to help him in the work of the church, but he believes the pastor must demonstrate leadership in his actions and in the manner he lives his life. The church is full on Sunday mornings and is made up of professional and working class people from the community. Harry has a strong voice that booms as he speaks. The service is very lively and has many people from the congregation participating. Harry believes the church will need to build soon to meet the needs of the community and congregation.

John

John is the pastor of a Methodist church in a suburban area of a southern city. John has been the pastor of the church for over two years and has been in ministry as a pastor for nineteen years. John worked as a director in the Urban League in a major American city and in the more recent past as a director of mental health. His experience has given him an incredible pool of knowledge, which he quotes from with great ease, concerning the black community and the African American family. The walls of his office are lined with recognition of his work in the community and appreciation from the city. The church is in a rundown part of the community with rental homes around the church. A few of the homes are fixed up with nice yards. John pointed out, "The church bought a couple of the homes and fixed them up in order to bring families back to the community." As John speaks one begins to understand his deep respect for the history of the black church and the struggles of the African American community.

John does not live in the community of the church, but keeps office hours to make himself available to church. John is well educated and has two master's degrees. The first degree is in Counseling and his second is in Divinity. His experience in community building and serving people runs deep. He served as the director of the Urban League before he decided to enter the ministry. Moving to Atlanta, he enrolled at Turner Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center. He contacted his mother's childhood friend, Coretta Scott King, when he moved to Atlanta to ask for help finding a job. After seminary, he also worked as a director in mental health (see above) in South Carolina. John quickly recalls information and statistics on the black community in relationship to mental health and health issues. He understands the challenges and believes the pastor, one time the leader of the community, is a partner in leadership with educators, politicians, and entertainers.

The church is very liturgical in its worship. The church follows a long order of service and conducts itself in a less emotional manner than the other churches. The people of the church are very involved with the service and are open and engaging to visitors. After meeting the members of the congregation, it is obvious the congregation has its share of educators and professionals. At the service I visited, the congregation was completely African American, mostly middle-aged with few children. John is a thoughtful preacher who measures his words in a rhythmic style. His sermon was well-executed and approached the message from a historical standpoint. John has stewards that help him in the ministry of the church, and he answers to a Methodist bishop. John stated, "I am a part of a team and use the discipline as a guide to my leadership." John believes that the connectional government of the Methodist church makes the pastor a better leader because it makes him accountable.

Tim

Tim serves as the pastor of a Pentecostal church in the middle of a suburban city. The church is a church plant that Tim and his wife started in the city, and it meets in an old lodge that once served as a school. The community is a part of the old mill village portion of the city. The church has blueprints on the wall for a new building on the outskirts of the city. Tim referenced the plans several times in the course of the morning service I attended to remind the congregation of their commitment to the churches' future. Tim has served as the pastor for 12 years. He works full time in order for the ministries of the church to have adequate resources to meet the needs of the congregation. Tim's wife is very much a partner in the ministry and serves as the unofficial associate. Tim's wife grew up in a pastor's family and is very comfortable in the church and serving as a partner in the church. Her father served as a mentor to Tim after he entered the ministry. Tim has a high school diploma and some technical school experience. He lives and works within the city close to the church. Tim stated that he "grew up in the church, but never wanted to be a minister;" however, he moved to a large city for a job and got away from the church.

Working fulltime requires Tim to work many hours in the afternoon and evening. He believes that his congregation expects him to be available to them. The services are very lively, and Tim is a very animated and energetic minister. When I observed a church service, Tim gave everyone an opportunity to participate in the experience of the service. Both the children and adults came forward to sing or give testimonies before the congregation. As Tim spoke, he started with a slow cadence that grew in speed and volume. He was pressed on by his wife, who sat in the front of the church. At one moment, Tim called to his wife to serve as an illustration to his point in the sermon. Tim stated, "The pastor serves as an example and leader for the

congregation. The folk look at me to set the example and lead them by living what I preach.”

Tim’s demeanor is very different out of the pulpit. He is soft-spoken and thoughtful in what he says to parishioners. Tim has deacons in the church to help him with administration and a bishop to help guide him. Tim prefers having a superior that he can learn from and seek guidance from when he has a question on ministry.

Art

Art is the pastor of a newly built church in what he referred to as the “most improvised area of this city.” The church organization has existed in the city since the turn of the 20th century. The church is located in a southern city that is growing at a rate that places it in the top twenty five in the country. The building itself is new and modern-looking in a rundown area of old mills and steel buildings. Art and his church are leading a petition to stop the opening of a brewery in the community. The church believes that alcohol and drugs have hurt this community and don’t want new problems. The church employs a television ministry and other ministries that reach out to the community in creative ways. The church has an entrepreneur ministry that highlights the people of the church and their personal businesses, encouraging the congregation to patronize the businesses when possible. Art uses technology as an outreach in his ministry. The church has a website that is professional in its presentation. Art’s church also hands visitors a CD of church services. Art approaches his leadership position in the manner of a CEO. The church is professional, well-organized and uses the latest technology to meet the congregations’ needs.

The church offers two services on Sunday, and both are full. The congregations are entirely African American. The services are businesslike, planned to the smallest detail. The church gives the impression of being a mega-church although it is smaller than the traditional

mega-church. Its programs reach out into the community to provide multiple ministry opportunities and reflect Art's vision of what ministry should be and how it should be organized. Art has an earned master's degree and an honorary doctorate. Art is forceful and polished in his delivery of the sermon and displays his education as he preaches. He is very much a teacher in the pulpit like his heroes Rev. Tony Evans and John MacArthur. Art has an assistant pastor and deacons to help him in the ministry of the church, but he believes "it is the pastor who has ultimate responsibility of the church. He must be the visionary that takes the church to the future."

Joe

Joe is the pastor of an urban Methodist church. Joe is very proud of the history of his church. The church was founded in 1865 by Henry McNeil Turner and is one of five Methodist churches the famous preacher founded. The original structure is in the middle of the city. It was condemned by the city engineers, and the congregation moved to a neighborhood several blocks away. History is important to Joe and he draws from the history of the church and community to lead his church. Joe attended the Turner seminary in Atlanta and believes the seminary helped him to appreciate the history of the black church. The church now resides in an old mill neighborhood where the majority of the people are older and retired. While many of the congregation drives from outside the community to the church, Joe has tried to reach out to the neighborhood to draw new members to the church. The neighborhood still has the look of an old mill town while one mile down the street new homes are going up in an upscale subdivision. Joe was educated in a Methodist seminary and believes his education prepared him to lead the church. Joe is a full time minister and spends time in the community working on behalf of the

church and his people. He believes the pastor leads by example and through helping others discover their talents as well.

The church is the largest African American Methodist church in the area. Recently, the church has gone onto local television and offers two services every Sunday morning. Joe believes he must lead the church to help new folk, and younger folk, to rediscover the black church experience. Joe stated that “the African American community must rediscover the black church experience.” Many in the congregation drive into the area to attend the church. The church has tried to reach out to the people of all races in the community. Because the community is elderly, left in the community by children who moved to the suburbs, the church sponsors a meals-on-wheels program and other initiatives to attract attention to the church. The congregation is older and professional. The service of the church was liturgical and unemotional until Joe encouraged the congregation to become involved. When I observed him, Joe presented himself in a dignified manner and transformed himself as he started preaching. The sermon was well-crafted and thought through. It was obvious Joe had put time and research into the message. Joe energized the congregation with the presentation of the message, encouraging a couple of people to talk back to him and clap during the sermon. Joe has stewards and stewardess to help him with the administration of the church. He also answers to a bishop who he considers his pastor. Joe believes the Methodist Book of Discipline sets his responsibilities as pastor.

Don

Don is the pastor of a Pentecostal church in a major American city in the south. The building is an old Baptist church which the present congregation bought when the Baptist congregation moved out of the area to a middle class neighborhood. Don’s community is rundown, a stereotypical poor community in the city with rows of convenience stores, clutter on

the streets, and chain link fences around the parking lots. There is an elementary school across the street from the church. The pastor stated the church has adopted the school and helps the underprivileged children with resources such as book bags, pencils and sometime clothes. The Atlanta police are on the street during the Sunday morning worship to help control the traffic. The congregation is predominantly African American with several professionals driving into the church for worship. While many of the congregation walks to church, I did observe vehicles on the street that indicated the presence of middle class parishioners. Don is very involved with the church and the community. He lives within the city and keeps office hours at the church. The church runs a food pantry out of the church and a men's and women's clothing store.

Don has a master's degree from a seminary where he majored in the Old Testament. He is a full time pastor and conducts seminars at his church and other churches as well. The congregation showed great respect for the pastor during the service I attended. Each time the pastor entered the pulpit, the congregation stood to show respect for the office of the pastor. Don was very articulate in the pulpit and began slowly before forming a duet with the organ as he preached. He remained in contact with the congregation as he called on the people to respond to him throughout the sermon. While the message was very emotional and high energy, the formation of the message and the quality of the information was excellent. Don stated, "The pastor is the leader of the church, and the church is the leader in the community." He takes pride in the relationships he has forged in the community and how the church has been able to have influence in the community. The local elementary school calls on the church with a variety of needs, and Don works to meet those needs although the children and their parents often do not attend the church. Don has deacons and elders to help him with the administration of the church and meet the needs of the people. He also has a bishop that serves as his supervisor.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented the participants and the context of their ministries in the church and community. The description forms the foundation for understanding the ministry of the pastors and how they learn the roles of ministry for their churches and community.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to understand how African American pastors learn to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. Three research questions were used to guide the study. The questions were:

1. What are the central roles that African American Pastors learn in the Black church?
2. How does context shape the role of the African American pastor?
3. How do African American pastors learn these central roles?

The pastors represent three different traditions of the traditional black churches. The traditional black churches are identified by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA (Inc.), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). The traditions are Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal and represent different governmental structures for supporting the pastor and developing his or her roles in the church.

Introduction to Findings

The study was based on interviews with ten pastors, nine male and one female, to explore and seek an understanding of how African American pastors learn the skills to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. Themes that emerged from the analysis were roles the pastors identified in their jobs, included ministry, administration, and community roles. The

contextual factors that shaped roles included racism, organizational structures, and the influence of church size. Finally, the ways in which pastors learned to perform these roles included formal and organized learning, and learning from the community. These findings have been summarized in Table Two.

Table 2
Findings

What roles do African American Pastors learn?
Ministry Roles
Preaching the gospel
Teach Christian principles
Mentoring for spiritual growth
Administrative Roles
Director of deacons
Director of financial operations
Community Roles
Community leaders
What contexts shape the role of the African American pastor?
Racism
Organizational structures
Church size
How do African American pastors learn their roles?
Learning in action
Formal and organized learning
Learning from the community

Roles African American pastors perform

The informants of the study identified several roles they performed in their capacity as pastor. These included ministry roles, administrative roles and community roles. Ministry roles involved preaching, teaching and mentoring. The administrative roles were directing deacons, directing financial operations of the church. Community roles involved providing leadership in the community in various organizations or for various issues. Several of the roles the pastors indicated arose from the expectations of the congregation. They could also vary from church to

church. Each category of roles included sub-roles identified by the pastors. I created the name for some of the sub-roles from the pastor's descriptions.

Ministry Roles

Ministry roles were important to the ministers because they were the roles the ministers most strongly associated with their job. Preaching and teaching were not thought by the pastors to be learned skills. Rather, they considered them to be powers or gifts bestowed on them. Yet, preaching and teaching were learned from observing other ministers. Preaching is considered a ministry role, but can be blended into a community role when the pastors are asked to address the community concerning pressing issues. Candice believes preaching is cathartic for the congregation. It is a time of communication where the pastor shares the heart of God, which the pastor discerns through prayer and contemplation and then shares with the congregation:

Preaching is a time to give people hope, vision, and a plan for their lives. The African American pastor is expected to bring the word of God to the people in the Church so they can feel His presence. It's a time when people can surrender the pain and disappointment of the week to their Father.

Richard believes that preaching is the centerpiece of the pastor's work. He identified two expectations of the congregation, preaching and visiting the sick:

My folk expect me to preach with power. When I started here, we were meeting one Sunday a month. Now I am preaching three Sundays a month. The people look for a sermon that is from the Bible and gives them something to live by. Next to preaching, my folk want me to visit the sick when they are in the hospital or at home.

John believed preaching was a cathartic experience in the black church. That is why preaching was viewed as the center piece of the pastors work. A pastor could have short comings in the other areas, but not in preaching:

The people in the Black church expect the pastor to preach. He or she needs to make people feel better after the week and lift the burden. But if the pastor is a poor preacher, and the people are not getting that feeling of relief, he won't be there long.

Teaching was an important role for the pastors as well. Teaching was conducted in various locations in the church. Teaching allows the pastor to interact more closely with individuals and gives the congregants an opportunity to ask questions. Teaching also gives the pastor opportunity to train volunteers and deacons in specific task they might perform. Art discussed his role as a teacher to his congregation. He leads many of the teaching forums in his church and is responsible for training and mentoring the other teachers in the congregation:

We are a teaching church. I tell my Sunday school teachers and bible class teachers that we must make the gospel real to folk out there (in the congregation). Teaching is one of the gifts in the bible that is as important in the church as preaching.

Tim identified moral leadership as a teaching role that takes time to develop. He did not specify the particulars, but implied that people look to the pastor as an example of living the Christian life that the pastor attempts to inspire others to live. He had to learn how to express this to his congregation through his actions:

Pastors not only so much preach a message but live that message. People want to see a living message. What happens a lot of times, leaders can preach and teach a message but they can't live it. And I think people look for an example in pastors and look for them to

be a light, when Jesus said, “you are the light of the world.” They are looking for a pastor to be different than everybody else.

Don provided teaching to his church and other churches in his area, by providing weekend seminars at his church. The seminars would be based on a topic of leadership or Christian lifestyle and Don would be the speaker for the weekend. Usually there were costs associated to being involved in the seminar. In a large congregation, Don believed by teaching in this manner he was able to shape the thinking of his congregation:

I have limited access to the people of my church. There are just too many people. But, I want a hand in helping to shape the lives of the people in my church. I try to do a seminar each month on something the people need to live right. I invite other churches to come as well.

Mentoring, teaching through a relationship was a means for the pastors to teach staff and congregation members the value of living a life of piety. The role was a natural one for the pastors and often they had developed the skills to mentor by being mentored by someone else. Mentoring is time intensive and the pastor must make choices on whom they could mentor at any given time.

Candice mentored young women in her church. She believed that having a close relationship with these young girls was the best means of helping them to mature into Christian Women. The girls she chose were from homes where the girls were living with grandmothers or foster parents.

I think it is important to pour my life into young women. Many were from difficult home situations that do not have mothers in the home. I listen to them and help them understand what it is to be a Christian woman.

Mike mentors young men and women in his church who are interested in ministry themselves. He has a reputation for his mentoring in his denomination and often young men are sent to him to learn how to lead a church and conduct their lives in a manner worthy of a minister. Mike believes he must help young people to separate themselves from popular mass preachers and concentrate on the people before them.

I tell young men when they come to me not to watch ministers on the television while they are here. They must get their attention off of themselves and on to the people in front of them. You're not going to help others if you think about yourself.

The other ministers mentored the deacons in the church or other men. The pastors would have a close relationship with one or two members of their church or another young minister. Often the pastors used the mentoring roles to also meet their personal need for friendship.

Administrative Roles

The administrative roles are the ones that encompassed the most time for the pastors. These are the roles that were at times invisible to the congregation but the pastors learned that without them the church would not function. Because they are performing these functions throughout the week and in tandem with staff, congregation members, and local leaders the roles are less visible to most members. Nevertheless the performance of these administrative roles is vital to the work of the church. The people of the congregation do not typically interact with the pastors as they perform these duties. Most often these are roles that grew out of the specific context of the local church and pastors learned to perform these roles by actually doing them. The informants also stated these were the roles they did not learn in formal education but learned through experience or "in action." These were also the roles observed from mentors but the pastors had to reframe problems, questions, or mistakes as they arose in performing these roles.

These roles are identified by the pastors as leadership, but I see them as organizing and managing.

Director of deacons: The theme of directing Deacons was important to the churches, specifically to the larger churches that needed these volunteers to help with the ministry of the church. Deacons are assigned by the church at the suggestion of the pastor and are expected to aid the pastor in serving members of the church. In the Methodist churches the deacons are referred to as stewards.

Candice identified providing leadership to others as her responsibility. She did not define it apart from mentioning different aspects of addressing the needs of the church and organizing others to get things done. She seemed to understand leadership as the act of doing something about issues important to the congregation, advocating for justice, and changing the attitudes and complacency of the community. But in describing the position she talked about directing deacons to work on projects and managing the outcomes. She does not mentor anyone in ministry but is mentored by her co-pastor, who holds her accountable to her roles:

[In] leadership roles, the responsibility is all mine. Each pastor faces unique issues based of his congregation in areas of race, social issues, and economically, particularly most urban churches face societal issues on a deeper level. My church is balanced in that we do face various types of rural and urban issues. The pastor directs the church to carry out the solutions.

Art described one of his roles as the pastor of a large church as “doing what needs to get done” He and the church had recently built a new church building and the congregation left the task to him to complete. Art again referred to this as administration, which he discussed as managing his deacons and organizing in his description:

I was in charge of getting the new building put up. I negotiated with the builders on a price, and raised the funds. I have to provide the leadership to get the money and have it to keep everything going.

Art continues to describe the traditional role of the pastor in administrative terms that identify his perspective of his role as CEO:

So my role as pastor starting off, I did all the teaching, I did all the preaching, I did all the counseling, I did all the attending to the sick, whatever happened to anyone you called the pastor. Middle of the night I am up doing whatever I have to do. I buried all the dead, I did all the baptisms. I did all the administrative work, I did all the business negotiations, any business decisions, raising money for the bills we had to make I did all those decisions.

Don describes the administration role again in making sure the families of the church are visited by the deacons along with meeting the immediate needs of the people in the congregation. He understands relationship as the primary expectation of the congregation in his administrative role as pastor and in a large church using the deacons to meet this expectation is essential. While he directs the deacons, they are not a substitute for the pastor:

While elders and deacons may go and visit those who are sick or home bound or in the hospital no matter how many members you have as an African American pastor you are still expected by the congregation and even from ourselves to make those visitations. I am expected to be there in the journey of people's lives.

The pastors were considered the chief administrator in the church. In order to get all the operations of the church done the pastors relied on deacon and stewards to help. These are appointed or elected leadership from the congregation. The pastors would assign duties to the

deacons or stewards who could encompass, helping in ministry or aiding in administrative duties. The pastors indicated at times there could develop a power struggle between the leadership of the pastor and the deacons and or stewards.

Director of financial operations: managing financial operations was important for the pastors to learn and manage. These are the day to day actions that keep a church going and functioning. The pastors were most often the ones who petitioned for money and were responsible for keeping a cash flow. These are not high profile roles – but important to the churches' existence. Money coming into the church to pay for the pastor and fund the ministry is also a central figure. One pastor, Tim, worked a second job as not to be a burden on the church. Candice made this observation:

The pastor is expected to find the money to do all the things the congregation believes is important, feed himself, and buy the church literature. But, when we ask for the tithes to be brought into the storehouse some think we are greedy. That is the hardest thing to do is raise enough money to get everything done.

For the pastors of the smaller rural churches making the ends meet for the church can be difficult. Fred would take two offerings in his services, one to pay his salary and the bills and one for the benevolence ministries of the church. Fred thought money was a constant concern for the pastor:

Money is always a problem for us. I have never had an education in money so I had to learn myself. I have a treasurer in the church but they don't need to worry about the bringing it in- they just sign the checks.

While the other pastors also mentioned money as an administrative expectation, only Candice directly approached the subject. The pastors each used the process of weekly offerings

to pay the bills of the church and receive their weekly check. This type of fundraising was important to the congregation and put added pressure on the pastors to stress tithing as a means to meet the financial needs of the church.

Community Roles

Community roles are essential to each of the pastor in the study. A community role is the action the pastors perform outside of the church membership in the local community. Each of the pastors seem to have a tacit understanding that the duties of the African American pastor is to be in the community enacting change on behalf of the larger community or serving as a voice for it. At times the pastor had to learn these roles from the parishioners. At times they were initiated by the pastors themselves because of a perceived need or a personal frustration.

Community leadership: The pastor has different organizations in the community that can address the concerns of their congregation and community. Fred is involved with the local NAACP and the Democratic Party. He views the organizations as historically connected to his community and his congregation. His congregation has an expectation for the pastor to be involved. Fred explained that he had come to understand from his congregation many years ago that involvement in the NAACP and Democratic Party were as important to his church as his other roles:

My people expect me to be involved with the organizations to express their concerns and use the groups as leverage to meet our needs. I do not tell my people from the pulpit who to vote for, but I do inform them where the candidates stand with the community on issues like education and jobs.

Harry believes strongly that the pastor is still the leader that stands up for the community when injustice or discrimination occurs. The community action was a part of the church before

he came and they made it clear to him that they expected it to continue. Harry described activism and community outreach in a partnership with the community:

I have to stand up for the welfare of my people. Whether we got to be that voice crying in the wilderness for our people, whether it is a job, whether it is a school problem or whatever the problem is, I think we have to be their voice, and we have to stand up, and when we stand we don't just stand by ourselves, we got numbers behind us.

Some of the duties or responsibilities include working with schools and with teachers and principals. Activities might include recruiting African American teachers to the local High School. In Richard's case he gets support from his church in this role. Richard believes that offering his help in a positive manner can create good will. The church supports this activist role:

I volunteered my time to go out and recruit teachers to come to the high school. The principal seemed interested, but hasn't done much to hire anyone. Recently, we had names for an important position and the principal hired a friend from his old school. The students need to see role models to aspire to become. My church, and others, wants the young black people in the county to see what they can be.

John expressed his perception of race and his role as pastor by addressing community issues, which he understands as more specifically associated with the black community. John was very informed about statistics of the black community and articulated the historical perspective better than his peers:

The needs of my people in some respects are different. Poverty rate is high, illiteracy among our people is high, and you have a higher percentage of African American males in prison than in college. You have higher incidents of single females with families in the African American communities. So in the context of culture, community and the things

that impact the nature of our ministry, the black church, of the peoples are different as compared to Caucasians.

John's experience in working with the community in two other roles, the Urban League and Mental Health has given John a comprehensive view of health needs of the community, racism, and the ministry. When describing his involvement in community leadership he made the following observation of the way he had experienced the approach of white pastors who work with urban ministries in the black community. He related the information in the context of the white seminary approaching urban black ministry as missions. John noted that this is how they approach ministry in foreign countries as well and believes it communicated an attitude of distance in the mind of the larger church.

Based upon my training and the time frame of being trained not according to the twentieth century, is that most of white seminaries prepare persons to do ministry to middle class suburban white people. The only time a white seminary in the last part of the twentieth century focused on the inner city ministry or urban ministry it was seen as missions.

John's perspective is associated with the church in the past living with the realities of the modern church. He used his experience to secure loans to purchase the run down homes in the community. He and the church then put time in repairing the homes and helping low income families secure loans to move into the homes.

Richard described his community as his church and the black community in the county where his church is located. He shared his perspective on the immediate and pressing needs that defined the community:

The people here struggle with reading and education. I have asked the local high school to allow me to help them recruit minority teachers to the school. How will young people know there are professionals that look like them if they don't see them at school? The folk in my church believe this is important.

Candice uses her unique position as a woman in ministry in reaching out to black women and girls in the community. She gives the church the opportunity of work with social services and other community organizations to help unwed mothers and volunteer for big sisters. She believes the church must always reach out to the "least of these, who are in a precarious lifestyle and needs the churches love".

The pastors understood themselves as serving the needs of people who were missing parents, educators, or other significant figures in their lives. This meant the pastors would become social workers, counselors, and mentors for the people they served. The pastors invested much personal capital into this part of their position.

Context and the influence on roles

The pastor's roles were influenced by several contextual factors. The factors are: a) Racism and the lingering conditions of joblessness, lack of education, and fatherless families, have remained in some communities and affect the pastors today. b) The churches' organizational structures played a role in how the pastors learned and the environment in which they learned in action. c) The size of the church also contributed to what the pastor learned and the relationship he or she would have with the congregation.

Racism

Racism has established patterns within the community that the participants recognize and pattern established to give hope to a community that for generations has been denied dignity and

a voice. The lingering influence of racism has established conditions the pastors continue to address.

The analysis of the pastor's statements reveals the role racism has played in the development of the black church and community. The racial prejudice of the past shaped the pastors' roles and the congregations' expectations of their pastors. The impact of race on their roles was difficult for the pastors to articulate at times. The effect of racism is seen in housing issues, unemployment, healthcare and relations with government. At times they discussed their roles by contrasting them with their perception of white churches.

The pastors addressed the remaining influences of slavery, Jim Crow and Civil Rights by describing what they do to address the issues of the community that persist. The issues of illiteracy, poverty, social problems, and the high rate of families abandoned by fathers are linked in the mind of the pastors with the past discrimination. The pastors discussed the past and moving toward the future. What is depicted by some writers as the black pastor's greatest moment of leadership, their ability to help the community to look forward for a time of justice and equality, still remains with them in the context of the daily roles that are assigned to them.

The congregants look to the pastor to give aid to those caught in social issues and help to solve these problems. This approach is traced back to Richard Allen and the first organized churches. The pastors use resources and time to deal with these issues as they arise in their churches and each becomes some program or activity in the pastor's work. Richard and John discussed their efforts of help their congregation with illiteracy. Richard remarked on the inability of people in his congregation to read the bible or Sunday school material. He designated a time when he and some educators in his church worked to bring people together at the church

to learn basic words. He found that many were motivated to learn so they could read the Sunday school material.

The folk in my church need to be able to read the bible. Many of them can't read so we work with helping them learn. They want to learn to read the bible so it helps to get them to come out and learn.

John found that many of the people who came to him for help with resume writing or filing out a job application many could not write complete sentences. John started a ministry to help anyone in the community of fill out applications and write simple resumes. He also worked with local temporary employment agencies to help others in the community as well. He was fortunate to have a university nearby and used students to help as well.

Poverty was an issue that influenced the pastor's energy. Mike discussed his understanding early in ministry the church needed to help cloth and feed people before you can have them listen to you. He developed a clothing and food bank for his church. He organized the volunteers to tend to the bank. These efforts were time consuming for him and stretched his volunteer's time and kept them from other ministries in the church. Also, the local state agencies used the food and clothing banks as well. Mike believes this was a central role for the pastor:

Taking care of people has always been the way I look at ministry. If someone is hungry they can't hear you. You must meet their needs. This is what my church as a boy did and it is what I believe a church should do.

For John poverty involved changing the community. He directed his church to buy the run down housing in the local area and renovate it for family housing. The church committed a large portion of it resources to do so. John was the administrator of the project which took up a great

deal of his time. Physically the results were visible in the community. In this run down community the small houses around the church were painted and landscaped with clean yards.

The social issues of the community were always present for the pastors and most devoted time, effort and resources to confront them. Don discusses the presence of prostitutes, violence, and drugs around the church. He worked on the issue on two fronts. He attempted to become the pastor for those caught up in these vices. He worked closely with the city police to protect his community from them, but then also made himself available to the police and social services in his role as pastor and counselor from people from his community. He indicated that he had mixed results in this endeavor. He also spent his time in with the local hospice that worked with AIDS patients. Everyone in his church was not supportive of these ministries and the time it required.

I have worked with HIV and AIDS patients locally. It is a growing problem here.

Everyone is not happy with my ministry to these folks. They don't mind drunks and prostitutes, but the idea of AIDS is different. I know God loves them as well.

Art had recently built a new church in an impoverished area of his city. Art believed it served as a beacon to those in the community in need. Art believed that alcoholism was the most pressing social problem in the community and he worked to help agencies in the area. In his business minded approach to ministry he also believed that many of the social issues were connected to lack of resources. He actively recruited businesses to come to the community. He promoted these businesses and asked the congregation to support them. Each week in the church bulletin and on the boards the business are there. Art admitted that his approach was different and his people had to adjust to it. He devoted much of his personal capital to make this approach a focus of his church and it was not accepted by many of the older members.

Family issues were the constant with all of the pastors. High numbers of families were not the traditional nuclear family. Grandmothers raised grandchildren from different children; mothers were often left to raise children with little contact with fathers. Candice spoke to this issue by relating the role of the pastor is to fill these roles. Candice spoke from the perspective of the congregation and used a comparison to express what racism has done. Black congregants expect the pastor to fill gaps in the experiences of the congregation that have been denied to them in the past or have been denied to them because of the past. The attitude of the congregation shapes a difference in understanding the pastor's role and his performance for the congregation. She believes the African American pastor is different from a vocational perspective as well:

For black pastors there is an overwhelming pressure for them to be everything that blacks have not had in the past. The African American pastor has to be a mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a provider, a politician, and anything else that blacks feel robbed or deprived of in society. For blacks there is a sense of ownership of their pastor.

They understood that many of their roles were historic ones created from the years of segregation their grandfathers experienced. Racism was addressed often in an indirect way; with the phrases "my people" or "my community," but the pastors did not specifically address the African American community as separate.

Two of the pastors addressed race by using denial, attempting to be positive in their response. The pastors may have wished to speak of the history of race as a means of reconciliation, which is important in Christian thought of reconciliation. Mike stated he discouraged his people or his ministers in the church to talk about race negatively. He saw the answers in the future with working together and not addressing old issues. He understood being involved in the community

often meant playing the peacemaker. Mike had interracial couples in the church, which may have influenced this attitude. He wanted to have an environment in his church that was open to these couples, but he spoke as if his perspective was that race should not be an issue. “Our founding bishop had white folk working with him. God does not see color and we won’t either. We have too many folks separating us in boxes. God said we are one.” Mike seemed to attempt to redirect the issues of race, but the influences of race on the history of the black community are evident in his actions and his attitudes toward ministry to “his community.” He acknowledged the lack of education and opportunity that must be addressed by the church. “People need to be built up as people. They need education and opportunity.”

Some pastors would not acknowledge that they had a real idea what the white churches or pastors were doing in their churches and what their roles were in relationship to the African American pastor. These were the perceptions of the pastors. The typical comment was “I don’t know what they do” or “I don’t associate with white pastors to know what their roles are.” Richard expressed his discomfort with evaluating white pastors and their roles in their churches, “I don’t know what their deacons expect, and I can’t judge what they should do.” Don expressed that he has not interacted with white pastors and could not judge what they do. “...I have not done a lot of fellowshiping with the white churches. I wouldn’t want to mistakenly say that a group is not doing something if I am not aware of it.” The two pastors did not give background for their responses to the question. Even when asked about the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow, they did not use the word “race” as a description. Race obviously did influence what the pastors learned. While identifying the issues they believe are a result of past history and the treatment of the black community, they would not identify race as a cause.

Harry also moved away from expressing differences in the roles of the black and white pastors and issues of race by ignoring the question and discussing the means of entering the ministry. “White pastors seem to go to school to become ministers and black ministers receive a divine call and go to school.” While this statement is certainly a generalization not grounded in fact, he believed it firmly. He seemed to think that education can take something out of the power of a pastor’s message and ministry. He went on to state:

The most segregated school in this country is not the public school; it is Sunday school. I think that it is kind of redundant to me that we took lead in African American churches to push for integration. But yet we aren’t integrated. And I think that to me that’s the last form of slavery for us, and we have to diminish that. We don’t preach race in our church. We just preach Christ and try to embrace each other. I don’t really think we can say we are successful until the church can break down those walls and learn how to worship together at the same time.

The other pastors acknowledged historical problems and the influence of race directly or indirectly by discussing the problems of the community and how they attempt to break these generational cycles. The pastors were able to do so without placing blame on present white churches or the white community. The pastor’s role was to be inspirational and not controversial. They viewed the issues as a reality that influenced their roles in the church and community and that must be addressed in a Christian manner. The church helped the community develop a positive identity. The identity is the catalyst for establishing roles for the pastor and serves as a learning community for the pastor and congregation. Candice expressed her understanding in this manner:

Contextually the church has been a place of worship and meeting God for whites, but the church for blacks has been the meeting ground for spiritual, political, and economic aspects. For blacks the church is the only place that we felt safe during the slavery and civil rights era and to some degree even now. As sad as it is, church is the only place for blacks where they feel free, unashamed, un-embarrassed, and un-prohibited based on the color of their skin. For blacks, church is the only place not about color, because we are all the same in God's eyes. In past times, church was the place where, the white man can't tell us what to do while we are in here. Church gave blacks peace, authority, and a sense of belonging.

Richard described the past discrimination as an experience that impacted the older members of church, but the younger members were not appreciative of the improvement to the community through their struggles. The tension between the younger community and the older community was also a concern for other pastors as well:

My older members remember the struggles of the past. The younger generation doesn't know what it was like. I remember when the school in the county was integrated. The younger generation does not understand what the older folk experienced. The problems with illiteracy and other issues still are a part of the community.

The struggles of the past developed for the pastors a historical hermeneutical lens that developed to put racism in a context. Candice described the relationship between the past discrimination and the role of the pastor in helping the community overcome issues. She also introduced the idea of legacy as what shaped the communities' self image and viewed the roles of the pastor as being created out of the struggle:

Slavery and segregation is the backdrop of what has previously motivated blacks to have a deeper spirituality in God. These two eras of history are the driving force behind what African American pastor's stand on. Not only are they trying to teach spiritually mature to their flock, but educationally, socially, politically, and economically. Black pastors look to former leaders of these eras to get guidance on how to lead a people that don't get equal opportunities in society to understand God's plan for their lives is for them to be all that He has created them to be. Basically, black pastors have to be demolition men first in knocking down all the fallacies in the black mindset that we are not good enough so that they can lead us spiritually. Slavery and segregation keeps us united. We look back to these eras to realize that those blacks only made it over because they stayed united, not united in race, but united for a cause. Many blacks have lost this sense of pride, but our heritage still rings loud in all of our hearts and ears, that you are only as strong as your weakest link. Our heritage speaks of helping one another, and black pastors are trying now to band together to keep the black race from falling apart.

Building community, encouraging the disenfranchised, promoting educational empowerment and meeting immediate physical needs are understood by all of the pastors as their roles in terms of connecting history to the present. Every pastor acknowledged the cohesiveness of the community as being shaped by the past and given to the next generation. Mike discussed the history of discrimination as something that is still with the community and is manifested in the roles he performs each day. He did so by looking forward for opportunity. Mike, consistent with his view of race, sees the legacy as in the past. Mike is optimistic in his description of the legacy. His view is that the minister is there to guide people through the hardship to seek out a better way:

Well, we see many of the problems of today in the church happened because of slavery and Jim Crow. Joblessness, illiteracy and other stuff is with us because people weren't given a chance. Young folk don't understand this. We had to hold the folk together and give them something to help them make it through it. There are still things that are going on, but it is getting better. That is what the preacher does is he helps people get through it. We must point people to a better way.

Racism provided a backdrop to the roles of the pastors in their communities. The many factors that persist from racism such as illiteracy, poverty and social issues along with their effects require the pastor's attention and effort. The pastors developed different means of addressing these issues and developing a method of discussing the issue with their congregations.

Organizational structures

Denominational governance provides for the pastor an organizational context in which to learn. There were two basic types of organizational structures represented, episcopal and congregational. The episcopal structure gives the pastors a support system that allows them to develop their skills in preaching, administration, and outreach to the congregations and community. Roles are performed through cooperation and collaboration in the church using the book of discipline as a guide for both pastor and congregation. The congregational system, on the other hand, allows the pastor to lead without outside influence. The pastor sits at the top of the leadership pyramid, but that position comes with anxiety. The pastor is an *entrepreneur*, who draws upon experience and exposure to other ministries to develop roles outside the traditional roles.

The theme of organizational structure and its influence on roles of ministry, administration and community emerged early as a means for pastors to learn their roles. The way in which the

church is governed has an influence on the manner in which the pastors learn their roles.

Organizational structure develops the environment in which the pastors work and function. Some of the pastors approach their role as the head of a church and the sole voice to say what should be accomplished and which roles should have priority. Some of the pastors work within a hierarchy that supports them as they learn and practice their roles.

The organizational structure of most of the pastors' churches is the episcopal structure, which is supportive and connective for the pastor and gives them a structure for understanding their roles in the church. The power is distributed among several groups and allows the pastor to feel somewhat secure. The episcopal structure has a system of bishops, who are leaders for pastors. They serve as counselors, pastors and mentors to the pastors and at times enforcers of the discipline of the denomination. The pastors are a part of a connective group and do not make the sole decisions of the church. The form of government gives the pastors a sense of security as they learn their roles. The pastors are not on an island by themselves and are assured of a process if the congregation is not pleased with their performance. Committees and stewards are used to help the pastor in this regard. The Pentecostal and Methodist pastors work under this form of governance. The pastors are guided by the book of discipline and an elder bishop, which gives the pastors a means of learning pastoral roles and specific methods of fulfilling them. The churches also use committees in order to effectively give the pastors direction.

The congregational governance places the pastor at the top of the leadership pyramid. The power is concentrated in two offices: the pastor, and the deacons within the congregation. The pastors must learn the congregation's priorities and then learn to accomplish what they prioritize. The congregational governance also gives power to the congregation to decide if the pastor is doing the job and fulfilling their roles. While the pastors in the study enjoy the

autonomy that top leadership affords them, they also suffer a great deal of anxiety. Learning takes place with sense of urgency to establish success in the eyes of the congregation. The congregational pastors, all Baptist, are concerned about failing and upsetting the people in the church. Learning takes place in an environment where creative leadership can be rewarded or frowned upon. The system puts added pressure on the pastors to understand the expectations of the congregation and fulfill them. Power struggles with the deacons are constant problems for the pastors. This creates a style of learning for the pastor in which they can become autocratic or submissive to the direction of others. The stress that comes with these expectations appears to lead the Baptist pastors to mimic other ministers instead of using creative problem solving, which the episcopal pastors seem to employ. This can be illustrated by John developing a community renovation ministry as a pastor because he saw it as having an immediate impact in the community. He was able to develop support and distribute responsibility through the committees of the church. He was able to gain back, personal and financial, through his Bishop and denomination.

Contrast this with Art, who developed his ministries by attending seminars and reading popular Christian literature. When he wanted to build a new church, or develop his business model for the church he had to expend his personal capital with his church. When he needed volunteers to help with the projects he had to develop the committees and define their function. When he needed capital he had to request it, sell the idea to a bank, and take responsibility for securing it.

The pastors in the episcopal group find security in the intentional structure. The pastors used terms such as team-oriented and supportive to describe their churches' approach to ministry and by using the book of discipline the pastors have a common methodology for fulfilling the

traditional roles of the pastor. For instance, when serving communion, Fred uses the book of discipline, reading directly from the book, as the guide to fulfill the role. The book of discipline also protects the pastors when members of the congregation attempt to usurp the leadership of the pastor. The bishop serves as the pastor's supervisor and mediator. The bishops appoint the pastors to the churches with the churches' consent. Fred recognized the need for a system to ensure a working relationship between the pastor and church. "The system makes sure the church and the pastor are working together. It helps prevent church fights and splits."

Joe referred to the Episcopal system as a "check and balance of the church to ensure harmony."

Joe also understands the role of the pastor as the "middle management" of the church in the system. Joe described the system as it is used by his denomination:

First of all we have a presiding bishop like you would in any Methodist church, and then the next level down of the hierarchy is middle management they call it. Presiding elders or in the United Methodist Church, it is district superintendents. And each presiding elder serves under the bishop and each presiding elder has an area of churches. Each district superintendent has an area of churches that are under his supervision.

Joe continued to describe the system and its relationship to the pastor and his congregation's stewards' leadership. The stewards support the pastor in developing the roles of ministry in the church:

For the most part it is a check and balance system. You can not be a steward in a conference year because pastors in a Methodist church are appointed one year at a time. If you stayed there twenty years you got twenty appointments.

This type of governance gives pastors a sense of a team approach that allows the bishop, pastor, and stewards working together in relationship to establish the roles of the pastor and give

the pastor support in adjusting those roles to the specific needs of the community. The concept of a team frees the pastors from feeling they shoulder all the responsibility.

The Pentecostal ministers also work under an episcopal system with a book of discipline and bishops, but the system is not as formal as that of the Methodist Church, and the pastors have more autonomy in developing their roles. Mike serves as a pastor and a bishop to other ministers. He gave a unique perspective as a pastor and a supervisor of pastors. The ministers in the Pentecostal tradition feel a sense of security in their system of organization as well. Don discussed the advantages of the team approach:

If I am away preaching or teaching somewhere, I can call on any one of them and they could do it. Any of my elders could do that. They also assist with visitation, and then they are here when I am here, they are here helping to carry the load in the worship services.

Tim finds the system to be an effective way of communicating and learning the role of the pastor and methods of leadership in the church. Mike, who serves as Tim's bishop and as a pastor, believes the system of governance of the churches gives the pastor the opportunity to be the leader of the congregation without being alone:

The bishop is the pastor's pastor. He listens to their problems and helps them with issues in the church. The articles of faith can help the pastor with what to do in services. The bishop and the fellowship he has with pastors helps them understand how he should conduct himself as a man of God.

Fred continued with the description of his role as the bishop of pastors and how he helps them understand their roles as ministers. Many of the young pastors in the area are under his mentorship:

I want the young ministers to understand that ministry is not about them. It is about the people in the congregation and what they need. The first things I tell a pastor is don't watch ministers on television. The camera is always on the minister and you think it is all about you. Ministry is about the people in front of you.

The episcopal form of governance makes the pastors a part of a community. While they still deal with the personal issues and power conflicts of the congregational churches, they do not feel alone. The pastors know they have someone to appeal to, their book of discipline is detailed in what is expected, and they receive feedback from the congregation and the bishop.

The second type of organizational structure for the churches is a congregational system where the congregation elects a pastor and does not answer to a bishop or leader. The congregational churches (Baptist) are associated with the denomination that bind the church or pastor to a national organization more loosely than is the case in episcopal-like forms of church governance. The pastor becomes the central leader and does not have a supervisor. The Baptist pastors of the study related the independence they have in establishing their roles. While the pastors enjoy the latitude they experience in the system, they also understand the fragile nature of the system. Richard said that his church did not have a way of evaluating if he was doing a good job. "If I made the wrong family in the church mad, whether I was doing a good job or not, I could be out of a job." The Baptist pastors include a female pastor, Candice, who serves in a rural setting. She brings a different perspective to the form of governance and benefits from the congregational setting. Candice recognizes that she was given an opportunity to pastor because the local church ordains the pastors, and she had the advantage of working with a church that followed the pastor's leadership and would ordain women.

The congregational governance brings a different perspective to the pastor's roles. The Baptist pastors accept the mantle of strong leadership and acknowledge the expectation of the congregation that they accomplish the roles of the office. While each of the churches has deacons as a part of the church structure, the pastors are comfortable with deacons as "helpers" but not leaders. Art explained this view of the leadership of the pastor. As the leader of the church, Art believes the pastor identifies the roles that are needed in the church. Art described the leadership structure in this manner:

The typical African American church deacons have become more like, and this has become a big thing, deacons have become more like a board of directors. Our church is all pastor-led, the pastor leads. Deacons are assistants to carry out ministry as given directly by God. We don't vote in this church, we don't allow it. Congregations don't decide the direction of the church. God decides the direction of the church, and He speaks to the pastor, the pastor gives vision which is a word from God, and then the congregation asks how can we help you carry out what God is telling you?

Harry also gave insight into the environment of the congregational system and how it affects the performance of the pastor when he believes he is the sole leader of the church. Harry understands the pastor to be the leader of the church, and the deacons are there to help in fulfilling some of the ministry roles under the leadership of the pastor. "I'm the shepherd so to speak of the church; the pastor is at the head. We fall like the pastor, deacons, trustees, and so on."

Candice also believes the pastor is the one responsible for leadership to the people in the church. She understands the people have an expectation of the pastor to be the one to fulfill the ministry roles:

In my church, yes, the role is clear to me; the structure is not like most other churches. I am expected to always be there - I am the pastor. Most people don't want you to send another minister or deacon, they want their pastor. I think the role of pastor is sometimes unclear for the flock of what I can actually do and what is within my capability.

While the congregational pastors express their desire to be the leader, at times this leaves them in a precarious position. They are the target when congregations are unhappy or desire a new direction. They are also the ones who put themselves as targets. These pastors have suffered from listening to the people and their concerns and shaped their roles accordingly. Roles and expectations are driven internally. Art expressed loneliness as a pastor, a job where your friends are also your rivals and trust is difficult. The words of Richard permeated all four of the pastors' views when he stated, "... make the wrong person mad and you're out of a job." This environment gives pastors who maneuver through the personal issues in the church an opportunity to either learn a means of success or be constantly looking over their shoulder for the next problem. The governance of the church was important to the manner in which the pastors went about performing their roles. The Episcopal governance gave the pastors a sense of security along with a community to distribute responsibility. These pastors seemed better supported and more attuned to the specific needs of their communities. The congregational governance gave pastors more freedom in decision making, but they also carried the responsibility as well. The pastors seemed tentative and copied the action of others churches that seemed to be successful without being creative with their community needs.

Influence of church size

The church size shaped some of the ministry and administrated roles of the pastors. The number of people involved with a church affects the congregation members' expectation of

personal attention. The smaller the church the more interaction the pastor has with the parishioners. The rural pastors know the individuals of the church and what is expected of them because their churches are smaller and more intimate. They are often personally involved in actions of the church while the pastors of the larger churches do not interact much with individuals of the church. The pastors rely on preaching and church functions to relate to the parishioners. As the church moves closer to the urban area, the pastors move back from the congregation and have staff and volunteers as buffers between them and the parishioners. Church size affected the pastors' learning in terms of the amount of close interaction with parishioners expected of them.

The activities of the churches are very similar in regard to the actual functions regardless of size. All of the churches have weekly services, activities, and community outreach. The pastors that are further from the parishioners, that is the larger churches, are able to develop the roles from their own perspective and fulfill them through administration instead of personal intervention. An example would be organizing deacons to visit sick members of the church. Also, volunteers were used to administer many of the ministries of the church and reported to the pastor the results. The closer the pastors are to the parishioners the more personally the pastor feels the expectations of the church, which creates a difficult environment for learning.

The participants in this study worked in churches located in three types of settings: urban, suburban, and rural. While I found slight differences in the roles of the pastors due to their context, I found many similarities. What was significant was the means by which the pastors fulfilled common roles. The differences were often a result of a unique situation in the community in which the church was located and not necessarily the rural/urban setting. The roles, the struggles the pastors identified, and preaching and worship styles were all similar. The

differences in the size of the churches affected the manner in which the pastors approached their position. While the roles were basically the same, each setting defined the particulars of what the congregation or community believed to be important. This demonstrates the uniqueness of each work environment (church and community) and the importance of learning the roles and expectations in individual work situations.

The rural pastors, Mike, Richard, Candice and Fred, are in the smaller churches and live a distance from the churches they serve, which are in the southeast of the United States. All of the churches are in an area once dominated by textile mills and agriculture. Now pulpwood, kaolin, and granite are the industries that drive the economy. The area has a history of racial and economic inequality. Civil war monuments are scattered throughout the area. The pastors work from their homes when not involved in direct contact with people of the church on a daily basis. While each of the pastors identify themselves as full-time pastors in the church, they also work full time at other jobs or worked full time before retiring. For the rural ministers, the churches are smaller, ranging from 40 to 400, and the pastors know every family and are expected to make a visit to their homes. The pastors also make visits to hospitals and nursing homes each week or so. While the churches are small, the expectations from the congregation are high. The effect the rural setting has on the pastors has to do with the means of fulfilling expectations. The pastor is expected to be available for every parishioner and their needs. The job in the smaller churches is very relation-intense. None of the pastors has a staff to call on with visits to the hospital, homes, jail, court, or other venues where the pastor is expected to be. The pastors need to rely on volunteers to accomplish many of the ministries of the church. These pastors need to be strong motivators and organizers. The pastors learned these skills in the stress of performing the many other functions that were expected of them.

Fred is less involved with community organizations and has developed initiatives within the church itself. He sees his role as activist as originating for his church, not other organizations. His church organized a food bank and clothing center within the church. The center is run as efficiently and professionally as a Goodwill or Salvation Army store. The church has a committee of professional people from the community that help people, in the church or community, with resume skills and interviewing skills. The committee also helps individuals find jobs and write recommendation letters. The church also has a fund to help individuals pay their rent or the first payment on a house. The church has a strong scholarship fund and every student, whether attending Morehouse or the local school of cosmetology, is eligible. Fred stated that because his church is in a small town, “we must make opportunity for people as a part of the ministry.” The role of community advocate is expected by the churches, at least in the perception of the rural pastors. Fred describes his job this way:

People know where I live and my phone number is in the book. When people have a need they call me, no matter what time. People expect their pastor to be there when they need him. Everyone that walks out of my church on Sunday expects me to know their name and the name of their children.

Candice also recognizes that the expectations of her church members are immediate and her response is expected to come quickly. She knows the expectation of immediate access and relationships is not up for negotiation with her congregation.

The folk at my church expect me to be available to them. When an event happens in their life, such as a baby or a death and marriage, I am expected to be there. They see me as always accessible, which makes it very difficult to have a life outside of the church.

Three of the pastors, Tim, Harry, and John, serve suburban churches in cities or communities with populations of around 100,000 in the southeastern United States. All three pastors serve in areas with a major university which dominates employment and demographics. Two of the pastors are ministers in cities that were prominent in the Civil War and have a strong history connecting them to the Jim Crow era. Their history includes instrumental figures in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1900s. Two of the pastors live in the city where they pastor, and one lives 20 miles from the church. Two of the pastors are full-time pastors and one works a full-time job separate from his church responsibilities. One of the churches sits on a main street of the city. The neighborhood is middle class with several businesses around the church. Two of the churches sit in old mill house neighborhoods. The Methodist church is in a bleak neighborhood, but houses around the church were bought by the congregation and renovated to be sold to families to help change the area. The suburban pastors discussed the issues of the community more and are more active in community action groups; their churches are larger than rural churches and can afford some paid staff.

The suburban pastors view the church in a broader context of the community around the church, extending beyond the members who attend church, than the rural pastors, whose roles of helper and advocate are more local to the church. These pastors have at least a secretary to rely on with two of the churches also employing two staff people. The relationship between the pastor and the congregation in these churches is not as intimate. The pastors often have a committee or staff person that serves as a buffer to some parishioners. The pastor's direct contact is restricted to visitation to hospital patients and shut-ins and volunteer leadership. Two of the suburban ministers purposely expanded their ministry to include the whole African American community that surrounds the church. The mid-size church ministers step away from the more personal

contact, that is, immediate contact and access to all members of the church, in comparison with the rural pastors, but not completely. The congregations are small enough for the pastor to have relationships with the members when possible or there is interaction at services, funerals and hospitals, but large enough to give the sense that the pastor leads from a distance. The pastor spends more time on administration and is less personal. All three of the churches have as a role for the pastor the administration of traditional outreaches such as food banks, clothing and scholarship funds, along with the roles of advocate and preacher. The suburban pastors also interact with political groups and government more than the rural pastors. John described his church's view of ministry as being directed toward the larger community in which the church resides. Also he described the ministry in his church as moving outside the walls of the building into the community at large:

My church reaches out to our community. We are trying to find the needs in the area and work toward solving problems. We work with other churches to help people. That is what the church does is help people.

Harry also believes his church must reach outside the church walls. The suburban pastors, because of the size of their congregations, are not as actively involved with outside agencies or organizations. "I am working all the time to be the shepherd I need to be. I need a staff to meet all the needs." Most of the roles are the same; the size of the churches does influence the priorities of the suburban pastor more than rural pastors. Also, the suburban pastors seem to be more willing to reach out and work with other churches in the area. The small church pastors are concerned other pastors will "steal" from their congregation.

Tim understands the need to have some help in order to get things done in the church. While his whole family is involved in the ministry, he also uses volunteers to help accomplish some tasks:

I can't do everything and work a full-time job too. I have family jobs to do as well. I use others in the church to help with some things. Some folk in the church don't like it, but I am just one man.

I interviewed three urban pastors, Joe, Art, and Don, in two major cities in the south with congregations of over 2000 members. All three of the churches are located in the inner city and the communities were described by the pastors as run down, poor and bleak. The large churches are more technologically oriented and likely to be on television or radio, using marketing strategies and the internet. The Baptist church stands out in the surrounding landscape. The buildings around the church are old and industrial, while the church is new and modern. The churches have two services in the morning in order to accommodate all of the people who attend.

The pastors are very removed from the individuals in the congregation. These churches enjoy staff members, administrative staff, and volunteers. The pastors of these churches spend more time in the administrative roles of the church and do not preach as much as the suburban and rural pastors. The large church pastors also have more resources to use than the other pastors, both money and professionals in the congregation. All of these pastors worked themselves up through the ranks to become pastors. Starting in small churches and often passing through suburban churches along the way they believed they were destined to be in a larger urban church. Each of the pastors also sees the church as his last stop in ministry, except the Methodist pastor who is up for renewal each year. These pastors also had to learn deal with city

councils and other entities. They believe that they were not taught in their formal education the skills to lead a large church; they learned it by doing it.

While Art sees economic empowerment as a tool to be used in his ministry to help his members overcome their hardships, Joe sees it as a movement away from the traditional work of the church.

Basically, our approach to ministry has to be more from a holistic standpoint. We have to take other roles than just spiritual role. We take roles in every aspect of our peoples' lives. We must show concern in not only for spiritual development; we show concern about the economic development, social issues. We do a lot of counseling and training, addressing issues and different other things that makes us different from the white church.

Art is even more disengaged from the individuals in his church than any of the other pastors. His church approaches its work in the community in a business-like manner. Art works through his deacons as if they were directors of a business. The church uses technology, such as television and websites, as an outreach to people outside of the community. Art has attracted professionals to the church, which has given the church resources to help the people of the community.

The urban Methodist church is in the middle of an old mill village that time has forgotten. The original church, a historical building established by Henry McNeil Turner, sits downtown, condemned. The members drive to the present church from downtown. The church is presently reaching out to the community to attract new and younger members. Joe is more personally engaged with the congregation, similar to the rural churches, but not as involved with individuals

because of the size. Because of the church's situation, Joe is frustrated with what he can and cannot do as a pastor.

Basically, folks don't know the rich legacy and history... it is about economics. In many of the black churches today the pastors are presenting the American dream of capitalism. So instead of us really focusing on the heart and dealing with some of the inherent leadership situations many of us (black pastors) are adopting and adapting to economic leadership, economic empowerment and so it is about mega churches and mega ministries.

Art and Joe have completely opposite understandings of the role of the pastor in a large urban church, although they serve similar size communities and have similar educational backgrounds and similar congregations.

The urban Pentecostal minister brings to his role ideas similar to those expressed by both the Baptist and Methodist ministers. The church is in a run-down area in a major southern city. The church runs two services each Sunday morning and each of the services are full. Some of the parishioners drive in from middle class communities around the city to the church, but most are from the community. Don has a business chief executive officer approach to the office of pastor, but is more available to his church members than Art. Don is a teaching pastor who conducts weekend seminars for his congregation. He conducts workshops as a speaker at other churches as well. Don places emphasis on the community and being a good citizen. His role as the pastor of the church begins with providing information and opportunity to the people of the community. He stated,

As an African American church, even a Pentecostal church, we are involved in the community. We have political forums here for politicians regardless which side of the

fence they are from. In our church I provide opportunity and develop ways of meeting the needs of individuals.

The size of the church contributed a factor that influences the role of these pastors. The larger the church the more the pastor moved away from intimate personal ministry with individuals to a distance one. The pastors had to learn to delegate more of the personal roles and depend on deacons to help satisfy the ministry needs of the congregation. Also, the larger the church the more the likely the pastor would have staff to coordinate and direct. This caused some to need to learn a new role in ministry.

How Pastors learn

Formal professional training to prepare pastors for their church assignments was important for most of the participants in this study. However, this professional preparation was important primarily to launch them in their careers. All the participants described various ways how they learned their jobs while on the job. Learning in action, learning from the community, and formal learning were the means which these pastors acquired or refined the skills necessary to effectively perform their roles. Not all of the pastors had the opportunity of the college or seminary education, but they are active in the denominational continuing education calls or are attending seminars. Learning in action contributed to the pastors' learning and the pastors at times would describe this as leadership for reasons not clearly apparent. The pastor describes learning by doing which is identified as learning by action. Each one had to seek to understand their job, frame the expectations and learn to do what was expected. Learning from the community also contributed heavily to the pastor and his or her understanding of the position. Formal education and organized education was another means of learning for the pastors. Not all

of the pastors had the opportunity of a college or seminary education, but they are active in their denominational continuing education calls or are attending seminars.

The community served as a learning source for the pastors as well. Previous pastors, mentors and their community church helped them form a working idea of what a pastor does and what their roles are. For many of the pastors, they found the community as their most important learning resource. My analysis indicates that community learning, the loose and unstructured learning that is acquired through relationship with another person, is the most valued of the three. It is in relational learning that pastors learn to negotiate power struggles, understand the behavior of people, and learn to persevere through personal struggles.

Learning in action

The pastors were placed in leadership positions and expected to learn through observation and experience the roles of the office. As the leaders of the congregation, the pastors were expected to conduct services, serve as the chief administrator, and lead activities. The pastors were learning in the action of doing the job. They developed the ministry role and administration roles, by doing the job.

The pastors learned by leading and observing from other leaders. They learned in practice as they did the job and responded to the needs of the congregation and community. While they are strong transformational and moral leaders, they do not seem to grasp leadership as changing structures. This would be too difficult in their situations. As leaders the pastors, particularly the congregational pastors, understand that their position is somewhat tenuous, and they cannot challenge the desires of their church; they need to negotiate. I believe preaching is held so highly because of this fear. They learn through action to build consensus through their preaching. Harry described this well:

I watched my father and other ministers and what they did. I learned how to preach, and how to speak to people. I understood from watching other preachers what to do in certain situations. I think that is where we learn the important stuff.

All of the pastors had similar comments. Observation and copying the actions of other ministers was a strategy employed for preaching, teaching and developing interpersonal skills.

Fred expressed that he had learned most of his roles from experience. Fred began ministry early and learned through doing the job. He learned that different environments and people presented different challenges and used a rough reflective action to help him “connect the dots”:

I have been in ministry for a long time. I have learned a lot in the years. You don't learn everything in a book, and people in the church don't always tell you what to do. I learned from other ministers I have known and watched. I have learned by doing something and when it does not happen, I do something different. Every church is different and you learn something, but you may need to change it to make it work here.

Harry described much of his learning coming from a close relationship he had with his father and brother, who taught him by giving him experience and a mentoring relationship. Harry related that he did not have a desire to be a minister, having grown up in a pastor's family:

I never thought I would be a preacher, never in my life thought I would be a preacher, and I don't think nobody else thought I would be one. My father was a minister, and my brother was a minister, and I came up in the church. I saw my daddy, how sensitive and dedicated he was, and I figured people just take it so lightly. My call, I couldn't stay out of church, I couldn't, but I had been wrestling with it but when Dr. King got killed in 1968. That's when it really just tipped the scale.

John described experience as the most important teacher for him in ministry. He talked about learning from experience as situated learning. John gave an example of an incident in his church and made an important observation, that “you can read it in a book, but until you experience something . . . you [can’t] understand what your role is.” John described how he learned problem-solving skills through experience with people in his congregation:

My learning is taking place like my grandmother said experience is the best teacher. So what I have experienced as a pastor, challenges in congregations, my own individual experience when I went back to do my CP at the Hospital, when you meet people at their moment of need, family - I had a church member who was right here where I’m ministering. I was in bed on Thanksgiving morning and I received a call from a family to come immediately to the hospital, the house blew up. She got up to cook that morning and reached to get the Crisco can and pour it in the skillet, it was gasoline. That’s a challenge, you can read that in a book but until you experience something like that you don’t understand what your role is.

The pastors are leaders of an organization of people who must be motivated and directed. They are constantly developing through trial and error the roles that work for them. So much of their work involves interpersonal and communication roles. The pastors, though they struggled to identify this concept and consistently identified these skills as leadership, learned the most important skill, interpersonal relationships. They learned to motivate people, inspire them and help them commit themselves to a cause. They learned to deal with personality issues in the church, negotiate power issues, and to give dignity and worth to individuals.

The Methodist ministers who use the book of discipline follow an ecumenical worship service. The pastors see themselves as leaders of a community larger than the immediate church.

They extend the community of faith to individuals outside the physical walls of the church. Again, the power of the historical influence, not always acknowledged by the pastors, strongly sets the roles in motion. In this analysis, the roles are divided into two categories: ministry and administrative.

The ministry and administrative roles are those found in all Protestant churches, white or black. Preaching and administration, that is, visitation and duties pertaining to the daily running of the church, are understood roles for all pastors. Each of the pastors described the traditional roles. At times the pastors identified the traditional roles as the science of ministry, which they also identified as a skill learned from their formal education. But with preaching, they also identified some divine inspiration, which makes it special.

Candice identified experience as her best instructor. As the youngest and most inexperienced of the pastors, her reservoir of experience is just developing. It was outside of her community that she experienced a challenge to her world view that the older ministers actually experience in their own communities. She did not give detail on how it shaped her understanding, but implied she had had personal faith development – that is, a personal direct experience that changed her view of the world. The experience of seeing poverty in South America gave her a different view of human experience and affected her view of ministry in her church. The firsthand experience was a transformational learning experience that made her empathic as a pastor. She commented, “. . . the best teacher and preparer is experience, both good and bad. The next best thing is keeping a teachable spirit to learn from other pastors.”

Mike stated that he had learned what he knew of the pastor’s role from observing and gaining experience, particularly through learning on the job and finding out what was successful. Mike grew up in the church and understood the role of the pastor before he entered the ministry:

I learned by doing things. I learned much of what I know about being a minister to people from doing it. I just learned as I did it. You can watch other people and folk on TV and talk to other people, but you see what needs to be done by getting in there and doing it. I tell young people to get the education but also to get in there and do it. I watch my pastor when I was growing up. He was a good man. He didn't have all these educational opportunities; he relied on the Holy Spirit.

Tim gave a long, detailed description of his own experiential learning and discussed how other pastors learn from experience. Observing others and developing experience has been the primary teacher for Tim. He also described the use of observation and group interaction as a means of learning:

What prepared me I guess is just coming up in church, being taught well by men of God as well as women of God. Taking heed to what was taught to me. I had always been a person that had valued what people taught me, whether it is a young person or older person, I valued that. Taking it in and then have a pastor help me. I believe you are going to learn certain things by experience. And you are going to learn by being in school...even from television, seeing people teaching and preaching on television.

Formal and organized learning

The pastors also were involved in continuing education, seminars, and drive-in conferences. Formal education was important to legitimize the pastors for their denominational leaders and congregations as well as themselves. But formal education was incomplete in the view of the pastors. The pastors referred to the science of learning the ministry as opposed to the art of learning the ministry. Formal education was expected from the denominations of the pastors.

The pastors had a variety of learning experiences in formal settings that were organized and planned. They clearly appreciated them, but believed they were incomplete in preparing them for ministry. While they are divided in the chart, informal and learning from the community are combined here because they are both forms of informal and unstructured learning. I have split them to identify formal as structured learning conducted in formal settings and informal as learning without structure but with the purpose of understanding a subject or information to be used in their roles as ministers.

The pastors have different levels of educational experience. Five of the pastors have seminary education and one has a college degree. The pastors with seminary degrees all attended a traditional black seminary except Candice, who attended a predominantly white seminary. The remaining pastors had continuing education classes at the same traditional black seminary.

Learning is separated in two categories. Formal learning is the pastor's education in a structured classroom setting. Seminary and continuing education are formal learning opportunities.

Informal education is learning through unstructured means. Learning from role models, learning in structured and unstructured groups, and learning through experience are means of informal learning.

Formal learning experiences were valuable to the pastors, particularly to those who attended seminary. The pastors referred to their formal education as learning the "science" of ministry roles. Candice, who attended a traditionally white seminary, expressed that her formal education was an important experience for her. "Going to a Christian college and seminary has prepared me greatly. Other seminars, conferences and leadership platforms have also proven to be beneficial." John stated that his seminary experience and master's degree in counseling were very important in learning the "science" of ministry:

I appreciate the theological preparation, I appreciate seminary, I do. I had to read a lot of literature, I had to write a lot, and I feel I am a better writer because I went to seminary because of all those papers. I learned the science of ministry. And I think I was rewarded for it. I think I have been blessed in ministry because I told the Lord I wanted to give Him my best, and so I tried to give my best in preparation.

Don expressed gratitude for his seminary education and again identified it as providing tools of ministry. But he also expressed frustration that the education did not address the more practical aspects of the day to day roles he performed in the church:

I went to seminary; the three-year program took me four years. I have a Masters of Divinity, concentration in the Old Testament Studies, and to be honest with you, it was where I could get the most hours. In terms of my education preparing me, I think the education did a great job. In terms of education, the seminary certainly helped me with tools for dealing with the text. I needed that desperately. I think the seminary can do a better job at preparing us for the administrative side such as counseling. It is all of the time, but in addition to that I don't want to see Bible to get dropped, but we certainly do need more help with dealing with the administrative side. So that if we do have to appear before a zoning board situation, you have some kind of awareness of what that may be like, when you need to call an attorney in. We just need better instructions on administrative issues.

Joe expressed that his formal learning was important, yet he described it as theoretical or science and gave greater weight to his practical education (experience). Joe made statements concerning his seminary education, referencing a book that implies that the curriculum was not geared to practical ministry:

I have a Master of Divinity, spiritual guidance with the concentration area of marriage and the family relationship. And so much of what I learned from the start was more practical than theoretical, so I feel like I will always have the advantage in the practical. There was a book out about ten years ago, about fifteen twenty years ago, called “What did they teach you in seminary”? And so I learned a lot of things before I got to seminary. Some believe that practical will always be beneficial. And that was my way of learning, and at the same time I did not need to become a professional preacher.

Art expressed frustration with his formal, professional learning. He understood education as playing a part in his understanding of his role as a pastor, but in practice thought it did not work:

And I went on and got a bachelor’s degree from Washburn College in Atlanta. I did a year and a half of seminary study also in Atlanta. I did clinical pastoral education training in University Hospital here in the city and was pastoral care of ministries. I attended a number of seminars, workshop conferences on family and family development. I have an honorary doctor degree from Christian Bible College, but actually it’s like an earned doctor’s degree from Christian Bible College. This was just for me. I felt like my training was good on one hand but bad in another hand.

Several of the pastors’ formal education was acquired through continuing education classes at theological seminaries and independent workshops. Tim attended a technical school and high school but did not mention any other learning opportunities. Richard used workshops and non-accredited classes from a popular pastor for training in his job. Richard understood his formal learning as adding to his understanding of the Bible and his ability to communicate it to his people:

I don't have Bible education so I go to different seminars down in Atlanta. I try to learn as much about the Bible as I can. I used to go down to Earl Paulk Institute, but after he got in trouble, I did not go down there anymore. I take what I learn and apply it to what I preach. I don't want to learn complicated things, I want to take what I learn and make it real. I do much of my study on my own.

Fred has also attended continuing education classes offered by his denomination at the seminary in Atlanta. He stated that he also does a lot of self-education and has a large library at the church that he uses to study the Bible and prepare his sermons:

My denomination has continuing education in Atlanta I attend. I learn Bible, preparing sermons and administration in the classes. I have learned a lot through these classes. I also read a lot.

Mike also used the continuing education offered by his denomination to learn the Bible and administration. Mike expressed how important he thought formal education was for ministers and others in the African American community:

I worked, so I did not get education at a school. I attend the seminars that the denomination has for ministers. They cover all subjects that pastors should know. I tell all the young preachers to get all the school you can. This world isn't setting still. I sent my children to get an education. That is what makes the difference to a person's life.

Whether you are a preacher or you want to be a teacher - get all you can.

Formal education helped to validate the pastors and gave them a sense of accomplishment. It gave the pastor some knowledge of ministry roles such as preaching and teaching, but fell short in mentoring and the administrative roles of directing deacons and

directing financial affairs. But all of the pastors viewed formal education experiences as secondary to the lessons learned in the doing of the profession.

Learning from the community

The community had a powerful influence on the pastors' learning. They described their experiences of growing up in a community of faith. How they learned the expectations of people for the pastor. The community taught them, mostly in storytelling, the struggles of what it is to be a part of the community. They learned from the community the power of self respect. Family members in the ministry, role models and other ministers helped the pastors understand their role and develop a strategy for fulfilling the expectations. They also offered empathy and shared experiences, which is important to the pastors' developing a healthy self-consciousness. From these community members, the pastors learned how a person of faith conducts himself or herself. They also learned the important place the pastor has in the larger community. This collective community experience revealed to the pastor the expectations and needs of the community and gave the pastors an understanding of the roles the pastor must assume to reach the expectations of the congregations. The theme of learning from the community encompasses both the larger community and the immediate community as well, but both originate from the same theme.

At times the pastors learned from others minister's experiences. Most often these were not planned or structured learning events. They were lunches, gatherings or meetings at events. The pastor's role is a highly interpersonal one with little formal affirmation or evaluation. The pastors were not given feedback on their job performance in a structured manner and were left to their own judgment. The pastors of the study often felt alone in the struggle to please the congregation and meet their needs. The pastors found the experience of talking with fellow ministers to be an important aspect of their learning. The pastors were inspired and enriched

though these experiences. Unfortunately, the pastors also felt competition from other ministers as well, so this experience was not enjoyed often enough.

The community of the pastors could be interpreted in several ways. The community can be understood in a relational manner, reflecting the cultural aspects of the African American community that bind it as a unit. A shared history, a common religious point of view, and individuals of a common faith are all mentioned as aspects of the community. Often it was difficult to draw out a clear definition of the community because the pastors shifted their discussion from the macro to the micro community. The macro community extends to all of the black community in the South while the micro community is the immediate group of black people they had a relationship with, such as family, friends and fellow church members. The definition most often rested on the description of the immediate community of their experience. The needs of the community, however it is defined, dictate the roles of the church and its pastor or pastors. While the pastors could discuss what pastors do in a theoretical sense, they knew that outside of ministry functions such as preaching, teaching and visitation, the rest of their time is spent in meeting the needs of the immediate community. They learned from both, directly from one and indirectly from the other. They described having learned what a pastor was and what he did because it was discussed around them. They also identified learning from observing pastors and being active in the church throughout their lives.

Learning from the community they serve

Each of the pastors learned from their congregations what the priorities were for the church and thus the pastor. This is the unwritten job description that pastors need to learn in order to be successful in fulfilling their roles. The pastors have tacit knowledge of the important roles they have to play. Many acquired it growing up in the African American church. While the

pastors spoke of leadership and vision, it was obvious that the church community significantly influenced the pastors' roles by defining what was important to them.

Fred described the community in the context of his church and the social issues that he confronted as a pastor. Fred acknowledged that the issues of the community influence what he does daily as a pastor:

The people are seeking help with their daily lives. They want the children to have a good education. They want a good job. They want to be treated fairly. When they are in the hospital or having trouble in the family they want the pastor there. I am here to help the folk with their needs whatever the need may be.

Joe works in a community that moved from the inner city to a rundown part of the mill village of the city. His community went from a predominantly black community to a mixed community of blacks, Hispanics and whites. From Joe's words, one can see how the community shapes the response of the pastor to it and therefore shapes his role in the community. Joe's roles changed and the expectations of the community changed as well:

My predecessor moved and bought this church in a predominately blue collar white neighborhood. So you have a displaced congregation that is over here on this side of town, and this side of town is more transient now.

Richard stated that he had learned his roles mostly from his experience as a pastor. He did not mention a specific mentor, but grew up in the church and used his experience of watching his pastors and modeling after them. This is a different form of experiential learning from Candice's. Richard described his on-the-job learning:

I grew up in the church. I knew I would end up as a pastor, but I avoided it as long as I could. I knew what was expected of a pastor and his family. I have learned a lot since I

took this church. No one gave me a blueprint or a job description. You learn what people want and what they need by being with them and listening to them. Sometimes you learn from your mistakes.

The community provided a platform for the pastors to learn from develop their ideas for solving problems. This learning in a larger context of the community provided some continuity as well.

Learning from a community of pastors

The entire group of pastors in the study expressed a keen appreciation for the shared experiences with others in the community of faith with other pastors as the most relevant form of learning the roles in the ministry. Through experience, the pastors were able to learn what was important in the role of the pastor and what the expectations of the congregation were. The daily task of working to solve specific problems played an important role in their learning. The pastors were presented with the tasks that shaped their roles, and they had to think about how to overcome them. Many of these specific tasks were related to working through people issues. The pastors also discussed the process of learning from others. For some it was a mentoring process while others described it as watching and learning. Tradition was also a mode of learning. Growing up in the home of a pastor gave many experiences that helped them to sort out the expectations of congregations in general and a tacit knowledge to sort out expectations specific to their present church and community. The pastors described learning from a group of professional fellow pastors, in informal settings or structured settings. These were often ministerial group set up by their denomination or were independent groups the pastor chose to join. These groups served as communities of practice, with some of the pastors themselves as mentors.

Art gave first place to experience and learning by doing ministry in his learning process.

He also learned from observing other ministers and from a group of older ministers:

Wow, I guess when I first came into the ministry I really felt it was about me. Young educated preacher coming into a rural, illiterate, untrained people. I come in here and I got to get these people in line and I realized how foolish I was to believe that within myself. I had to learn by doing ministry. I think what I have learned mostly is patience; I had a lot to learn. I tell young preachers all the time God sends you to a church but they are not your folk because you didn't disciple them. You received the product of what someone else disciple.

Joe described the theoretical (formal education), the practical (experience) and clinical (doing) as the means of learning his role. He also described the relationship he had with his father and another mentor in ministry. He was reflective on how formal and informal learning come together to inform the experience of ministry:

I value the theoretical, because in the theoretical in seminary it offers you different settings, different things. After I finished seminary I became a pastor for a year.

Opportunity came along for me to be an assistant chaplain in a prison. I took it because it was an opportunity to involve myself in a clinical setting. Some believed you needed the practical and the theatrical and the clinical. And I did that and also pastored full time from the time the chaplaincy was only eight hours in the prison, only eight hours a week on the weekend... I think the theoretical, clinical and the practical is the foundation of the experiential. That's my thing now, it's more of experience and learned by experience, but it's not off the cuff. I believe ultimately the experiences are going to be the best teacher.

Art described his learning from older ministers, individually and together as a group of mentors for him. The continuation of learned practices was common for Art and the other pastors:

You won't know if you are crazy or sane unless you talk to someone who's been where you are trying to go. And I like old preachers, older guys. They can really tell you a lot of practical things. The things you will not learn from a book or class. May not get you all the theology, and hermeneutics, but they can tell you practical things about life and things that they have experienced as ministers. My mentor used to be a guy in Atlanta in his 80's, 90's that would really set me straight and put me right. My position now I am more of a guy that people come to, ministers come to for advice.

Candice also mentioned the importance of mentors in her ministry. Her co-pastor and his wife serve as powerful mentors for her. As a female pastor in a male-dominated profession and because she is called into very personal situations, she uses mentors as a means of keeping herself honest and avoiding transference issues, which plague ministers when dealing with people who are vulnerable. The honesty between her and the mentors help her to feel accountable if she begins to feel attracted to the vulnerable individual, as is often the case with transference:

I am connected to various other ministers, spiritual covenants and programs. I talk to my mentors on a daily basis in order to learn and grow as a minister myself. These covenants are not only to help me be a better minister for others, but also to help me be the best I can be. So many times ministers forget and neglect themselves. So I do have accountability partners to help me stay focused.

Tim addressed learning from others. Tim talked about marrying the daughter of a pastor and how that helped him when he got started and did not know what to do first. He felt strongly that he was helped in learning the roles of pastor in his present church through the sage advice of his wife and friends:

My wife is the daughter of a pastor. She understood before I did what you do and how you get started. She is my partner in ministry. You learn from different people. I tell people that you know people can cook cakes different ways. That's what we learn as ministers and pastors that we learn from others. I think no man is island; no man can stand on his own. We have to be taught through other people and other ministries. That is how we grow; we take from this person's ministry what they teach us, you take something else from their ministry what they teach us and put it all together to make a better fit of what you are trying to do. We learn from everybody that we are around. We can learn some small part or a big part from them. I think every part we learned, it has helped us.

John also cited mentoring as an important facet of his learning. John had a distinguished career before he entered the ministry. His father told John that he lacked training and experience in actual ministry. John described after the interview how his father gave him direction early in his ministry when he lacked a great deal of experience:

My father was a minister in my local church. So I consider him a mentor, which he was. I always appreciated him telling the truth. A lot of people who are ministers don't want to make the preparation, and he told me I was prepared in other ways. He told me I wasn't prepared to be a minister so that was why I left all that I had to prepare. Spent the time to prepare, worked in the church, and took my subjects seriously. I graduated with honors.

Chapter Summary

The chapter presented themes based on the analysis of the pastors' interviews in order to draw an analysis of their learning. The pastors identified learning in the process of doing the job as most influential. Experience was what the pastors identified as the learning of the art of ministry as opposed to the science of the job, which they believed they learned in more formal settings. The organizational governance of church and the church size had an influence on the learning of the pastors. The church size influenced the learning because it determined needs and means of interaction. The issue of racism was examined to understand its influence on the learning process as well as how it shaped the office of the pastor.

The chapter examined the roles that African American pastors learn, the context of learning and the methods of learning. The roles that were learned were divided into two categories, ministry and community roles. Under ministry the chapter explored administration and community leader. Next the chapter explored context and the influences on learning. Under this category the role of racism, organizational structures and church were examined. Finally the category of learning is explored. Under the category learning in action, formal and organized learning and community learning are examined.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand how African American pastors learn to effectively fulfill their roles in the church and community. While several of the ministers identified seminary education and continuing education opportunities as important, the pastors identified experiential learning as the primary means by which they learned the specific roles performed at their individual churches. I will relate how mentors, personal experience, and history were significant factors for them in learning the various roles of the African American pastor. I will use workplace theory to connect with the learning practices of the pastors. Three research questions were used to guide the study. The questions were:

1. What are the central roles that African American Pastors learn in the Black church?
2. How does context shape the role of the African American pastor?
3. How do African American pastors learn these central roles?

In order to understand the manner in which African American pastors learn the roles for serving their church and community, it is important to understand the context of the church. The churches represented in this study were identified by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) as the traditional black churches. They consist of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), the National Baptist Convention, USA (Inc.), the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). The theory which guided the research was experiential learning, specifically

workplace and community of practice learning. The ministers participating in the research were from the southeastern United States. Four of the ministers were from rural settings, three were from suburban settings, and three were from urban settings. The ministers were also from three different traditions. Four were Baptist, three were Methodist, and three were Pentecostal. The data was analyzed by manual procedures which annotated, coded, sorted and identified themes. Microsoft Word was used to color code the data and information was found by using the “find” command (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

There are three major conclusions identified from the study. The first is that the pastors learn to perform their roles through experience. Second, social contextual factors contribute to the learning of the pastors. These factors created the foundation on which the pastor built their understanding of their roles. Third, a community of practice informs the pastor on the vocation and expectations. The conclusion identifies the influence of governance, guiding literature and other structural factors such as size of the church that help the pastors to learn. The three conclusions are supported by situated learning, workplace learning, mentoring, and community of practice.

Conclusion one: The major influence of experience on learning

The pastors learned from doing the job and walking through the experience. Success was often gauged by the perceived satisfaction of the congregation and not by quantitative or qualitative data. Pastors described this as leadership and it served as a means of understanding their roles and performing them. But other than being responsible for functions in the church, they did not form a definition of leadership or describe how it aided in their learning. A pastor’s style of leadership can range from conservative, seeking to maintain the status quo, to moderate, seeking accommodations, to liberal, seeking to change social structure (Walters & Smith, 1999).

None of the pastors identified what leadership entailed, but they seemed to understand their leadership role as doing the job. The roles of the pastors were defined in the experience of the job. Some pastors learned their congregants placed emphasis on attending community events, controlling the finances, or in personal ministry. The pastors also learned how to involve volunteers, work with deacons, and walk through the interpersonal issues of the ministry.

Workplace learning was used as a theoretical model to understand the learning of these African American pastors. Workplace learning is interested in the practical more than the theoretical, process rather than assimilation of content, the particular rather than the universal, and finally the affective and social domain rather than exclusively the intellectual (Beckett & Hager, 2000). Workplace learning is a professional lifelong learning theory (Retallick, 1999) which works well as a framework for the pastors' learning. Workplace learning also has a wide claim to the learning experiences and takes place in a wide variety of environments (Merriam, 2008). All ten pastors talked about learning their roles though experience and the process of doing the job. The longer the pastors served, the greater their perception of a process taking place that led them to understand the roles and to react appropriately to the roles (Nielsen, 2008). Beckett (2001) described the development of practical knowledge as professionals do the walking and talking and continue in a job. Harry and Art described developing competency in their ministry as they were involved in the doing of ministry Which identifies the process of learning that is associated with workplace learning (Merriam, 2008) Don and Tim discussed the learning that took place in the doing of the job. Several of the ministers characterized their formal education as the science of learning, but the experience of functioning in the specific roles was where they learned the art of being a pastor, which was their means of identifying learning in practice. The attitude corresponds with the attitudes of other professionals that are asked to

compare experience with formal learning (Paloniemi, 2006). None of the pastors could identify specific theoretical learning from their formal education that they employed in their ministry. The pastors adapt information and ideas to their specific environments. They are very good at adapting ideas from other pastors and using them in their own churches. One suggestion drawn from this observation would be for Bible colleges and seminaries to use more experience-based training, for instance, a laboratory classroom, or an internship, to supplement the typical pastoral education.

Individuals learn from the work they do. Beckett and Hager (2000) identify the knowledge base that is accumulated by adult as they work. The knowledge becomes more than a tacit knowledge, it becomes a working knowledge. It can be called upon to solve problems and answer questions. The study confirms what was learned about the pastors in the study. They learned in doing their job and acquired knowledge they drew upon to deal with the multifaceted role they were asked to accomplish.

The pastors frequently made quick decisions that were grounded in practicality and know how. They pulled their knowledge from practice and common experiences. Beckett (2001) confirms this type of quick action in his look at hot action that is quick decisions making, in workplace learning. He identifies the need on the part of adult learners to draw on practical knowledge that has been developed through experience at work. Make decision, although one may not have full confidence at the time, is identified in Beckett's study and also was experience by the pastors as well.

The pastors also identified how they learned through the experience of others interaction with them. Observation and interaction served as a basis for them to learn on their job. They learned from both positive experiences and negative ones. Bauer and Mulder (2007) identify the

need to use experiences in daily activities at work to learn how the mechanics of decision affect the outcome of those decisions when applied to work. Again, the experience in the study identified how adult can learn from negative events to form a basis of understanding.

Conclusion two: Cultural factors

The second conclusion of the study is that context contributes to the learning of roles for the African American pastor. Context is important in shaping the roles. In fact, the learning in action is a response to the particular social, political, cultural realities in which the pastors work. Its influence is silent because it is everywhere but never really discussed. Without a doubt, it is also the most powerful influence on the pastors' learning. The issue of race is historically connected to the work of the black church and the African American pastor. The pastor was identified as the primary leader of the community in the period of slavery (Tucker, 1975; Wheeler, 1986). Hamilton (1972) identified the pastor as the paternal leader of the community and church. The pastors of this study were not comfortable with a discussion of race and the legacy of racism directly, but it was acknowledge in the way they described their work. Considering the importance of racism and discrimination to the African American community (Harris, 2002), the reluctance of the pastors to discuss race is disconcerting. Lincoln (1984) identified the importance of acknowledging racial issues for both white and black ministers.

Dealing with economic issues such as joblessness and poverty was also identified by the pastors as an administrative role. (Wimberly, 1991; Harris, 1991, 2002). One pastor, Mike, developed a ministry in the church, using the professionals in the church to conduct mock job interviews and help with resume writing. The board helps the individuals to seek jobs for which they are qualified. The service is not limited to church members only. Other pastors used their position to help individuals find jobs and get interviews. One pastor, John, addressed the

declining neighborhood and poverty by providing opportunity for change. The church bought rundown homes and fixed them up and sold them. The pastor attempted to change the conditions. The professionals in the churches were encouraged by the pastors to give back to the church and the people struggling. This reinforced the concept of opportunity coming from the community in a relational manner. This social and community outreach to help persons in need is historically linked to the black church. Many of the churches have provided help to individuals since the formation of the black church (Harris, 1991, 2002 and Barna & Jackson, 2004). These are examples of the pastors addressing problems that are constant in the church without addressing the root cause. Workplace education is tied to the context and environment of the vocation and the specific role of professionals to accomplish goals. It can inform on the importance of the context for learning roles (Winch, 2003; Beckett & Hager, 2003).

Reflection is an important component of workplace learning (Beckett, 2001, Osterman, 1990). The use of reflection in workplace learning is limited to the development of skills for problem solving within the particular job set. This kind of reflection is particular and focused on the skills to solve specific problems (Beckett & Hager, 2003) and (Gibson, 2004). The pastors used the word “understand” in place of reflection. They experience situations in the ministry and take action after they reach an “understanding” of the situation. The context of the learner plays an important role in designing practices and developing the problem solving skill needed (Collins, 2006).

The pastors live on a week-to-week schedule that requires three sermons, Bible lessons, and dealing with the immediate issues, like visits to hospitals and homes. History had an important role in shaping the pastor’s role. It is still part of the context in which they work and the experience of the community in which they work. Denominations would be wise to develop a

means of discussing these issues and giving pastors a platform to discuss race, history and its influence in a forward-looking manner that allows to pastors to see progress while acknowledging the past.

African American pastors learn within this loose context which leads to individual learning and problem solving. Workplace learning is a valuable theory of adult learning which takes place in the experience of the vocation. The individual's specific learning allows the professional to learn roles in the organization while contributing to the larger community (Beckett, 2000). The pastor developed their understanding of the roles in the context of this larger community.

The context informed the pastors of the problems that needed solutions in the community. These problems were understood as a part the pastors' focus on ministry. Recently, Kyndt, Dochy, and Nijs(2009) identified the manner in which context influenced the informal work place learning. One of the important factors the authors identified is information acquisition. Context served as a means of information acquisition for the pastors in several ways. Personal interaction informed the pastors of the needs of the community and church members. Learning the community and social needs of the community gave pastors a means identifying were he or she might spend their time and resources. The context set into motion the pastors action where they acted and learned better approaches to the problems or strategies that worked to alleviate the problems. Situated learning indentifies the growth of professional as they acquire more responsibility (Nielsen, 2008). The pastor identified a process of scaffold learning in which they built upon their prior learning to continue identify issues and developing strategies to apply to them.

The denominational structure played an important role in developing the problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and ministry skills. The view of racism and their personal views of pastors also shaped the roles to an extent, while the influence on the community and congregation in which they served developed the role expectations around these influences as well. Context plays an important role in learning from the position of the literature as well. Lave refer to this context as dominion, the place in which the learning takes place (Lave, 2007). The context (dominion) will determine where the cognition and understand of a role will take place.

Organizational structure: The governance of the churches contributed to the learning of the pastors in an important way. Denominational structures supported learning for pastors who work under an episcopal form of governance, while the pastors in the congregational structure were at the top of the pyramid of leadership and were more exposed as they learned roles independently in performing their duties. Denominational structure has been identified as a component to effectiveness in the black church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Structure determines communication, social interaction, and support which determines the level of comfort and openness that encourages learning by professional (Lines, 2005).

The Baptist pastors are independent of an intentional denominational structure and are left to their own talents, education or experience to discover the roles of the pastor and develop a working plan for the church. The Baptist pastors reside at the head of the hierarchy with deacons as helpers. The pastors can develop any type of structure they choose. The pastors do have deacons to help shape the church's direction and help the pastor in decision making, but at times the pastors spoke negatively of the deacons because they can oppose the pastor's independence. The pastors in the Baptist churches were not appointed to their churches, but were hired by the church after preaching to the congregation and meeting with the deacons. The pastors were then

confirmed by a majority vote of the congregation. The pastors stepped into the position without a job description or formal expectations. If the expectations of the people are not met, and not communicated, the pastor could be asked to leave the church.

The contextual roles the pastors have evolved along with the expectations of the congregation. Joe described the changing expectations of his congregation. His church went from a downtown church steeped in the history of the African American experience to a church in a changing mill town neighborhood. The expectations changed because the environment and culture changed. The expectations of the congregation changed with the move from the strictly relational church to a contemporary ministry concept of multi-media and multiple ministries. (Barna & Jackson, 2004) This example makes it clear that a continuity of structure can aid pastors in learning how to maneuver through the multiple roles and expectations.

The expectations for most of the ministers are communicated vaguely and without clear goals and outcomes for the roles the ministers perform. The ministers were interviewed, but were not given written job descriptions. The ministers themselves had difficulty describing their roles beyond preaching, teaching, and administration. Beyond the book of discipline, the ministers have developed their concepts of ministry roles for themselves using past experiences, observed practice by other ministers, and creative thinking. Reflection practice is used by pastors sparsely, but not with the depth of experiential learning expressed by Schön (1983). The pastors did not express or demonstrate the action of connecting the specific issues of the church and community to broader theological or social issues. The environment where reflection can take place and be nurtured by an organization is one of openness and trust (Scaratti, Gorli, and Pipamonti, 2009)

Most of the ministers are on their own to develop their roles and evaluate what their congregation expects of them. Candice has had the help of a co-pastor who has a great deal of

experience in the church they serve. But Candice is still responsible for discerning the specific expectations of her role. One difficulty the pastors have as professionals is the lack of a standardized evaluation. The churches have pastor-parish committees to serve that purpose, but without a job description and concrete expectations, the committees or boards cannot adequately evaluate the pastors. For some of the pastors, their job security is connected to unspoken and unspecified goals and expectations.

In conclusion, the expectations of the congregations and communities for the pastors are not well defined or communicated. Without a clear structure the pastors are left on their own to understand their roles, how to fulfill them, and how to evaluate their success in doing so. While the pastors in the less structured organizations can learn these roles and expectations, they are constantly seeking to understand what is expected, which diverts energy from completing ministry objectives. Most churches conducted interviews with the pastors, but do not have written job descriptions or strategic plans for the pastors to follow (Harris, 1991). Most of the pastors follow the patterns set by the churches they grew up in or churches they had worked in previously. The pastors are often left to themselves to discover specific expectations, which create anxiety for them. The leadership of the pastor and the ability to learn through experience is important for the pastor in navigating the ambiguous professional goals of ministry (Perl & Chang, 2000).

The key element of workplace learning is proper assessment in which the person is aware of their job expectations and job performance. A formal assessment is missing for the pastors and they struggle to know what the satisfaction of the congregation is in relation to their job. Professionals need to understand what they have learned and if the learning is leading to efficiency and effective problem solving (Inman & Vernon, 1997) and (Ananiadou, Jenkins, &

Wolf, 2004). Assessment gives a professional an opportunity to know what is expected and if the expectations are met. The pastors of the study do not have clear job descriptions or a means of determining if the role expectations are met. The Methodists and Pentecostals have an advantage since they have supervisors and the book of discipline to give them some guidance. But even these ministers are left to develop their own job descriptions and are given limited feedback as to whether they are meeting the expectations of the church. Billet (2003) found mentors to be very successful in the process of learning roles in an organization and serve as a means of personal assessment. Having the professional involved in their assessment and in determining what skills need to be learned is important to the process of learning (Billet, 2001). The pastors in the study are judged mainly on their ability to preach. Once they were hired they were not informed of specific goals of the congregation. The pastors are mostly allowed to develop their own job description, outside of preaching, and do not have annual or semi-annual reviews. They do not know the attitudes of the congregation toward their work unless there is a problem. For the Baptist ministers, who are at the top of the organizational pyramid, this causes anxiety. Richard stated he could do a good job and be successful, but if he made the wrong family in the church mad, I could be out of a job Monday.

Conclusion Three: Community of practice

The pastors in this study use communities of professionals to help them understand their roles and develop strategies for performing the job (Parboosingh, 2002) and (Hodkinson, Biesta and James, 2007). The professional community of pastors is loose-knit and disjointed in comparison to other social service types of professional communities. Many of the opportunities to learn are informal and self directed using observational learning. The collaboration of the community helps the pastors find immediate direction to local issues. The community gives the

pastor the opportunity to explore different ways of understanding the issues (Goldman, et.al., 2009). Fred described the community of practice of other ministers, discussing the position and appropriate actions of the pastor. Richard described the community of ministers that gather at the seminars he attends and the discussion of the issues facing the churches. Mike, who serves as a bishop as well as a pastor, described the collaboration of his ministers and how they helped each other with issues and gave support in difficult moments. The ministers commented on the difficulty of not being able to establish real personal friendships with the congregation. The people of the church may have such high expectations of the pastor that he or she cannot discuss the struggles of their roles and their perception of failure. A community of practice becomes an important means of support and learning (Davis & Sumara, 2001) and (Jonansson, Sandberg, and Vuorinen, 2007). The community of practice also becomes a means of assessing a standard of professional practice which did not exist in any of the pastors' churches.

The majority of the ministers do not have intentional communities developed by denominational standing or theological leanings. The groups are informal opportunities to fellowship and interact. These groups share lunches, meet for meetings or enjoy social time together. This kind of group loosely fits the criteria described by Lave and Wenger (1991) to identify a community of learning professionals which they define as a community of practice. The community of practice shares a common goal, uses knowledge to achieve the goal, and uses relationships in the group to form importance. The use of a common language and stories is also important in forming communal resources. These groups at times develop at professional seminars or are informal meetings between the pastors. Fred stressed the importance of his connection to the community of which he is a part, but noted that he intentionally does not meet with pastors in his immediate area because he does not trust ministers not to use any of his

questions or doubt as a means of undermining his ministry. He is involved in the ministerial groups in his county, but his community of practice is a meeting of friends outside of the area. Harry and Candice also questioned the wisdom of opening yourself up to ministers that may see you as competition. Candice is distrusting toward male pastors, other than her co-pastor, because of perceived prejudice against female pastors. Male pastors do have slanted views of women in ministry (McKenzie, 1996). She developed a community of ministry for fellow seminary students who were open to female pastors. Candice is the only minister whose community of practice is not predominantly African American.

A community of practice of ministers share common practices, roles and historical position in the community but are different in denomination, view of Scriptural literal value, education, and resources. The community of practice shares a common goal, uses knowledge to achieve the goal, and uses relationships in the group to form importance. Developing this community of practice is important to the education of the pastors. This is particularly true for younger pastors or pastors in their first church. First, information is shared that can be very important. The pastors can brainstorm ideas and solutions to difficult problems. Most importantly they find a cathartic experience in the groups. As mentioned before, a great deal of stress builds from having no clear goals or means of assessing job performance. The community gives informal feedback to the pastors and a sense of belonging. Denominations should consider intentional communities to provide information, feedback and support to pastors.

The role of a mentor or role model was a common thread in the learning of all of the pastors. Harry, John, Don and Art all mentioned a father, step-father or uncles who were mentors to them as they attended their home church. The other ministers cited the pastor in the church where they grew up as the mentor or role model. Candice described her relationship with her co-

pastor and the support he provides for her in ministry. Art had a father and also a teacher who saw potential in him as a youth and helped him develop his skills as he got older. Schön's (1983) description of a mentor as a coach does not fit the pastor's description of their mentors well. For the pastors, the mentor was an older and experienced pastor who developed a relationship with them. Daloz (1999) described the mentor as an experienced teacher or guide that serves to direct a person's educational journey. Wilhoit (2008) describes the importance of mentoring for individuals to develop a Christian worldview that nurtures compassion, service, and personal introspection. The relationship can be formed in an intentional or unintentional manner. For the pastors, the mentor relationship was at times intentional and planned, but also unstructured and accidental. Having a mentor is important for a pastor for several reasons. First, they offer objectivity to a situation. Second, mentors offer their own experience and wisdom, which gives a point of reference for the pastors. Third, a mentor brings a network of resources and people that are important and could take years for new pastors to develop on their own (Biehl, 1996).

When asked the question, "What or who influenced you to enter the ministry?" the ministers all gave the same answer. "God called me" or some extraordinary event took place that served as an impetus to direct them into ministry. The one exception was Don who described his intention to become a teacher and afterward was not happy. Don wanted to help people and thought about his step-father and uncle who were ministers. He described how growing up in the church and having his step-father as a strong role model gave him the confidence to try serving in ministry. Harry described his call into the ministry the night Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The ministers talked about their desire to follow a different vocation and how they would never have chosen the ministry without the divine call or the crisis that led them to accept the ministry as a necessary vocation. The pastors described the men and women who influenced them and

gave them a desire to serve the church. The mentors also served as a reference for understanding their roles and how to approach the ministry. Harry explained that much of what he knows about ministry he learned from observing his father and how he worked with people. He stated that he also developed knowledge of the expectations of the congregation from his father before he ever started ministry. The learning process with a mentor did not necessarily develop a reflective practice.

The experience of having a mentor involved with the pastors' ministry cannot be underestimated. While other churches have used mentoring as a means to training pastors (Godfrey, 2006), the experience of the participants in the study were mentored informally with little structure. Ministry is very much a relational profession that requires a commitment on the part of the pastor (Selzer, 2008). Mentors provided inspiration and strength to the pastors. Again, looking at the lack of clear goals, personal angst, and uncertainty, the role of the mentor is important to provide structure (Lytch, 2002). It becomes clear why experience is so important to the pastor's education. The pastors are given the task of inspiring others, relating to their struggles, finding solutions to problems, and providing hope to others. These are highly relational skills that are difficult to understand in the context of theory, but are discovered through relationships, personal stories and the experience of failure (Wilhoit, 2008).

Implications

The purpose of the study was to discover how African American pastors learn to fulfill the roles of ministry. The study examined ten pastors, nine male and one female, from three different denominations and three different settings. In the end, I discovered many of the roles of the pastors were developed by historical context, were poorly communicated and seldom

evaluated, and were learned mainly through experience and community. The discovery offers a few implications for ministry and research in the future. I believe the pastor is still an important leader in the African American community. He or she is a trusted professional the community seeks first, according to the pastors, to help solve their personal problems and deal with the issues of the community.

Theoretical implications

The first implication is the use of experiential learning to maximize the training of pastors. All of the pastors believe they learned from doing the job. Developing mentorship for pastors would mean an experienced minister to help them develop reflective practice and give feedback on their job performance. Many of the pastors had supervisors, but none of the pastors identified the supervisors as mentors. Ideally a full-time pastor to the pastors would serve as the best option for a mentor. With the high attrition of pastors and the future shortage of pastors that is anticipated, a full-time mentor would be worth the cost. The pastor would not experience the fear of competition that Fred identified if the mentor were a full-time pastor as well.

The mentor for the pastor could also develop communities of practice. These communities are not only important to the pastors in learning roles and expectations, but also in developing ideas and comparing problem-solving tactics. Surprisingly, pastors do not appear to have developed strong relationships with each other. The community of practice is the single most important means of learning for the pastors. Developing intentional communities and using them as learning communities would be an efficient way of developing pastors. The communities of practice would also be the ideal means of developing professional skills for the pastors as

well. Common practices could be developed through the use of theological frameworks or by common church settings.

Implications for practice

The first implication for practice is denominations and seminaries should consider in service pastoral learning opportunities as methods of addressing social and community problems that are a result of the social context. One pastor in the study had training from the Urban League and led his church to begin changing the community around the church. Unfortunately, most of the pastors did not have specific training in the methods of non-profit organizations. The pastors' perception is that the people in the church seek help from the pastor first when they are in need. Several professional providers seek the pastor as an ally in addressing medical or mental health needs. So training in specific skills would give the pastor an understanding of how to meet community needs.

A second implication for practice is for the roles the pastors perform for the church and how they are evaluated. The pastors are given a great deal of autonomy in setting their schedules and office hours. Some of the pastors work directly out of their homes. The only times in the week the pastors are specifically committed to are the times of the church services. The autonomy, which the pastors find positive, has some negative overtones. The expectations of the congregations are never clearly identified for the pastors. The pastor has committees or deacons to identify issues to be addressed. But, the pastors do not have a written job description that clearly identifies their job responsibilities. The goals of the churches are specifically addressing numerical growth or income. Pastors should structure their work with specific hours beyond services. The churches should develop a specific job description that details the expectations of the congregation, supervisors or the denomination.

A system of evaluation for the pastor should be developed to help him or her to develop skills that may be lacking or address educational deficiencies. While an evaluation would make a pastor uneasy, it could also serve as a protection against angry families or deacons that make accusations against the pastor's work without tangible proof. The evaluation would also indicate to the pastor the priority of roles for the congregation and if the pastor is meeting their expectations. A job evaluation could also help ministers who make the move from one setting to another make the transition with greater ease. Less time would be spent by the pastor in discovering the important roles and more time spent actually performing them.

Further research

The findings of the research suggest that further exploration is needed in the following areas. First, is the need for an adjustment to the curricula of the Bible colleges and seminaries that attract African American pastors. Most denominations have a continuing education program that keeps the pastor current with denominational issues or current affairs in ministry. As adult education programs, these continuing education directives, usually housed in the seminary, should consider more self-directed programs that allow the pastors to explore issues that are important to them by doing such activities as independent research under a qualified mentor. This kind of program has been attempted in some institutions with limited success.

The seminary curriculum has been questioned by both white and African American pastors in terms of its connection to practical ministry, but specifically it should address the issues of the African American community and give practical instruction on confronting problems. The seminary is also the natural environment for giving pastors practical tools such as reflective practice, as well as assisting them in the development of racial and professional identity. The pastors identified the seminary experience as teaching them the science of the job,

but it fell short of providing practical instruction on budgeting, issues of faith-based non-profit organizations, and how to conduct themselves as professionals. Developing labs and experiential forms of classes would greatly help the pastors to understand the roles they will face in their jobs.

Secondly, the church as an organization has not changed greatly in the past century. A study of the organizational structure and hiring practices of churches would give insight into what are successful practices. The churches and pastor of this study seem to have poor work evaluation methods and looking into what churches do to hire, evaluate, and organize would serve as an important and fascinating study for the religious community. The socio-historical effects of race were always present in the minds of the pastors. Research into the effects of race on white and black churches, including the lack of interaction between white and black Protestant churches, would be an important study. Does the message of love, fellowship, and common purpose draw Christians together? Or is the language used by Christian ministers not followed through with action?

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- I. What are the role, task, and abilities that are expected of African American pastors?
 - A. Ask for job description.
 - B. Who influenced your decision to enter the ministry?
 - C. What are the role expectations of your supervisors or deacons? How is it different from the actual role?
 - D. What do you believe are the roles you actually fill in the church?
 - E. Did your supervisors clearly define your role?
 - F. What do you perceive as the difference with your roles and the roles of pastors in urban/rural environment?
 - G. What do you believe is unique for you as an African American pastor?
- II. What do African American pastors do to discover the roles?
 - A. What learning opportunities have you had in the past?
 - B. What surprises have you encountered?
 - C. Do you have a mentor or community of pastors that you learn from in your ministry?
 - D. Did you actively seek to discover your congregations expected roles?
 - E. How has your view changed?
- III. How do African American pastors learn to fulfill the roles?
 - A. Did your education prepare you for your role as a pastor in this congregation?

B. What learning methods have been most beneficial to you since starting your ministry?

C. What roles were learned after starting in your ministry?