

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PASTORS LEAVING EMPLOYMENT DUE TO
EXPERIENCED POOR PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT

by

Stephen Talbot Buys

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe pastors' experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor person-organization fit. For this study, pastoral staff turnover was defined as the employment of full-time pastoral staff employed for at least one year who have resulted in voluntary or involuntary resignation from their place of employment because of value incongruence. In this phenomenology, the church is viewed as an educational institution, including similarities between pastoral roles and educator and administrator roles. As the literature review demonstrates, many seminaries, ministry, and theological institutions do not include educational or organizational components in curriculum. Social cognitive theory and person-organization fit theory are established as the theoretical framework and used to moderate pastors' experiences, self-reflection, and self-efficacy, as they seek to educate congregants while simultaneously administering the church's educational and mission programs. Person-organization fit theory provides a framework by which research questions are formed. The study was a hermeneutical phenomenological study of 10 lead/senior pastors who have experienced the phenomenon through semi-structured one-on-one interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group. The data were analyzed for thematic saturation and reported with seven major themes that are discussed with implications and recommendations for future study.

Keywords: education, leadership, pastor, pastor-church fit, person-organization fit, seminary, structure, turnover, value, vision

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who gives me hope and a future along with everything I need according to His goodness and riches.

I dedicate this dissertation to a host of individuals who have taught me, invested in me, believed in me, and encouraged me:

To my mother and father, Russell and Vickie Buys, who have believed, encouraged, and stayed with me through every season, including seasons of want and seasons of plenty.

To my wife, Anna Buys, whose undying devotion and unconditional love has helped me weather every storm.

To my sons, Silas and Benaiah, who I hope are directly impacted in positive ways through this research, and I hope will be proud of their father.

To my academic mentor and friend, Dr. Beth Stapleton, who was one of the first to articulate her belief in me and encourage me by teaching valuable lessons on what can be achieved when discipline and skill are combined.

Acknowledgments

Throughout my life, many people have sacrificed and given so that I may have opportunities to pursue the acquisition and application of knowledge. From before I was born, my parents made sacrifices that allowed me the opportunity to receive a quality education. They poured into my life spiritually, emotionally, physically, and academically. Especially in this journey, I acknowledge their moral support, prayers, listening ears, and passionate investment into this journey. From daily phone calls to trips out of state to provide care and support when needed, they have gone above and beyond to help me push through and finish strong.

To my wife, Anna Tadlock Buys, I thank you for your partnership and sacrifice for years in this pursuit. You have been my strongest supporter and shown that through emotional, spiritual, and academic support. You are an amazing woman in so many ways. Most practically, I am thankful for the hours and days spent applying your skill set proofreading. Your sacrifice in taking care of our children, allowing me the freedom to research, write, and process the doctoral journey has been enabling, empowering, and equipping. I am better because of you.

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To my church family, thank you for your freedom and trust to complete this journey all the while serving and leading you, the bride of Christ. It has been a great fit. To my brothers and sisters we call "staff" and leadership teams, thank you for your prayers, support, consideration, and patience with me as I have pursued this research.

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To the pastors that participated in this study, thank you for trusting me with your experience and being willing to share for the sake of working together for the sake of the Church. Your stories were an amazing blessing in that you all honored the Church as a whole and the specific churches you served. The honor has been mine to take your story and use it for the building up of the Church so that each church may be more equipped to fulfill her biblical mandate.

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List of Abbreviations

Differentiation of Self and Role–Clergy Version (DSR-C)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

Maslach Burnout Inventory—Educators Survey (MBI-ES)

Pastor-Church Fit (P-C Fit)

Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One presents a background for the study by situating the context historically, socially, and theoretically through addressing pastoral turnover, leadership theory, and leadership practice necessary to effectively fulfill pastoral roles. The study background also includes leadership education in seminary and other ministry-related educational institutions as it pertains to pastoral leadership and person-organization fit (P-O Fit). The problem and purpose of the study are defined and expounded. The problem is the increase in pastoral turnover and lack of pastoral leadership education. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore and describe pastors' experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor P-O Fit. The significance of this study is that the inquiry provides understanding of pastoral turnover from the perspectives of P-O Fit and leadership education, and the findings may provide information for expanding leadership education among pastors, decreasing turnover, and increasing P-O Fit between pastors and churches. A central research question was developed to guide the hermeneutic phenomenology, along with four supporting sub-questions. The chapter is concluded with definitions of relevant terms.

Background

This section provides a historical, social, and theoretical contextualization to the problem of pastoral turnover in churches and the purpose of the study. Historically and socially, the problem of pastoral turnover has been on the rise in recent decades (Barna, 2021; Rainer, 2014) and is accentuated by the increase of polarizing issues, including rapidly changing culture, social issues, political extremism, and a movement away from denominationalism (Stetzer &

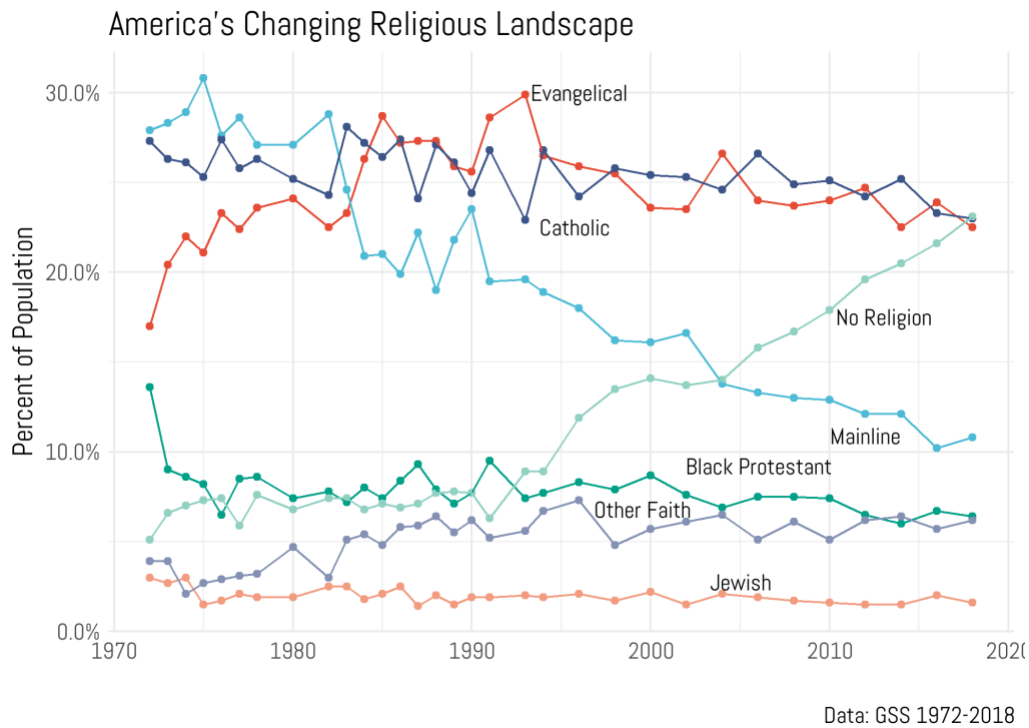
MacDonald, 2020). Stetzer and MacDonald (2020), Strunk (2020), and Speight and Speight (2017) also posited the lack of and need for more leadership education in seminaries and other ministry-related educational institutions. The theoretical context of this study of Bandura's (1991, 2012) social cognitive theory (SCT) and sociocultural theory supports the methodology of this hermeneutic phenomenology, allowing for pastors to share experiences of leaving employment and the impact of education on those experiences. The framework is strengthened by the use of P-O Fit theory (Chatman, 1989), which provides a moderator to determine the important points of congruence by which a pastor and a church can evaluate and improve P-O Fit, and by which pastors, church leadership, and educational institutions can use to teach effective leadership practices to equip pastors to navigate organizational challenges.

Historical Context

Pastoral turnover among pastors has been an increasing problem in recent decades (Rainer, 2014; Strunk et al., 2017). Turnover and church decline may be due in part to the rapid changing culture in recent decades, along with the lack of leadership education for pastors to navigate issues and their organizational effects (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). At the time of this study, people of faith are moving from traditional methodological American Protestantism (also known as denominationalism) to what Stetzer and MacDonald refer to as evangelicalism with nondenominational ties or a non-religious affiliation. Additionally, a study published by the General Social Survey in 2018 showed for the first time in recorded history the number of Americans identifying as non-affiliated with a religion being higher than those that are either Catholic or evangelical (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

America's Changing Religious Landscape (Eagle, 2022, para. 2)



Identifying this historical trend helps bring to light a significant number of correlational and causative factors, including political division, secularism, and an increasing cultural divide taking place in the educational system (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020). The “Digital Babylon,” a biblical reference and modern analogy that describes the convergence of thoughts, ideas, and opinions in the digital world (Kinnaman & Matlock, 2019, p. 17), creates the opportunity for people to share preferences and protests in many places while also creating echo chambers, a place where individuals only hear and share like-minded convictions that aid to entrench individuals and ignore alternative convictions (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018) that foster division in culture and the church. This division in culture and church could be mitigated in the church if a concerted effort was made to incorporate leadership education for pastors to navigate these challenges into the theological educational framework in seminary and other ministry-related

educational institutions (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk et al., 2017).

Much research has been conducted to show the increase of pastoral turnover. Most recently, Barna's (2021) research showed 38% of pastors (n=507) contemplated quitting their jobs and/or leaving the vocational ministry altogether within the previous year. The 38% of pastors is 9% higher than a similar study reported in January 2021. Additionally, the future of the evangelical church in the next generation is at an even greater risk of survival, as younger pastors contemplate leaving full-time ministry at a higher rate as "46% of pastors under the age of 45 say they considering quitting full-time ministry, compared to 34% of pastors 45 and older" (para. 3). The statistic of 38% of pastors contemplating quitting their jobs and vocational ministry is an increase from Carroll's (2006) report that 40% of pastors have doubted their calling and 30% have contemplated abandoning the pastorate and ministry altogether, illustrating an increase in burnout and turnover. While research exists helping to identify causes for pastoral turnover and potential strategies to increase resilience, little research has been published to identify how P-O Fit may be used as a moderator. Vision-conflict, value incongruence, leadership style, conflict management, compassion fatigue, and poor pairing and fitting are some of the causes identified as leading to poor P-O Fit, leading to turnover (Adams et al., 2017; Beebe, 2007; Joynt, 2019; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017). Additionally, many researchers recognize a historical deficiency in leadership education and propose a great need for improved education in seminary and ministry-related educational institutions (Abernethy et al., 2016; Joynt, 2019; Noullet, 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk et al, 2017; White Smith, 2020).

Social Context

The increase of pastoral turnover threatens the health and even existence of the Protestant

evangelical church in today's social context, including both nondenominational and denominational churches (Rainer, 2014; Strunk et al., 2017). As more pastors quit the ministry, either voluntarily or involuntarily, it becomes increasingly difficult for churches to maintain vitality (Rainer, 2014). Speight and Speight (2017) pointed to a collective lack of and greater need for pastors to receive organizational leadership education both in seminary and on-the-job to help benefit pastors in increased resilience and for churches to have equipped and educated leaders. Also, White Smith (2020) posited that a highly effective measure to prevent pastoral burnout and turnover is education for pastors. If pastors are educated in organizational leadership, learning how to identify the most important factors that contribute to P-O Fit at the onset, and navigate the quickly shifting social culture (Charles & Duffield, 2018), including increased political division in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017), cultural hostility, and social issues (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020), pastors and churches will benefit from a healthier relationship and unity than without such education. Taylor (2020) recommended that seminaries include leadership education in how to address social issues, such as race relations. Suh (2021) advocated for seminary education to include how to lead through the issue of sexuality in churches. Even in the Catholic Church, a deficiency in leadership education is recognized as Simonds et al. (2021) recommended priests be educated in organizational leadership and management to prepare them to lead schools and other programs and ministries.

With the current body of research on factors that cause and have increased pastoral turnover, a lack of research exists concerning factors in organizational leadership that lead to the fit between a pastor and the church as an organization. This research may benefit pastors, church leadership teams, and educational institutions in identifying important issues and increasing communication around those issues, increasing the chances for a positive P-O Fit and increasing

pastoral resilience and tenure. Momeny and Gourgues (2020) stated that consistent leader communication benefits a healthy ministry team, which positively influences the church. Therefore, improving organizational leadership education will contribute to better communication styles and effective communication methods between pastors and their ministry staff and congregations. If the local church, as an organization, is unified and grounded in biblical theology, they will be more effective in accomplishing her purpose to make disciples of Jesus in the Church and affecting the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20) outside of the local church. For seminary and ministry-related educators and administrators, the challenge will be including these types of organizational leadership topics and technologies while maintaining the theological and pedagogical values of each program and institution (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020).

Theoretical Context

Bandura's SCT and derivative sociocultural theory provide a context by which it can be assumed pastors' experiences vary based on their personal experiences, education, and the church within which they served (Bandura, 1991, 2001, 2012). Furthermore, many studies investigating pastoral turnover have implemented the theory and practice of self-reflection (Dewey, 1933) through surveys, questionnaires, phenomenological studies, falling under SCT and allowing for past experiences to be evaluated and recommendations to be offered. Amineh and Asl (2015) explained that a person's position and perception of knowing (knowledge) is determined by their own experiences and perceptions of other people, community, and culture which is an example of a former study that incorporated social constructivist theory (Piaget, 1977). This hermeneutic phenomenological study builds on previous studies in other fields that evaluate a person's pairing or fitting within an organization as is demonstrated by the application

of P-O Fit theory. P-O Fit theory is developed and inspired by situational theory and interactional theory, which speak to the importance and value of considering both an individual and the context when evaluating present and future fit (Louis, 1980; Schneider, 1987). Situational theory focuses on the context of the setting under study while interactional theory focuses on the agents under study, for example an employee and the persons with whom interaction occurs.

Research has been conducted applying expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) with an added element of social awareness (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018) to identify motivation for employees. Other studies have shown causes for pastoral turnover in comparison with other helping professions (Adams et al., 2017) and show the positive impact of social context on the fit. Within previous studies of helping professions, Beebe (2004, 2007) posited that many of the same challenges for educators from an organizational leadership perspective are transferable to the pastoral setting, showing a lack of leadership education and training across areas, such as communication, role overload, ambiguity, and conflict (Foss, 2002), as well as conflict management (Joynt, 2019). Barfoot et al. (2005) claimed one in four pastors from evangelical churches, including denominational and nondenominational, will experience forced termination, a life-changing experience for pastors (Speight & Speight, 2017), impacting the health and vitality of churches (Rainer, 2014).

Speight and Speight (2017) and Strunk et al. (2017) emphasized that increased leadership education and training improved pastoral resilience, and they showed how leadership theory, especially servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970), could be used with a study like this one to reduce pastoral turnover. Wright (2009) incorporated leadership theory while studying pastoral effectiveness and found relational leadership practices are important to incorporate like those of transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978), which is utilized to change people, the

environment in which they work and serve, and the product or service they provide.

Furthermore, to impact an organization in such a way requires organizational change which was presented originally through the three-step process of Lewin's change theory (Burnes, 2020).

Lewin's three-step process was meant to help organizations make changes quickly in rapidly changing environments or situations including 1) unfreezing, 2) changing, 3) and freezing. The concepts are meant to unfreeze the organizational factors impacted by the external changes, make needed changes through objective observation, and refreeze any new decided realities for the organization to adjust as needed. One of the most widely recognized change models recommended for leaders to influence and lead through change is Kotter's (2012) eight-step process for how to lead organizational change. The model's eight steps include leadership creating a sense of urgency among those impacted by the identified issue, creating a guiding coalition that will help affect the needed change, using that coalition to develop a vision and strategy, effective communication and casting vision, empowering those with responsibilities to accomplish the vision, generating short-term wins that serve as motivation, consolidating the organizational advancement from the change and leveraging that change for more needed change, and anchoring the change culture in the organization.

With the impact of pastoral turnover being so costly to the health and vitality of churches (Rainer, 2014), incorporating P-O Fit theory (Chatman, 1989) into the current research provides a platform by which to moderate the inquiry into pastors' experiences. P-O Fit is a model, with modern development of the theory, to evaluate congruence of an individual and the organization with a variety of factors, including values, environment, structure, and normative behaviors (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Vveinhardt & Gulboviate, 2017). Vveinhardt and Gulboviate's recommended approach and utilization of the P-O Fit model fits with SCT and refines the

existing body of knowledge and research around the problem in this study in that pastors, churches, and seminaries can evaluate and determine the factors most important within organizational structure and social context that will lead to increased P-O Fit, resilience, and tenure.

Problem Statement

The problem is an increase in pastoral turnover and lack of pastoral leadership education (Barna, 2021; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017). Barna's study showed 38% of pastors have contemplated quitting their pastorate and leaving ministry entirely, a 9% increase between January 2021 and October 2021. The problem also proves to be a long-term issue, as is shown by Carroll's (2006) study exhibiting that 30% of pastors had contemplated quitting their jobs. Joynt (2019) concluded that pastoral turnover is a challenge across denominations and geography, not limited to one group but the Church as a whole. Rainer (2014) stated the impact of pastoral turnover diminishes the health and vitality of churches and can lead to death of a church. While researching pastoral turnover and burnout, specific issues have been popular topics of investigation. Speight and Speight (2017) claimed that the exploration of pastors who have experienced forced termination "has received little scholarly attention" (p. 156). Strunk et al. (2017) and White Smith (2020) also concluded that pastoral burnout and turnover is a result of insufficient organizational leadership education, including training in seminary and other ministry-related institutions that seek to prepare pastors for their ministry positions and associated responsibilities.

Exploring the perspectives of pastors who have left employment as a result of poor P-O Fit (Chatman, 1989, Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017) narrows the focus to identifying mitigating factors of pastoral turnover. Some of the causes of pastoral turnover have been identified as

vision conflict, leadership style, conflict management, values, and compassion fatigue, ultimately leading to a poor pairing between the pastor and the church (Adams et al., 2017; Beebe, 2007; Joynt, 2019). Focusing on pastors' experiences from a P-O Fit perspective provides a moderating framework by which to identify pastors' and churches' values. The empirically deduced values are issues that need to be addressed within organizational leadership to pastors, churches, and seminaries that will improve education and preparation for pastors and churches.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore and describe the experiences of pastors who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor P-O Fit. At this stage in the research, *pastoral turnover* is defined as the employment of full-time pastoral staff employed for at least one year who have voluntarily or involuntarily resigned from their place of employment because of value incongruence. A pastor who left employment as a result of P-O Fit is defined as a pastor who voluntarily or involuntarily left their church pastorate due to poor P-O Fit, which is summarized as value-incongruence. *Values* are defined as enduring beliefs of an individual or organization that result in actions and structures “personally and socially preferable” and important (Rokeach, 1968, p. 16). The theories used to guide this study included Bandura's SCT (1991, 2012) and Chatman's P-O Fit theory (1989). The combination of these theories provided a framework by which pastors' experiences in a multifaceted social and organizational environment revealed values necessary to evaluate P-O Fit. The values provided insight into what leadership theory can provide, what leadership education has been received, and what needs improvement in seminaries and other ministry-related educational institutions.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was grounded in three perspectives: theoretical, empirical, and practical. The theoretical perspective was based in Bandura's SCT (1991, 2012) and Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory, connected to the empirical perspective which is made up of a body of literature that addresses the problem of pastoral turnover and the potential cause related to the lack of leadership education among pastors. The study's practical perspective is situated within and was built on current empirical research with implications for present and future studies on how to improve P-O Fit and leadership education among pastors in seminaries and other ministry-related educational institutions.

Theoretical Perspective

The approach, methodology, and results of this study were grounded in the theoretical framework of Bandura's SCT (1991, 2012) and Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory. As SCT is an original theory, Bandura's components and practices of self-reflection, self-efficacy, and the interconnected influence of social context, experience, cognition, motivation, and expectancy all impact the approach and methodology of this study in which the pastors' lived experiences provide understanding of the factors that contributed to their experience. The approach, methodology, and results were supported by applying P-O Fit as a theory and model by which to evaluate the value-laden congruence/incongruence of pastors and churches, including organizational structure, leadership qualities, and leadership practices.

Empirical Perspective

This study builds upon the current empirical body of research and literature relating to pastoral turnover (Adams et al., 2017; Barna, 2021; Beebe, 2007; Joynt 2019; Knight Johnson, 2018; Rainer, 2014) and the need for more leadership education for pastors in preparation for the

pastorate (Abernethy et al., 2016; Noullet et al., 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017; White Smith, 2020). While there is an abundance of research on pastoral turnover and resilience strategies (Adams et al., 2017; Joynt, 2019; White Smith, 2020), little research exists that brings together the experiences of pastoral turnover, the framework of P-O Fit to assess the value-laden system of fit evaluation, and the influence of leadership education on the experience. Conducting this study will add to the variety of empirical research that already exists on the topics of pastoral burnout and turnover, P-O Fit, and leadership education by using a hermeneutic phenomenology to provide new insights related to leadership education.

Practical Perspective

The practical implications of this study may be applicable to pastors, churches across denominations, seminaries, and other ministry-related educational institutions. Pastors may learn from experiences of others who have left employment as a result of poor P-O Fit by identifying key leadership qualities and practices that should be aligned to ensure value-congruence as is supported by P-O Fit (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017). Additionally, pastors may benefit by learning what education would aid in equipping pastors to lead the church as an organization effectively as recommended by Strunk et al. (2017). Churches may also benefit from this study by using the key themes derived from the phenomenology to evaluate if their current pastor and future pastors meet the needed components of P-O Fit. Lastly, seminaries and other ministry-related educational institutions may benefit from this research, as it provides a substantive, empirical body of knowledge of important leadership principles that should be incorporated into curriculum to educate pastors to be prepared to lead the churches in which they serve as is recommended by Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) and White Smith (2020).

Research Questions

The current body of research and literature reveals the problem of pastoral turnover (Adams et al., 2017; Barna, 2021; Speight & Speight, 2017) and related issue of the lack of leadership education for pastors (Abernethy et al., 2016; Joynt, 2019; Strunk et al, 2017; White Smith, 2020). The Central Research Question (RQ) and four Sub-Questions (SQ) were developed to guide the research and accomplish the purpose of the study. The RQ is grounded in Bandura's SCT (1991), as it includes social context and environment, experience, and cognition of pastors' experiences. The RQ is also based in P-O Fit theory (Chatman, 1989), as it provides perspective on organizational leadership and the education pastors received that influenced the experience. The first SQ draws from SCT (Bandura, 2012) and establishes the platform for pastors to describe their own perceptions of fit within the organization of the church that includes components, such as leadership structure, values, culture, and environment (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017). SQ (2) draws from their experience using P-O Fit as a framework by which points of conflict that resulted in poor P-O Fit can be identified. SQ (3) is also guided by P-O Fit theory and connects it to the existing body of research literature that identifies the need for more leadership education to prepare pastors to effectively lead churches, which will improve P-O Fit as a practice. SQ (4) is guided by SCT, as it provides an opportunity for participants to share through self-reflection, their social cognitive framework, and the conclusions they have drawn based on knowledge and experience in an environment. SQ (4) is also guided by P-O Fit, in that it gives a lens by which the needed aspects of organizational leadership may be shared by the participants.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of pastors who left employment as a result of poor person-organization fit?

Sub-Question One

How do pastors describe their experience as a fit within the organization of the church?

Sub-Question Two

How do pastors describe how person-organization fit influenced their exodus from the church in which they served?

Sub-Question Three

How do pastors describe the leadership education they received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution?

Sub-Question Four

How do pastors describe the need for leadership education to improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the organization?

Definitions

1. *Seminary* – an institution of higher education responsible for pedagogy and theological training to prepare pastors and ministers for vocational ministry (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020).
2. *P-O Fit* – the extent to which an individual and an organization congruently align in values, norms, environment, personality, leadership, structure, and governance (Chatman, 1989; Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017).
3. *Pastor* – the biblical role as the overseer of a group of people who form a church organization (New International Version, 2011/1973; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1).

4. *Value* – an “enduring belief” of an individual formed by knowledge and experience that leads to preferred behaviors and environments (Rokeach, 1968, p. 16).

Summary

This chapter provides a historical, social, and theoretical background for the study, the problem and purpose statements, the significance of the study, the research questions, and definitions. The background of this study addresses the gap in research between leadership education and P-O Fit as it relates to pastoral turnover. The problem under study is the increase in pastoral turnover and lack of pastoral leadership education (Barna, 2021; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017). The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore and describe pastors’ experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor P-O Fit. The significance of this study may reveal insights on how leadership education may decrease pastoral turnover and improve P-O Fit between pastors and churches. A central research question was presented, along with four sub-questions guided by Bandura’s SCT (1991) and Chatman’s (1986) P-O Fit theory. In conclusion, key terms were defined to provide a base for understanding.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two includes a current literature review of theory and research that pertain to the phenomenon under study, which includes pastors' experiences of losing or leaving employment because of poor person-organization fit (P-O Fit). This chapter is focused on building a theoretical framework of both well-established theories and recently emerged theories by which to provide a guide for investigation and interpretation. This chapter presents what current peer-reviewed literature states regarding pastoral turnover and burnout, leadership, and the church as an organization, which reveals a gap in literature and research dealing with the leadership education and experiences of pastors and P-O Fit. Within a hermeneutic phenomenological study, the literature review provides a synthesis of research that grounds the current study in recent and applicable academic and professional fields.

Pastors of governmentally autonomous churches are typically brought into the senior pastor role through an application/recruitment and interview process by which the pastor meets with a group or groups of people to determine and assess mutual fit between the two parties. After these meetings, the pastor is offered a call, or offer for employment, to a church and presented the opportunity to engage in employment. Yet, pastoral burnout and contemplation of pastors leaving ministry in December 2021 was 38%, which is 9% more than reported in January 2021 (Barna, 2021). With this increase in pastoral burnout and turnover, Rainer (2014) addressed how short tenures of two to three years and increased pastoral turnover contribute to the decreased vitality of churches and potentially the life span of a church (Barna, 2021; Gallagher, 2020). Applying SCT, which addresses how to determine and understand the factors that influence individuals' work toward an outcome (Bandura, 2001), provides a foundation for

which pastors' and congregations' expectations can serve as motivating and moderating factors in P-O Fit through the inclusion of social context and structure (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017). Self-reflection theory (Dewey, 1933), which influenced cognitive constructivist theory (Piaget, 1977) and is included in Bandura's (1986, 2001) SCT, posited that a person's reality is based on a reflection of past experiences and lessons that can be learned. Self-reflection of studied pastors provides insight into the value of applied servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970) and more developed models, such as serving leadership (Jennings & Stahl-Wert, 2016). These theories are mutually beneficial to the incorporation of P-O Fit theory (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown et al, 2005; Verquer et al., 2003; Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017).

The practices of self-reflection, servant leadership, and using P-O Fit as moderators for pastors and congregational leadership may be beneficial. Much research exists around the experiences of pastors and identifying causes and conflict that result in pastoral turnover and burnout in churches (Adams et al., 2017; Brownell, 2010; Foss, 2002; Joynt, 2019; Knight-Johnson, 2018; Mueller & McDuff, 2004; Speight & Speight, 2017) and resilience of pastors in churches (Burns et al., 2013; Lee, 2010; McKenna et al., 2007; Strunk et al., 2017). Leadership theory and approaches have also been studied in pastoral and other similar fields, such as education, hospitality, and service industries (Ayers, 2015; Bavik, 2020; Burns et al., 2013; Harms et al., 2017; Miner & Bickerton, 2020; Wright, 2009). Strategies have also been identified as helpful, such as self-reflection (Lanaj et al., 2019) and mindfulness (Frederick et al., 2021; Hulsheger et al., 2013). However, no studies were found incorporating the challenge of pastoral turnover with P-O Fit models serving as moderator. Chatman's (1989) original P-O Fit model was limited to person-organization value and organizational value, including norm congruence,

but has been developed (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017) to include variables important to the relationship between congregations and pastors along with but not limited to values, norms, environment, structure, and governance. Therefore, gaining a greater understanding of pastors' experiences of losing or leaving their employment because of poor P-O Fit or lack of leadership training in their higher education through a phenomenological study helps provide insight to the extent that fit matters.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1991) SCT was used as a framework, along with Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory, to guide this study in approach, method, and evaluation. Bandura's SCT was developed to progress the understanding of cognitive development and has advanced to include the social awareness (Bandura, 2012) and as a base for practices, such as self-reflection. P-O Fit theory, developed on the basis of a value-congruence model between an individual and an organization, has advanced to provide a moderating framework to evaluate values and practices necessary to enter, maintain, and develop a positive P-O Fit experience. The two theories together provide an internal consideration by searching and evaluating a person's cognitive state and the external environment that will provide an understanding of leadership education needed to advance pastors' fit and effectiveness in the churches they serve.

Social Cognitive Theory

The theoretical framework that has guided this research was based primarily in Bandura's (1991) SCT. SCT can be placed in a historical and cultural context in which Bandura explored how an individual constructs their perceived reality. He determined an individual's perceptions of reality are constructed by a collection of experiences, lessons learned from reflection of those experiences, and responses to those experiences. This theory was developed to assist in the

educational field and is transferable as understanding the components that contribute to how an individual's cognitive development can aid in motivation of educators and employees in both academic and free-market settings (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018).

Bandura's (1986b, 1991, 2012) sociocultural theory, like SCT, encourages the incorporation of considering the cultural influence over an individual's cognitive development. Although personal agency factor is to be considered, one's cognitive development is still influenced by sociostructural and sociocultural influences that produce an interactional transaction with cognitive implications (Bandura, 1991). These factors are similar to Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory applied to address a gap in practices toward motivation and was suggested to influence and determine motivational force for people. Expectancy theory is formed by using motivational force as the product of an individual's work toward an outcome using three determining measurements—expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy is considered the amount of effort believed by an individual to accomplish a given task. Instrumentality is considered the individual's belief the performance of the task will be accomplished. Valence is considered the reward or outcome itself. Out of a deep consideration of an individual's cognitive state, Lloyd and Mertens (2018) summarized that expectancy theory is based on the assertion that people have choices and, therefore, will make decisions that render the most perceived favorable outcome. Lloyd and Mertens' statement about expectancy theory is affirming of Bandura's (2001) determination that SCT includes personal agency in pursuit of desired and expected outcomes, proxy agency with dependent action of an individual toward desired outcomes, and collective agency to influence and moderate one's reality.

An important connection and common theme is found surrounding the formation of an individual's motivation and organization fit in Bandura's (2001) SCT. Lloyd and Mertens (2018)

suggested the addition of social context to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), which essentially replicated Bandura's SCT (1986, 2001). All theories are contingent on the reflection and ability to become aware of past experiences and how those experiences impact present and future states of both the individual and the environment in which they work. Bandura posited that a person's reality is based on a reflection of past experiences and lessons that can be learned from that reflection. Likewise, it is necessary to reflect with intentional effort by which social and individual constructs are formed, and this reflection is not possible by a passive existence in reality (Bandura, 1986, 2001; Piaget, 1977). Bandura's SCT is similar in this way to Dewey's (1933) seminal theory on self-reflection. Self-reflection offers a point of reference for more modern constructivist theories like SCT (Bandura, 1986), constructivist theory (Piaget, 1977), and social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1986). Piaget (1977) posited that learning does not happen passively but by an active construction of meaning by which the individual is restoring a sense of equilibrium to their cognitive state by making sense and assimilating new knowledge by altering thinking and reality (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Interestingly, Vygotsky's (1986) social constructivist theory posited that community and culture mediate the process of knowing which is affected by other people and their influences (Amineh & Asl, 2015), meaning that learning and development are simultaneous, but that development does not precede acquisition, assimilation, and application of knowledge. Conversely, Piaget (1977) posited that learning is preceded by individual and educational development, implying that thought comes from the individual into society, while Vygotsky (1986) determined society influences individual thought. Similarly, both theorists agree that society, environment, and culture each play a role in individual development, and self-reflection plays a role in construction of knowledge and reality. Dewey's (1933) and Bandura's (2001) works allow for the most important elements dealing with self-reflection that

are pertinent to this study to be applied without having to subscribe to a Piagetian or Vygostkian argument.

The practice of self-reflection holds that individuals gain knowledge and understanding through gathering data, events, feelings, and experiences to construct a perceived reality in a type of postformal reasoning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In reading Dewey's (1933) thoughts on self-reflection, it is determined these practices are transferable to other situations, namely the value of enhancing cognitive, educational, and leadership development (Creswell, 2018), which also impact a person's view and understanding of their own self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986a). SCT serves as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study as pastors and churches, viewed as educators and educational institutions, are studied to understand experiences in sociocultural settings that influence the ultimate loss or leaving of employment.

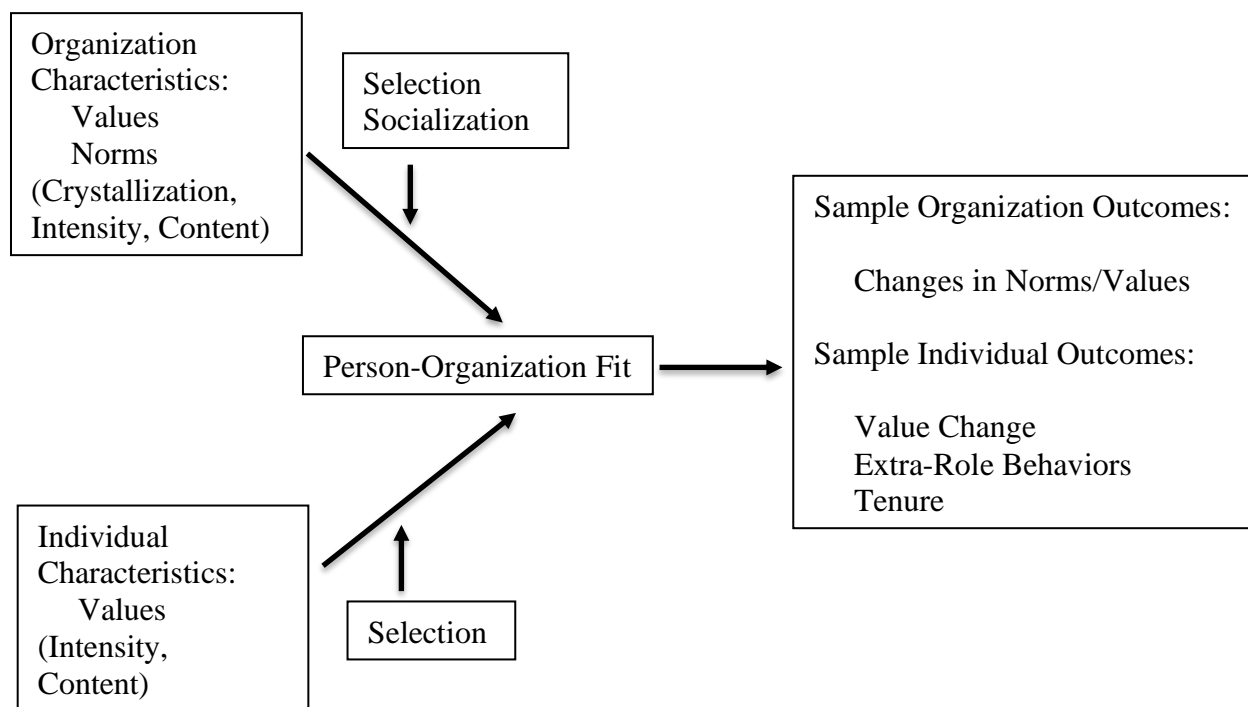
Person-Organization Fit Theory

Incorporating SCT establishes a strong framework by which to evaluate the person of the pastor as educator and administrator in this study because of the individual components including individual agency, self-reflection and self-efficacy, and social components including proxy agency and collective agency. Yet, the critical element of the fit between the person and organization needs a foundation by which to evaluate the organization within the phenomenon under study. Chatman (1989), originating theorist of P-O Fit theory, was inspired by information and the shortcomings of person theory, situational theory, and interactional theory. This theory is used to recognize the limitations of assessing a person's abilities as a predictor and evaluative tool to perform and fit well within an organization. Chatman (1989) recognized much research had been conducted to evaluate a person's effectiveness and motivation, but the field lacked a comprehensive approach to include more factors that would evaluate effective P-O Fit (Chatman,

1989, p. 335). The theory builds on the idea that organizations are situated in time and space, as are the people who work within them. Each situation experienced is formed by an interaction between both an individual and the organization (Mischel & Peake, 1982). Due to the shared experiences, a crossover in theoretical underpinnings exists, similarly in that SCT posited how an individual's perceived reality is developed based on an individual's interactions with sociocultural influences (Bandura, 2001). The nature and components of these interactions should take on a holistic approach to evaluating effective fit for a person and an organization. As a proposed model, P-O Fit theory suggests incorporating an approach by which value congruence exists between both a person and the organization. Chatman defined P-O Fit as a value and norm-based congruence that exists between an organization and the values of people. For congruence to be determined, both recognition of each parties' values and norms, as well as assessment of agreement, is necessary. Chatman's original model, seen in Figure 2, demonstrates that norms are beyond beliefs but include behaviors and structure, and even address influential factors that contribute to how motivation and expectations between person and organization impact a desired outcome, which ties back to Bandura's SCT.

Figure 2

A Model of Person-Organization Fit (Chatman, 1989, p. 340).



Verquer et al. (2003) recognized a variety of variables that had been suggested and used to measure P-O Fit including “goal congruence (e.g., Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991), value congruence (e.g., Boxx et al., 1991; Harris & Mossholder, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997; Meglino et al., 1989; O’Reilly et al., 1991), needs-structure fit (e.g., Bretz et al., 1989), and personality–climate fit (e.g., Christiansen et al., 1997)” (p. 474). Even still, at its inception, Chatman (1989) claimed the usefulness of the P-O Fit model is found in the predictability of the extent a person’s values change within organizational membership and a person’s adherence to organizational norms. Research about this theory is helpful with its derivative models of P-O Fit, including many factors such as selection, socialization, values of both parties, normative behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors), systems and structures, and expectations

(Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and provides an academically grounded reference by which more related literature is discussed later in this chapter.

Related Literature

Pastoral turnover has been studied for many years, and recent literature shows an increase of turnover threatens the health and effectiveness of churches (Adams et al., 2017; Barna, 2021; Beebe, 2007; Carroll, 2006; Joynt, 2019; Rainer, 2014; Strunk et al., 2017). Researchers show causes of burnout and turnover that serve as predictors and are considered points of conflict that may be addressed to mitigate the problem (Adams et al., 2017; Joynt, 2013; 2019; Knight Johnson, 2018; Spencer et al., 2012). While little empirical research exists specifically on how to address the problem from pastors interacting with the church as an organization, researchers have determined that a deficiency in leadership education exists for pastors in seminary and other ministry-related institutions (Abernethy et al., 2016; Charles & Duffield, 2018; Joynt, 2019; Momeny & Gourgues, 2020; Noullet et al., 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk, 2017; White Smith, 2020). Recognizing the church as an organization and leadership approaches effective in navigating the organization (Fischer & Schultz, 2017) may help a pastor be more effective and increase P-O Fit (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017).

Pastoral Turnover

Pastoral turnover and burnout have been increasing challenges in the Protestant evangelical church that threaten the health and life of each church (Rainer, 2014; Strunk et al., 2017). A comparison of Barna's (2021) and Carroll's (2006) studies, mentioned in Chapter One, confirms that pastoral retention is declining. Jackson-Jordan (2013) was the most recent literature review of clergy burnout and resilience found in a database search using Jerry Falwell Library advanced search feature with no limitations. Joynt (2013) conducted grounded theory

research and subsequently published a series of peer-reviewed articles addressing pastoral/clergy turnover and burnout (2017a, 2017b, 2018). His results suggested that pastoral retention and satisfaction are prevalent challenges across denominations and even in other countries.

Especially over the last two decades, the effects of pastoral burnout and turnover are contributors to the decreased vitality and death of churches, with pastors often leaving their position every two to three years (Rainer, 2014). While pastors consider quitting full-time ministry altogether, Barfoot et al. (2005) claimed forced termination is an experience that one in four pastors from evangelical churches will endure. Speight and Speight's (2017) claim that "forced termination among clergy is a prevalent and a life-changing experience yet has received little scholarly attention" (p. 156) motivated them to conduct a qualitative study discovering the lived experiences of 10 Southern Baptist clergy couples who faced forced termination. While challenges and demands of ministry prior to forced termination were explored, there was little information provided regarding the experiences of pastors within the organizational structure. However, Speight and Speight (2017) identified a major theme that pointed to a need for proper organizational leadership education and training to prepare pastors for ministry, which coincides with White Smith's (2020) study showing the importance of education and training as a preventative measure against burnout.

Burnout and Turnover

Pastoral burnout is the result of a complex set of interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions that influence a person's ability to perform their professional roles and responsibilities (Jackson-Jordan, 2013). Burnout was most profoundly conceptualized and defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981) (Maslach, 1982; Maslach, et al., 1997b). Maslach et al., (1997b) acknowledged burnout as being caused by a variety of complex factors that render

complex symptoms, including emotional exhaustion (EE), a low sense of personal accomplishment (PA), and depersonalization (DP) manifested in detached reactions (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1982). Maslach and Jackson (1982) conducted a quantitative study to determine the level of burnout among n=420 professionals involved in social work or education using their developed 25-item *Maslach Burnout Inventory* for which n=420 were tested for reliability and internal consistency, being found to be at .83 for frequency and .84 for intensity. All coefficients of EE, DP, and PA were found significant at $p < .0001$. Findings from their study of validating the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* are confirmed in previous studies and suggest that burnout is related to job turnover (Maslach & Jackson, 1979). Jackson-Jordan (2013), having tested Maslach and Jackson's burnout inventory among a variety of professions, noted that burnout is a primary influence on job satisfaction among many professions and, if not treated, can lead to an individual leaving not only a job but also a profession.

Foss (2002) examined the connection between pastors and burnout, concluding positive correlations between burnout and role overload, ambiguity, and conflict. Palser (2005) concluded that clergy's attrition by burnout and failure exceeds other human service professionals, using the modified Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997b) MBI and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso (2002) *Emotional Intelligence Test* to address correlation between burnout and emotional intelligence. Similarly, Harms et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of literature regarding leadership and stress, finding that burnout and turnover are related to specific styles and behaviors of leaders. Adams et al. (2017), recognizing that pastors experience burnout, conducted a quantitative analysis compiling research from previous studies to reflect the amount of clergy burnout in comparison with other professions associated with helping people. The sums of scores from previous studies were taken as mean scores from the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human*

Services Survey (MBI-HSS) and the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey* (MBI-ES), which allowed for transferability to conduct a multi-variate analysis. While no reliability or validity was reported, the researchers concluded that clergy do not experience a higher burnout rate than other helping professions included in the study. Teachers scored the highest in burnout because of EE, and the highest contributor to burnout among clergy was DP. This result is substantial because of the high relational demand of such positions (Adams et al., 2017).

As burnout is empirically shown to reach into pastoral roles in a profound way, Joynt (2019) conducted a qualitative study using a classic grounded theory methodological approach to evaluate clergy retention. Convenience sampling was used with 10 participants from the Hatfield Training Center for church leadership meeting additional criteria including a completed undergraduate degree in theological studies from HTC between 1990-2010, having been employed full-time in pastoral ministry by a church, having left full-time ministry, and living in South Africa. Participants of the study had served in various pastoral roles, including student pastor, assistant pastor, associate pastor, lead pastor, congregational pastor, and district pastor. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed until theoretical saturation was accomplished to conclude that the church as an organization does not always listen to staff which, in turn, leads to DP, conflict, higher turnover, and decreased retention.

Prediction

The current body of literature on predicting pastoral burnout and turnover is helpful, as many researchers refer to factors that result in poor fitting and connections (Beebe, 2007; Spencer et al., 2012; Joynt, 2013; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk, 2017). Joynt (2013) conducted an original theological grounded theory study to examine why pastors leave full-time ministry. While participants were based in South Africa and met pre-determined criteria,

including having earned a bachelor's degree, having been employed by a church, and having left full-time vocational ministry, transferability is possible to the United States culture as extant literature from studies performed in the United States across denominations was used to build the literature framework for the study and to evaluate and discuss findings and implications. Joynt's (2013) seminal study concluded that clergy leave the ministry due to not being heard by people in leadership, feeling a new or changed calling, conflict, mismatch in leadership styles, financial compensation, lack of encouragement, and issues related to job description. Joynt's research was the beginning of a series of studies and publications which produced results that offered insights to predictive behaviors that may lead to burnout and turnover (2017a; 2017b; 2018; 2019).

Beebe (2007) also found conflict as a predictor for clergy burnout and turnover and posited much literature exploring pastoral burnout and turnover has been published addressing the multiplicity of demands from a systemic approach, and he claimed that little literature existed having researched the psychological demands of clergy as it related to the high social and relational demands that pastors encounter. Beebe's findings aligned with Joynt's (2013) study and confirmed in Joynt's (2019) study that interpersonal conflict within staff and congregants is the result of a demand to integrate role and self and the challenge of pastors to differentiate the role and self. Beebe's (2007) quantitative multivariate analysis to measure the MBI-ES, *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (TKI), and *Differentiation of Self and Role—Clergy Version* (DSR-C) among 290 licensed or ordained pastors in their respective denominations showed at a statistically significant level ($p < .001$) that workload demands beyond personal resources, lack of clarity in role expectations and evaluations, low differentiation between self and role, and differences in conflict management all predict clergy burnout (Beebe, 2004; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).

Spencer et al. (2012) conducted a quantitative study using a 42-item Likert-type scale, *Pastors at Risk Inventory*, to predict risk of termination/exit of pastors from a church. The study's primary research question was formed to search for factors of clergy at risk of forced or unforced resignation that correlated with items from the Wickman survey. The findings offered statistically reliable results among 285 participants of pre-determined criterion that vision conflict (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$) and compassion fatigue (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) are predictors for pastoral turnover. Spencer et al. (2012) explained that the terminology of vision conflict does not appear in extant literature within the field, but scholars and literature embody the concept and define it as the disparity of a clergy's feelings between expectation of answering the call to ministry and what actually happens when serving in ministry. Compassion fatigue may very well serve as both a predictor and a point of internal conflict from the same perspective of Beebe's (2007) research.

Compassion fatigue incorporates the simplistic exhaustion brought about by high demands of a job as it relates to an individual's affection for the job (Foss, 2002; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 1986; Maslach et al., 1997b), and compassion fatigue includes, in its most original intent, the emotional, mental, and spiritual weight of bearing another's burdens (Hart, 1984). More recent researchers opine that many of these predictors can be mitigated and even overcome with more leadership education and training around a multiplicity of factors, including leading in a shifting societal culture (Charles & Duffield, 2018), leading in an increasingly hostile political environment (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020), leading in recruiting volunteers and lay-leadership (Scott & Cnaan, 2021), developing effective ministry leadership teams (Momeny & Gourgues, 2020), leading in conflict management (Joynt, 2019), and leading an organization (Speight & Speight, 2017). All these areas are directly or indirectly

related to determining a leader's level of P-O Fit and, with proper education and understanding, may increase P-O Fit by increasing value congruence (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017).

Points of Conflict and Experience

Jackson-Jordan (2013) supported the case that burnout is higher among helping professions like pastors and, therefore, identified literature that note predictors of burnout. However, burnout and turnover are not higher among pastors than other helping professions in comparison to teachers, social workers, and healthcare workers (Adams et al., 2017). Spencer et al. (2012) concluded that certain styles of conflict management and cultures of high expectation with vision conflict result in higher burnout, while resilience is higher for those who practice certain styles of conflict management and have vision continuity. Beebe (2007) found that conflict management style is a predictor of burnout in a study of 343 interfaith clergy. The higher levels of burnout were found among clergy who practiced avoidance or accommodating styles in comparison to those clergy members who practiced competing or collaborating conflict management styles. Clergy burnout was directly correlated with role conflict (Adams et al., 2017; Foss, 2002).

To further understand conflict as a theme in the research, recognizing the points of conflict are multifaceted and include internal conflict (Joynt, 2013), interpersonal conflict (Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013), vision conflict (Barfoot et al., 2005; Spencer et al., 2012), not being heard (Joynt, 2019), a lack of support (Burns et al., 2013; Joynt 2013; Knight Johnson, 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk, 2017), and ambiguity of decision-making (Adams et al., 2017) is helpful. The ambiguity of decision-making is a challenge because clergy are placed in a leadership role to make decisions related to subjective matters, such as spending limited funds or taking a position on community issues, which requires negotiating conflict and vulnerability to

criticism. Criticism can also take an emotional toll on pastors, contributing to burnout and turnover (Joynt, 2019; Knight Johnson, 2018).

In Knight Johnson's (2018) grounded theory study, a random, convenience, and purposive sample was used to interview 40 male and 17 female pastors and their spouses to help answer the central research question addressing if congregations, in their actual practice as employers, align with particular ideas and values, or do their practices conflict? In a similar theme of differentiation between self and role (Beebe, 2007; Joynt 2013), the researcher identified points of conflict that may cause burnout and turnover. Knight Johnson made recommendations to decrease turnover and strengthen resilience, which is discussed in the next section. While looking beyond what are termed structural conflicts, Knight Johnson (2018) identified issues like stingy vacation policies, expectations to work seven-day weeks, and inflexibility with schedules, children, and workplace.

While Knight Johnson's (2018) study possessed a seeming bias by intentionally leaving out more conservative learning denominations which may influence transferability, a similar theme of a lack of organizational support was found in Speight and Speight's (2017) phenomenological study of 10 Southern Baptist pastors and their spouses who experienced forced termination. Using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, participants were identified who met four specific criteria (Hennink et al., 2011; Patton, 2002): 1) heterosexual couples, 2) served as a senior pastor or staff minister at a Southern Baptist church, 3) were terminated for at least three years, and 4) not for a moral failure or misconduct. The definition of forced termination in this study was described as either voluntarily or involuntarily leaving employment. The concept of voluntarily leaving employment and being considered a forced termination was related to the pressures identified in the study that would cause a pastor to leave

the position. The study showed five major themes of feelings experienced by this retroactive study: 1) trust/distrust, 2) abandonment and ambivalence, 3) shock and disbelief, 4) anger, and 5) relief and peace. The lack of trust and feeling of abandonment support previous findings from other studies that lack of organizational support results in pastoral burnout and turnover (Bligh, 2017; Joynt, 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017). Trust is identified as a dynamic force that exists among persons in the workplace and has significant implications for feelings of support in the workplace (Bligh, 2017).

Other factors that may be a point of conflict were revealed in Mueller and McDuff's (2004) quantitative analysis, which concluded that a mismatch in theology between the pastor and congregation produced job dissatisfaction. This study was conducted using data collected from returned mail questionnaires by participants ($n=2,467$) who were pastors within two Protestant denominations and excluded interim pastors, as their role was already defined as transient. Ordinary least squares regression analysis was used to determine the level of relationships between job dissatisfaction and the mismatch in theology and the congregation and was found significant at $p<.001$. However, the findings are only significant when the theological mismatch is characterized by the pastor being more liberal than the congregation. In the scenario that the congregation is more theologically liberal than the clergy, $p>.005$. Additionally, they concluded that the poor fit resulted in an increased intention to leave the current church. This finding is in line with the P-O Fit model's incorporation of the value-congruence and environmental factors necessary to result in a moderate to high fit (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Conflict arises as a result of a misfitting and can be defined as differences in people's opinion or purposes that complicate goals or desires (Sande, 2004). The factors included in conflict—goals and desires—suggest pastors should know what goals and desires are

and how they align with the greater divine, external, and particular call to be in vocational Christian ministry (Joynt, 2019; Schuurman, 2016). If a pastor is not fully confident in his calling to come forward to lead pastorally (Nel & Scholtz, 2015), it may affect confidence. Conversely, The Barna Group (2017) noted that a pastor's satisfaction with their work and their church's ministry are directly correlated with confidence of calling, not stating but implying a mutual causative relationship. As a result of the identified points of conflict through qualitative and quantitative studies among pastors, it is ideal to learn from those who have provided recommendations and tested strategies for increasing pastoral resilience.

Seminary Leadership Education Toward Pastoral Resilience

Pastoral burnout is a widespread issue affecting many pastors (Abernethy et al., 2016; Lifeway Research, 2015b), and studies show a direct link between burnout and its causative effect on pastoral turnover (White Smith, 2020). Either by direct statement or a recommendation that educational institutions incorporate more leadership education, many researchers recognize a deficiency in leadership education and training in seminaries and other ministry-related schools that effectively and adequately prepare pastors for the leadership mantle they possess when entering the lead/senior pastor position (Abernethy et al., 2016; Charles & Duffield, 2018; Joynt, 2019; Momeny & Gourgues, 2020; Noullet et al., 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk, 2020; White Smith, 2020).

Burnout prevention strategies are valuable topics of study considering clergy generally experience high interpersonal stress, are required to be available at all times, and clergy burnout is considered moderate compared to other helping professions (Adams et al., 2017). The implementation of organizational and educational resiliency strategies is important in that it may deal with and prevent burnout both in seminary and formal education settings, including while

serving in the pastorate (Abernethy et al., 2016; Noullet et al., 2018). Joynt (2019) listed some effective strategies that improve clergy retention and equip churches including: establishing clear job descriptions and reporting lines, advocating resiliency and conflict management training, as well as providing training in leadership skills. Joynt's research took place in a nondenominational ministry training school and is consistent with other researcher's recommendations in other denominations. Charles and Duffield (2018) have begun research to span over a decade-long pastoral leadership education/mentoring program in the Presbyterian denomination as they observed the need for more formal leadership education and training in seminaries and other educational institutions. Simonds et al. (2021) studied the preparation of Catholic priests to lead the church and associated schools through structured interviews of 10 national leaders within the Catholic church. In their study, through thematic coding and cross-referencing responses, they posited that seminaries should educate priests to evaluate, determine, and lead through establishing best fit organizational leadership structure and governance models for the school and the leaders. Wong et al. (2019) interviewed 109 pastors and denominational leaders across Canada using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to identify how pastors and churches can both be educated in preparation to have a flourishing congregation. Using NVivo to code and analyze the data, they found four major themes, including 1) equipping the saints, a manifestation of pastors theologically teaching and mobilizing congregants to do the work of the ministry, 2) practical discipleship training, living biblically inside and outside the church, 3) spiritual formation of seminary students, and 4) missional and organizational training, educating, and training pastors and congregants to organize for effectiveness.

White Smith (2020) conducted a phenomenological study of 12 Nazarene pastors who met pre-determined criteria, including having completed some level of leadership training within

ordination requirements, pastored in a church for at least five consecutive years, and experienced burnout in their roles. They administered the MBI-HSS survey, considered internally reliable with a Cronbach coefficient alpha at .90 for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), .79 for Depersonalization (DP), and .71 for Personal Accomplishment (PA), to determine burnout before moving on to the semi-structured interview. Following this data collection, the data were analyzed using the QSR NVivo 12 program and reviewed by hand in which major themes emerged, identifying a need for consumer culture training for pastors, people management training, and volunteer recruitment management and training. This research confirms previous findings that pastors lack education in managing volunteers and how a consumer culture impacts culture and growth strategies (James, 2013; Lifeway Research, 2015a). James (2013) identified the consumer culture of present society has presented a threat to the church and is validated by White Smith's (2020) findings that there is a need for ministerial education and training on consumer culture and will help prevent burnout. Pastors generally share frustration with lack of volunteerism in church ministries (Joynt, 2013) which follows the general society trend of a decrease in volunteerism (Vermeer et al., 2016).

Both recruitment and management of volunteers is an issue, especially in small churches (Schaper, 2018; Stankiewicz et al., 2016; White Smith, 2020). As White Smith's (2020) study showed a called desire from pastors for education on recruiting and managing volunteers, Borchardt and Bianco (2016) researched and recommended motivation for volunteers be evaluated to help assess expectancy. Motivations for volunteerism included the church's reputation (Borchardt & Bianco, 2016) and the expectation that volunteerism would result in reduced depression, a greater gratitude to God, improved physical health, and greater life satisfaction (Mollidor et al., 2015). White Smith's (2020) study revealed a theme of volunteer

motivation to be a matter of love and devotion from the heart, and Hager and Brudney's (2015) study of volunteerism among non-profit organizations (n=1,361) was conducted through a ordinal variable response survey confirming a positive relationship between net benefits to an organization and volunteer intensiveness ($p<.001$), training for paid staff in recruiting and managing volunteers ($p<.01$), and screening and matching volunteers to places of service in the organization ($p<.01$). White Smith (2020) concluded providing leadership education and training on consumer culture and volunteer management would decrease burnout and have a positive impact on pastoral resilience and retention.

Without training on how to recruit and manage volunteers in the church environment, pastors may experience burnout, which can result in interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict. Because conflict management and effective listening skills are considered traits associated with long-tenured pastors (McKenna et al., 2007), conflict management education and related action steps are suggested to be taken in churches to foster a more supportive organizational environment that would increase clergy resilience (Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013). As vision conflict has also been found to be a predictor for burnout (Barfoot et al., 2005; Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013; Knight Johnson, 2018; Spencer et al., 2012), conflict management education is also pertinent toward the variations of vision conflict, including expectations and perceptions of the current well-being of the church and ministry (Spencer et al.), the future organizational direction of the church (Adams et al., 2017), and the support of the pastor from the church (Burns et al, 2013; Joynt, 2013; Knight Johnson 2018; Lee, 2010; Strunk et al., 2017).

Burns et al. (2013) recommended the organization as a church include pastoral support, care, sabbaticals, personal vacations, continued education, and personal boundaries for the family. Strunk et al. (2017) addressed some of the same issues and recommended anticipating

these matters by including them in a formal job description and compensation package which may encourage pastors to make choices resulting in greater efficacy and long-term tenure.

Knight Johnson (2018) discussed ideological work-life scenarios, such as flexibility in workplace, generous vacation time, flexibility with children, fair financial compensation and benefits, and memberships to engage in community settings. This grounded theory study posited that clergy develop a personal ideology of what church community should entail as an employer and use that to communicate and measure against lived experiences. The important missing link in Knight Johnson's study is the recognition that the organizational structure, environment, and job should all be developed to encourage these supportive activities that will possibly enhance resilience, reduce turnover, burnout, and increase P-O Fit. Joynt (2019) recommended the organization of the church incorporate supportive voicing activities, platforms, and opportunities by which employees can speak and be heard, can receive response, and can see actions result from these voicing practices. Ruck et al. (2017) found that giving the employee a voice increased organizational engagement. Joynt (2019) stated that a valuable element for employee engagement in the workplace is having a voice and being heard, including clergy, which increases workplace retention. This practice could have a direct impact on decreasing pastoral turnover (Barna, 2021). Creating a common understanding via expectation, interpretation, and meaning will reduce burnout and possibly reduce turnover as perceived and actual expectations between both pastor and congregations can be clearly communicated (Lee, 2010; Strunk et al., 2017). Lee (2010), based on his quantitative analysis of measuring pastoral dispositional resiliency and adjustment among Protestant pastors, also made the practical recommendation that boundaries and communication be clear between pastors and congregations, serving as factors to

increase pastoral resilience. Strunk et al. (2017) claimed that disappointment and dysfunction are the most likely results if a pastor is invited to lead without first aligning expectations with reality.

While many pastors leave the ministry altogether (Barna, 2021), other pastors transition from one church to another. Speight and Speight (2017) studied the experiences of pastors who had experienced forced termination and identified two main themes that increase resilience: 1) gain perspective of the congregation, culture, and organization, and 2) be prepared through education and training in conflict management and practical organizational leadership (Strunk et al., 2017). Speight and Speight (2017) also recommended a strategy for increasing resilience in pastors who have experienced forced termination to extend a formal apology for offenses by congregational leadership, the development of healthy work environment, and organizational systems and processes that protect all parties.

Strunk et al., (2017) conducted a phenomenological study exploring the experiences of long-tenured pastors with a focus on how those experiences may benefit from pastoral education and increase resilience. Their study affirmed and built upon current research by recommending that each pastor should develop a philosophy of ministry, a strong peer group, a vision for the church, and authentic community based in cultivated relationship, all from a fidelity to the pastoral call. Strunk et al. emphasized that a pastor should develop a proper philosophy of ministry, which should prepare pastors for confronting the realities and different responsibilities of their calling and is supported by Speight and Speight's (2017) assessment that many pastors who experience forced termination do so as a result of being ill-prepared for the tasks they are called to do. Strunk et al. also recommended congregations address areas of human motivation (physiological needs and safety needs; Maslow, 1943) by providing a salary that allows a pastor to feel stable and valued (Knight Johnson, 2018).

Leadership in the Church as an Organization

Jesus Christ made a clear statement with respect to the church and her role in the spiritual and physical realms when He said, “[O]n you, Peter, I will build my church and against it the gates of Hades will not prevail” (Matthew 16:18). First, the implication is that the church is to be built on the cornerstone of Christ, and secondly, the church is to be built up and fitted together with other Christian disciples/Christ-followers for the fulfillment of Christ’s purpose. Ephesians 2:19-22 communicates that structure and purpose:

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (*Holy Bible*, 1973/2011).

Morgan (2006) addressed the helpfulness of using metaphors for organizations as a method of thinking about, seeing, understanding, and managing organizations in both distinctive and partial ways. However, Morgan also warned against the potential distortions created by metaphors, saying that metaphor can blind the reality and create a way of not seeing. Morgan’s warnings are of worthwhile note while also recognizing that the potential for partiality, bias, and paradox within the metaphor is mitigated, as Jesus and the New Testament writers metaphorized the church in multiple ways as a temple (see 1 Corinthians 3:16), a house (see 1 Peter 2:5), a body (see Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18), and a bride (see Ephesians 5:22-32), all serving to provide a holistic and multifaceted understanding of the complexities and organization within the church.

In each of the metaphors, there are two shared, noteworthy characteristics: 1) authority and organization. The clearly defined authority for the church is Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the temple (see Ephesians 2:19-22), the cornerstone of the house (see 1 Peter 2:6), the head of the body (see Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the groom of the bride (see Ephesians 5:22-32). The other characteristic of each metaphor and the church is that Christ established the church to be an institution filled as a living, breathing organism with a clear organization.

The organizational structure and functionality of the church are considered in Romans 12:4-8:

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (*Holy Bible*, 1973/2011)

Additionally, the demonstration of how the church is to be made up of different people who have different functions who all serve the same overarching purpose is communicated in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27:

¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part

of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (*Holy Bible*, 1973/2011)

These biblical references set a foundation for the importance and value of organizational structure and functionality within the church. Furthermore, to maintain the structure and the proper function of the church, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter describing the importance of organizational leadership and structure in 1 Timothy 3 as he described that the church is to have an overseer to provide the leadership needed for the church to foster vitality. This overseer role is commonly known as the pastor in the Protestant, evangelical church and a bishop in more traditional hierarchical church structures. In the phenomenological study by Strunk et al. (2017) studying the efficacy of pastors in this role, they referenced other sources and found that

deficiency in pastoral leadership contributes to lack of church vitality (De Wetter et al., 2010; Wind & Rendle 2001). They also continued to address issues presented by Burns et al. (2013) about the need for pastoral leadership training and education. Strunk et al. did not, however, continue the pursuit of that knowledge other than agreeing with and mentioning a need for greater education in “pastoral leadership and management” (Burns et al., 2013, p. 16). A need exists to examine leadership from the pastoral perspective, as it is clearly a matter of deficiency within the church organization due to the lack of education in theological colleges addressing relational and applicable leadership theories grounded in coherent theology supported in empirical research (Miner & Bickerton, 2020).

Leadership Education and Training

Recognizing the church as an organization in need of a structure, function, culture, and leadership validates the examination and presentation of effective leadership practices found in academic literature that address the phenomenon under study. Fischer and Schultz (2017) conducted a literature review in a conceptual study in which they determined the existence of a unifying theme of leadership empowerment in leadership literature and the associated positive effects on organizational effectiveness, including leadership, processes, structure, and culture. The study was set to establish a position and theoretical framework by which future testing could be practiced to prove quantitative rigor. Likewise, Park et al. (2017) conducted an empirical study providing surveys to participants (n=285) who were employees of firms in South Korea to test and conclude that leaders who are empowered to do their jobs, as well as given the authority to empower others, are more likely to have an improved psychological well-being ($p < .01$) and have greater job engagement ($p < .01$). The data from the surveys were compiled, and determinations were made through a confirmatory factor analysis to assure convergent validity of

the construct measures. Then, structural equation modeling was used to analyze the fit between the hypothesized model and data.

Abernethy et al. (2016) reviewed the pilot Pastors Empowerment Program, which was developed to empower pastors with skills and training needed to navigate complex disasters and challenges that impact ministry. The program was developed with five objectives in a structured delivery method over a three-year period. Through the observations of a case study of a pastor and his wife from a Baptist church in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana post-Hurricane Katrina, Abernethy et al. made a connection that leadership empowerment improves job engagement and reduces job burnout and turnover in pastors. In Southern Baptist and other non-denominational Protestant evangelical churches, the pervasive church organizational/governmental model is one of congregational authority, creating a potential conflict between who possesses authority and a consequential need for pastors to be empowered to fulfill the authoritative and leadership roles they have been given as they are called to fulfill Ephesians 4:11-13:

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (*Holy Bible*, 1973/2011)

Many researchers have recognized the need for pastors to be educated in leadership, and much emphasis has been placed on organizational leadership education included in seminary and other ministry-related educational programs and institutions (Abernethy et al., 2016; Joynt, 2019; Noullet et al., 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk et al., 2017;

White Smith, 2020). Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) published an article noting Pew Research's (2017) observation of growing division in the United States among political parties and connected it to the threat of division within the church as political division influences cultural division. At one time, pastors led people who shared similar morals, values, and stances on social issues, yet the people within churches are now becoming more divergent from one another by sharing contrasting and conflicting social, cultural, and political views. Additionally, they described the current societal movement of evangelicalism as movement away from traditional methodological American Protestantism, which Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) refer to as denominational alignment to a more nondenominational alignment. The movement of evangelicalism is relevant because they recognize this as the remapping of evangelicalism, which is characterized by a disengaging from denominationalism and the engaging of networks and organizations, influencing theological education and opportunities. As they then posited, pastors need to be educated on how to lead organizationally through this changing period to refrain from creating echo chambers within the church (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019) of like-minded, ill-equipped congregants to effectively engage in the culture. Essentially, Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) echoed the emphasis of previously mentioned researchers that pastors should receive leadership education that does not change theology but applies theology and organizational implications through concerted leadership education in seminaries and other ministry-related education programs. Manning and Nelson (2020) called this movement the disestablishment of mainline Protestantism, while, like Stetzer and MacDonald (2020), considering it an opportunity for seminaries to incorporate leadership education that will equip pastors to navigate the quickly changing culture and become a "visionary possibilizer and convener of public conversations"

(Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020, p. 78) for the congregation in pursuit of casting and executing vision through influence.

Leadership Approaches

Many leadership approaches exist. Nevertheless, leadership is widely accepted as influence exerted over people toward a certain goal or end (Maxwell, 1993; Northouse, 2019). The following leadership approaches provide an overview of the most commonly practiced approaches within organizational church ministry and addressed in peer-reviewed academic literature.

Various leadership theories and approaches have been developed in recent decades, and efforts have been made to apply those theories to Christian leadership (Miner & Bickerton, 2020). Miner and Bickerton reviewed the deficiencies and inconsistencies of secular-based leadership approaches by dividing leadership theories into two groups. Making quick review of trait and style approaches, they more greatly emphasized the various qualities and characteristics of relational approaches, specifically leader-member exchange (LMX), transformational and servant leadership theory. They noted the most applicable leadership theory of servant leadership developed by Greenleaf (1970) and noted its shared Christian values while also pointing toward a derivative relational leadership approach developed from a biblical worldview by Wright (2009), which incorporates elements from both transformational and servant leadership approaches. Wright's full approach of relational leadership starts with a relationship between an individual and God, resulting in character, and then developing into leadership that influences mission and organizational culture. Miner and Bickerton (2020) also developed a relational leadership theory which is triune in nature as it includes 1) the goodness of the leader meant to reflect God's divine attributes, 2) spiritual and God-given personal resources, and 3)

organizationally based resources used through a relationship network for purposes related to fulfilling God's purpose in a "relational universe" (p. 288). However, for this phenomenological study, the servant leadership approach is used as the base to present an emerging leadership theory called *serving leadership theory* developed by Jennings and Stahl-Wert (2016), which shares many of the same values as Wright's (2009) relational leadership theory, and Miner and Bickerton's (2020) trinitarian leadership theory.

Servant Leadership

Leadership theory has been under development for many years, and Northouse (2019) summarized the difference between management and leadership by clarifying that the primary purpose of management is to create order, stability, and consistency for organizations, while the chief function of leadership is to effectively foster constructive change and movement through adaption. The clarification between management and leadership is important, as pastors are consistently in a position where they are challenged to manage and maintain stability and consistency of a church, while also leading in change as an obedient call to fulfill the responsibility of Scripture. Thus, it is necessary for an organization's success to have both management and leadership because leadership without management can be misdirected, and management without leadership can be stifling (Kotter, 1990). Ephesians states that the Church is the bride of Christ, issued with a challenge to be holy and blameless in Jesus' sight and reflecting God's goodness to the world (*Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, 1973/2011, Ephesians 5:22-33). Therefore, the biblical implication for pastoral leadership is to act as a stabilizer that leads people into service of the Gospel through their own service.

Greenleaf's (1970) seminal work on servant leadership serves as the fitting leadership approach to serve as a foundation for this study. While academically recognized as novel to

Greenleaf, it is arguable that this model was first presented by the person of Jesus Christ throughout His life and subsequent biblical instructions in the New Testament. Regardless, servant leadership focuses on prioritizing others above oneself by serving those over whom leaders have influence and authority. Greenleaf emphasized humility amid 10 dimensions including listening, empathy, healing, conceptualization, awareness, persuasion, stewardship, building community, foresight, and commitment to people development. Bavik (2020) also mentioned the necessary components of wisdom and morality to effectively observe needs of others and to build genuine and quality relationships. Greenleaf's (1970) focus on altruism is supported by Bavik's (2020) claimed that servant leaders comport themselves altruistically through an emphasis on serving their followers and their need to grow. Hale and Fields' (2007) study of servant leadership across cultures showed its cultural transferability, and with Brownell's (2010) study showing its application and verifiability in the hospitality industry, Bavik's (2020) study even further confirms its inter-industry applicability. Bavik's systematic review of servant leadership literature was conducted specifically toward hospitality and service industries, showing a profound transferability to the church as an organization, as pastors have the responsibility to act as simultaneous servants and leaders.

As servant leadership focuses on the altruism of the leader, it is a logical deduction that pastors, without proper training and support, have a tendency toward burnout and compassion fatigue (Adams et al., 2017; Spencer et al., 2012). Therefore, considering more modern approaches to servant leadership that reflect an ironically older, more Christ-centered, biblical approach is important. While not yet considered theory, Jennings and Stahl-Wert's (2016) publication of the concept of serving leadership, different from servant leadership, is unique in that it incorporates important biblical elements and other leadership theories that make it more

appropriate for this study including transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), authentic leadership (George, 2003), and leader-member exchange (LMX) leadership, a derivative of vertical dyad linkage theory (Dansereau et al., 1975). More related research and literature to this topic will be provided later in this chapter. Servant leadership is centrally based on putting the good of the follower above the needs of the leader (Greenleaf, 1977). However, the servant leadership approach was developed from a secular perspective while sharing many Judeo-Christian and biblical values (Miner & Bickerton, 2020).

Within Harms et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis of stress and leadership in correlation with leadership responsive behaviors and consequential follower stress, the results led to a discovery that supports the practices of servant leadership. The .86 overall effect size was large, and the four hypotheses tested included leadership approaches, such as transformational leadership and LMX. They concluded that a leader's approach of transformational leadership contributed to lower leader stress and burnout, high levels of transformational leadership also resulted in lower levels of follower stress and burnout, and high levels of LMX resulted in lower levels of follower stress and burnout. Their findings were largely confirmed and helped to confirm that burnout and turnover are related to the specific style and behaviors of leaders.

Martin et al. (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of LMX among subordinates and confirmed the value and importance of leadership relationships between leaders and subordinates with performance as the measurement. However, Martin et al.'s study did not address what Harms et al. concluded as another great concern of the moderating influence of individual and environmental factors in relationship to leadership and stress. Halbesleben and Buckley (2004) claimed extensive evidence exists in broader stress and burnout literature. The study of these issues within the leadership context remains relatively unexplored (Harms et al., 2017). While

Northouse (2019) explained Burns' (1978) approach of transformational leadership as primarily based in inspiration from the leader to the follower and is beneficial for empowerment of followers. Anderson et al. (2017) noted that many of today's leaders use transformational leadership practices with a primary focus on tasks and goals over the individuals who are being led. Harms et al. (2017) also noted that subordinate stress and burnout may be more effectively buffered through an LMX approach than transformational leadership. This observation implies that the relational aspect of leadership approach matters. Stone et al. (2004) pointed out the primary focus of servant leadership, unlike any other leadership approach, is the followers' development and health. Bavik (2020), along with Brownell (2010), concluded that servant leadership is the most effective leadership style in hospitality and service industries. However, because servant leadership was developed from a secular perspective, it does not account for the spiritual component of leadership required in the Christian ministry setting (Wright, 2009; Miner & Bickerton, 2020).

Serving Leadership

While certain qualities of servant leadership theory, an accepted academic theory on leadership, are transferable to the pastoral ministry setting, a need exists for a more holistic approach for ministry leadership (Ayers, 2015; Miner & Bickerton, 2020; Wright, 2009). Jennings and Stahl-Wert (2016) developed an approach to leadership that incorporated the three components of both Wright (2009) and Miner and Bickerton (2020) and called it *serving leadership*. Serving leadership focuses on five leadership practices, including upending the pyramid, raising the bar, blazing the trail, building on strength, and running with great purpose (Jennings & Stahl-Wert, 2016). Upending the pyramid, or turning it upside down, is meant to contrast the top-down model of leadership known in many organizations and focuses on the

leader being at the bottom of the upside-down pyramid to support those above. Raising the bar focuses on the execution of roles with excellence. Also, raising the bar emphasizes selecting the most appropriate and best fit for the organizational team as the predictive measures of Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit is meant to help along with practices from Wheelan et al. (2020), who encouraged hiring for skill, while Goodall (2013) emphasized hiring for attitude and training skill. Blazing the trail is meant to instruct leaders to lead by removing obstacles for employees and the organization and leading by trailblazing, which is consistent with Kotter's (2012) teaching on how to lead an organization through change. Building on strength is used to emphasize the importance of focusing on individual strengths, hiring for weaknesses, and enabling others' strengths for the benefit of the greater good. Running with great purpose is used to emphasize the importance of having a clear vision with a lasting purpose. Within a biblical worldview, this purpose must be grounded in a personal relationship with Jesus, healthy relationships with strong accountability, and bettering the environment around oneself through influencing others by way of all necessary means, including organizational structure and culture. Habakkuk 2:2 says, "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it" (*Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, 2001/2016). It is important for a leader to have the empowerment to lead and to practice leadership through these five steps. Using servant leadership as an academically accepted theoretical framework while implementing the needed elements of the emerging serving leadership model provides the perspective necessary to review literature regarding leadership practices that are effective in aiding P-O Fit.

Leadership Practices

An abundance of literature exists on recommended leadership practices that contribute to increased organizational and individual success, including self-reflection (Branson, 2007; Lanaj

et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2015; Nesbit, 2012; Park & Millora, 2012), social context awareness (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; White Smith, 2020), and mindfulness (Frederick et al., 2021; Hulsheger et al., 2013; Luken & Sammons, 2016). These three leadership practices were chosen for this literature review because they each have a connection to the theoretical framework, the study methodology, and implications on the findings within the framework of the phenomenon. Additionally, each of these three practices are shown to improve leaders' effectiveness when developed and practiced well (Frederick et al., 2021; Lanaj et al., 2019; White Smith, 2020), likely improving P-O Fit.

Self-Reflection

The practice of self-reflection was introduced into educational literature by Dewey (1933), giving his students time to think on information, experiences, and course material, as well as the student's role within this reflection. Since that time, the practice of self-reflection has been studied in a variety of settings, including higher education and educational leadership (Branson, 2007; Mamede & Schmidt, 2005; Martinez, 2015; Park & Millora, 2012). Park and Millora (2012) studied this theory and practice among college-aged students and empirically showed that reflection resulted in greater self-awareness and impacts an individual's interpersonal and intrapersonal identity by making meaning of past experiences and influencing the future. Mamede and Schmidt (2005) recognized that self-reflection must be practiced well because there is a risk it may negatively affect a person by creating false reality. They also claim that self-reflection is a skill that must be developed and under proper training. Martinez' (2015) research supported Mamede and Schmidt's (2005) claim by empirically showing that leaders who practice self-reflection must be careful to mind self-reflection resistance known as distancing, opposition, and avoiding intense emotions.

As Park and Millora (2012) carried the self-reflection practice from a primary and secondary educational environment to a higher education environment, Mamede and Schmidt (2005) and Martinez (2015) transferred this practice into educational leadership environments. Advancing the theory and application even more in leadership contexts, Lanaj et al. (2019) claimed that much research and knowledge exists regarding the effect of leaders on followers, but very little research exists that focused specifically on the leader as an individual. Their study shows the value of leaders who practice self-reflection by less energy depletion, improved work engagement, prosocial impact, and clout. Challenges like burnout, vision conflict, compassion fatigue, and not being heard are proven challenges for pastors (Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013; Joynt, 2013, 2019; Knight Johnson, 2018; Spencer et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important to utilize self-reflection for pastors being interviewed in this study for the purpose of helping provide insight to the phenomenon under investigation, as well as applying the practice of self-reflection by compiling each pastor's self-reflective comments into a societal whole to evaluate the validity of the hypothesized phenomenon of poor P-O Fit.

Nesbit (2012) also found that leaders who practiced self-reflection developed as leaders when practiced in concert managing emotional reactions to feedback and enacting self-regulatory processes for personal development. Park and Millora (2012) recognized that self-reflection is a subjective process because self-reflection is an interpretivist practice that requires an individual share one's own perception of what has taken place while situating that reflection into their reality. Regardless, self-reflection as a practice is believed to provide improved leadership in individuals. Self-reflection is not just practiced through reflecting on experiences but also through self-evaluation, which can lead to personal development (Nesbit, 2012). This practice of

self-evaluation and self-reflection may be catalyzed through positive mentoring relationships (Kracjsak, 2018a; Son, 2016).

Social Context Awareness

Bandura's SCT (2001) includes the important element of social context awareness factors and the self-reflection of them, which impacts motivation and desired outcome for employees and leadership effectiveness. In agreement with SCT's approach to cognitive development, Lloyd and Mertens (2018) proposed the inclusion of social context awareness as a fourth variable to determine Vroom's (1964) motivational force as determined by the multiplication of expectancy, instrumentality, valence, and social impact. Social impact can be determined by several factors and be known not just by social context awareness but by how leaders influence the social context. Bandura's SCT aligns with Kandrom's (2015) observation that one's locus of control influences motivation, and the locus of control is influenced by social factors, such as relationships, work conditions, organizational structure and job requirements, and compensation. Therefore, a leader should be aware of the social context and seek to facilitate factors that positively socialize other employees and members of the organization through positive mentoring relationships (Son, 2016) and a culture of shared values (Wheelan et al., 2020).

Following the reasoning that leader self-reflection will result in an improved prosocial impact for leaders (Lanaj et al., 2019), the social context awareness of leaders may also improve by engaging in consumer culture and volunteer management training, especially in the ministry setting (White Smith, 2020), just as educators are encouraged to continue education and training, not just reducing pastoral burnout but also having a constructive impact on the organization. Other strategies and practices already mentioned in the section on pastoral resilience may be applied to improve social context awareness.

Mindfulness

Considering the many references and sources citing the predictive measures and situations that increase pastoral burnout and turnover, a consistent theme of conflict surfaced in the literature review (Beebe, 2007; Joynt, 2013; Joynt, 2019). Styles of conflict management, vision conflict, and role conflict all contribute to the increase in pastoral turnover (Adams et al., 2017; Beebe, 2007; Foss, 2002; Jackson-Jordan, 2013; Spencer et al., 2012). Conflict is predicted to take an emotional toll on pastors, thereby contributing to burnout and turnover (Joynt, 2019; Knight Johnson, 2018). As a practice to reduce burnout, mindfulness has been a matter of study as it relates to job burnout (Cohen-Katz et al., 2005; Luken & Sammons, 2016; Moody et al., 2013).

Mindfulness is known to include the following four characteristics (Brown et al., 2007):

- 1) Like self-reflection, an individual receives and ponders on both internal and external experiences;
- 2) mindful practice is reduced to the pre-conceptions of the practitioner, meaning it is subjective and within the individual's perceptions;
- 3) different from self-reflection, mindfulness takes place in an awareness and focus of the present, moment-to-moment reality in lieu of pondering the past or futuristic fantasizing (Hulsheger et al., 2013);
- 4) mindfulness is inherent and varies by person.

Hulsheger et al. studied the practice of mindfulness in the fields of interactive service work, allowing their findings to serve some degree of transferability to the phenomenon under study. Within their two studies, they concluded that individuals who practice mindfulness experience less emotional exhaustion and increased job satisfaction both within self and between-person contexts. More recent literature states the same claim that an individual's current mindfulness and awareness reduces burnout (Braun et al., 2017; Sox et al. 2018).

Luken and Sammons (2016) conducted a systematic review of mindfulness as a practice for reducing job burnout and synthesized eight studies showing the positive impact of mindfulness training among employees. Each study included participants working in professions centered on helping others, requiring emotional awareness and personal interaction. Frederick et al. (2021) claimed that pastors share many working conditions as other professions associated with emotional labor (Hoshchild, 1983) as pastors are to manage both surface and deep acting when engaging emotions personally and with others (Kinman et al., 2011). To address the conflict of interest between the Buddhist origination of mindfulness practices and Christian practices, Frederick et al. (2021) suggested that mindfulness for all Christians, especially pastors, include *lectio divina*, centering prayer, and the examen. *Lectio divina* is the practice of reading Scripture in pursuit of divine revelation from God via the Bible. Centering prayer is intended to focus on the presence of God and the relational aspect with God. Lastly, the examen is a reflective practice to evaluate intentions, motivations, and attitudes with intention of creating a freedom to live out one's purpose and to deepen intimacy (Frederick & Muldoon, 2020).

Person-Organization Fit

Much research has been conducted surrounding the concept of a person's fit within an organization from perspectives of person, situational, and interactional theories (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Chatman's (1989) original proposal of the P-O Fit model was an interactional approach that recognized the changing nature of the person, the situation, and the organization, and that each factor is both influenced by and influences the others. Chatman recognized the shortcoming that a person theorist would simply focus on the impact a person has on the organization (Epstein & O'Brien, 1985), that a situational theorist would simply focus on the impact a situation has on a person (Louis, 1980), and that the interactional theorist may include

the interaction between the situation and the person but fail to track information of the morphing of people and situations over a long period of time (Staw, 1986). Chatman defined P-O Fit as a value and norm-congruence existence between an organization and the values of persons. While Chatman's definition is valid, this study follows the understanding in recent literature that the concept of P-O Fit has expanded beyond simply the values of the organization and person to incorporate a more holistic approach, including the needs and norms of both the organization and employee (Vveinhardt & Gulbovaite, 2017). Chatman's intention for the development of this model was to provide a predictor of P-O Fit to help determine a person's fit within an organization and if their values change along with aligning to organizational norms. For this study, P-O Fit provides an ideal framework to serve not just as a predictor but as an evaluative tool from an interactional approach to include the occurrences of a participant's experiences over a prolonged period of time. Organizational norms are defined as desired organizational citizenship behaviors and do not explicitly state, nor explicitly deny, the inclusion of organizational structure by which a person is to operate. For this study, organizational structure is included in the concept of a person's values and an organization's values and norms, as implied by Vveinhardt and Gulboviante.

Since Chatman's inceptual work of P-O Fit, more developed models and alternatives have been presented in the literature, including person-job, person-group, and person-supervisor (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003). Kristof-Brown et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis, the most recent meta-analysis of this topic after an exhaustive review of academic, peer-reviewed literature, investigated the relationship and consequences of an individual's fit in an organization based on person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit from pre-entry and post-entry perspectives. The four domain two-factor relationships and their consequences

were evaluated based on the empirical evidence provided by the sources chosen, and the effect was moderate. After analyzing the various P-O Fit models to date and moderators for fit-outcome relationships, the authors brought conceptualizations, operationalizations, and measurement approaches to serve as potential moderates for the fit-outcome relationships.

Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) concluded job satisfaction should be considered within the domain of fit as most strongly associated with person-job fit and organizational commitment with P-O Fit, which influences employee retention. Their conclusion aligns with Verquer et al.'s (2003) conclusion that the best predictor of outcomes of P-O Fit is an individuals' overall assessment of fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Vveinhardt and Gulbovaite (2017) conducted an analysis of literature on P-O Fit models and recognized the evolution of terminology in what are synonymously considered value-congruency models. Since Chatman's (1989) introduction of the model of P-O Fit, Vveinhardt and Gulbovaite (2017) identified and reviewed 12 models that have been developed. Meglino and Ravlin's (1998) model emphasized the clarification and descriptive nature found in the values rather than the interactional effective process. Cable and Edwards (2004) emphasized the relationships between psychological well-being and value congruence of the participant. Verplanken (2004) focused on how value congruence impacts attitudes and human relations. Westerman and Cyr (2004) revised the multidimensional model of P-O Fit, focusing on two relevant areas to this study: 1) the congruence of values and personalities and 2) a need-supplies fit. Edwards and Cable (2009) measured their model by the final element of turnover intention of the participant. Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) based their model on need satisfaction in three areas, including autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Suar and Khuntia (2010) focused on values among various positions in various sectors. Kallas et al. (2010) brought the importance of

considering and comparing the impact of perceived values and declared values between the organization and the participant when predicting fit. Hoffman et al. (2011) incorporated the influence of transformational leadership qualities and practices into the fit model. Seong and Kristof-Brown (2012) used their developed version to evaluate values-based fit and commitment. Bao (2012) developed an integrated framework which Vveinhardt and Gulbovaite (2017) claimed is the most comprehensive model of factors influencing fit that is found in scientific literature. They then developed and presented a model called the theoretical model of congruence of personal and organizational values. Their study is unique in that it provides a predictive measure as well as offers recommendations for how to strengthen organizational value congruence.

As the phenomenon of pastors' experiences of having lost or left their employment due to a perceived poor P-O Fit is studied, Chatman's (1989) original model provides sufficient framework by which to base the research methodology without compromising the qualitative nature of the study. Chatman's definitions and framework for both values and norms are inclusive of the phenomenon under study and establish a foundation to allow for participants to share experiences without limiting data collection by restrictive quantitative methods. Furthermore, Fischer and Schultz (2017) found leadership empowerment has positive effects on an organization. However, even as pastors may receive the empowerment needed to be successful in a church organization, research shows seminaries fail to prepare pastors with the leadership skills and knowledge needed to evaluate the fit in initial interviews and develop fit while in the position (White Smith, 2020).

While not the first to study the phenomenon of pastors' experiences leading to, during, and after employment, a search for any academic literature using P-O Fit as a moderator for such

a study rendered no results, suggesting this study to be unique and the first using this approach. Mueller and McDuff (2004) conducted a study examining the clergy-congregation mismatch or misfit from the perspective of liberalism versus conservatism, treating theological and doctrinal issues rather than organizational structure and leadership. They found that pastors are more likely to leave their employment if they possess more liberal political or doctrinal views in contradiction to a more conservative congregation, than if the pastor is more politically and doctrinally conservative than the congregation. This concept of clergy-congregation mismatch or misfit is applicable to the current research based on a new perspective and considerations, including pastoral/ministerial tenure with regards to organizational leadership structure and how it fits or does not fit with personality, spiritual gifts, and leadership style of the pastor.

Chatman's (1989) recognition that P-O Fit provides a framework to provide understanding between a participant and the organization is complemented by Kracjsak's (2018b) theoretical framework for which sense making and sense giving are used to provide mutual understanding through self-evaluation of relationships between employee commitment and organizational culture. The opportunity to utilize P-O Fit also supports Ruck et al.'s (2017) findings that giving employees a voice improves work engagement. Although this research is ex post facto, it may provide insight into new approaches that can improve tenure and bring about improved employee support and development. Jehanzeb (2020) conducted a study in which P-O Fit was utilized as a moderator and determined communication between the two parties resulted in improved organizational citizenship behaviors and increased organization commitment, thereby decreasing turnover. Additionally, if P-O Fit can be both predicted and evaluated, therefore reducing turnover, it will work by both an organization and the person having clearly communicated values and norms. Lin (2019) empirically concluded by using expectancy and

social identity theories that turnover intention can be diminished if an organization will improve employee development opportunities, a form of organization support needed for employees.

Summary

Pastoral turnover and burnout are ever-increasing problems for mainline Protestant evangelical churches. Because this problem threatens the vitality and existence of churches, extensive research has been conducted to determine reasons for pastoral burnout and turnover (Beebe, 2007). While an abundance of research exists regarding pastoral turnover and ways to increase pastoral resilience, little research has been conducted surrounding the experiences of pastors viewed from the perspective as organizational leaders, their perceived P-O Fit within the church they served, and the impact of leadership education pastors received on the job, in seminary, or in other ministry-related institutions. Clergy-related educational institutions, seminaries, and ministry schools, including schools of divinity, as a general whole do not teach business courses, organizational leadership, or educational theory and approach, which results in the release of pastors who may be trained in theology but lack the understanding and skills to know what is required to effectively educate and administrate within the organizational structure of the church (Strunk et al., 2017). Therefore, this study fits within the organizational leadership field in the school of education from a perspective that pastors are like that of educators and administrators, and the church is akin to the educational institution.

SCT provides a theoretical framework by which pastors' experiences among sociocultural influences contribute to the new information revealed from this study. This phenomenological study of past experiences has allowed the opportunity for the beneficial leadership practice of self-reflection (Nesbit, 2012; Son, 2016) for pastors. As pastors are considered servants and viewed as educators, both in this study and biblically, servant leadership

is used as a framework to discuss biblical expressions of leadership and its impact on P-O Fit. Secular leadership theories, models, and practices are often segregated from Christian church leaders' views, but emergent research reveals a need to address the impact to churches' leadership practices, equipping, and styles. Additionally, research shows some practices, like self-reflection, mindfulness, awareness, and resource availability help pastors be more resilient.

Little research has been conducted from the perspective of the church as an educational institution with an organization that possesses a leadership structure in which the pastor serves as both an educator and an administrator. While relationships within the organizational church have been studied, the overarching personality, or a church organization, should be considered by the church when hiring a pastor, and the pastor should consider the personality and needs of the church organization before accepting a job as the pastor in the same way a school evaluates its needs and a prospective educator. The P-O Fit theory and model provide a platform for this study to investigate an identified gap in research that needs to be addressed. By exploring and describing pastors' experiences of losing or leaving their jobs because of poor P-O Fit, pastors and church leaders may be able to evaluate potential issues that may help to prevent pastoral turnover and increase P-O Fit (i.e., pastor-church or educator-educational institution fit).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe pastors' experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor person-organization fit. For this study, pastoral staff turnover was defined as the employment of full-time pastoral staff employed for at least one year who have resulted in voluntary or involuntary resignation from their place of employment because of value incongruence. Chapter three includes a thorough description of the hermeneutical phenomenological research design. The research design section articulates why the history and rationale applies to the chosen research design. The research questions were articulated with the purpose of identifying and exploring the stated phenomenon under study. Next, the settings and participants are described, including criterion used and sampling methods chosen and applied. The researcher's positionality is described including philosophical assumptions and the interpretive framework. Lastly, an exhaustive list of the research procedures, a detailed description of the data collection plan, and reasons for trustworthiness are discussed.

Research Design

This study followed a hermeneutic phenomenological design. Pastors who experience the loss or leaving of employment, either forced or voluntary, from a church is often the result of perceived poor person-organization fit (P-O Fit), and the lack of adequate leadership education from seminary influences the pastor's experience. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that a qualitative study is most appropriate when there is a lack of reliable and valid measurable instruments that would permit a quantitative study. While there have been quantitative

instruments used to assess pastoral burnout and turnover like the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey* (MBI-HSS) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), the *Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey* (MBI-ES) (Maslach et al., 1997a), the *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* (TKI) (Jones, 1976; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977), and the *Differentiation of Self and Role-Clergy Version* (DSR-C) (Beebe, 2007), there were no reliable and valid instruments found to measure P-O Fit within the organization for a pastor and a church. Additionally, there were no studies found that directly address leadership education in seminary and other educational institutions from a pastoral perspective. This qualitative study provides the informational base needed of experiences shared by pastors by which a foundation is built to evaluate this phenomenon on a larger scale. As a phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016), a need exists for a deeper understanding of the experiences of pastors who have lost or left their jobs as a result of perceived poor P-O Fit and how leadership education influenced the experience. While many quantitative studies have been conducted using surveys, such as the MBI, understanding the experiences of pastors who have experienced this phenomenon through data collection using methods, including one-on-one interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group, in that order, and contextualizing the phenomenon benefits the field of research and has practical implications for further research, presenting opportunities to address the issue in constructive ways. Barritt's (1986) observation that gaining understanding of a phenomenon through research may improve practice through greater insight affirms the best design for this study is a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

A hermeneutic approach was most appropriate for this study, as it focuses on the

experiences of “people” and not “subjects” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 6). As a researcher, I have investigated both the transcendental (Moustakas, 1994) and hermeneutic approaches of phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990, 2016). A transcendental approach focuses primarily on the description of the stated phenomenon and less on the interpretation of the researcher as presented by Husserl and Moustakas (1994). Because the pastor is a human, and the Church is personified as the bride of Christ in the Bible (see Ephesians 5:22-33), a hermeneutic approach allows for a deeper understanding and investigation of the experiences of pastors who experienced the stated phenomenon. Furthermore, the hermeneutical approach encourages a description of the essence of the lived experience by interpreting the “texts of life” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4) and allows for the incorporation of Van Manen’s practice of phenomenological reflection while also bracketing the researcher from the interpretation of the study. Because the life and experiences of a pastor are holistic in nature as the different aspects of life are inextricably connected, Van Manen’s (1990) opinion of transcendental phenomenology that much of educational research has a tendency to reduce life into small, disconnected fragments of little use to practitioners is affirmation that the hermeneutical approach best fits this study.

Giorgi (2009) suggested that bracketing of the researcher’s experiences provides knowledge and encourages the stating of past experiences while not engaging or projecting those impressions within the experienced study. Creswell and Poth (2018) also reflected Husserl’s and Moustakas’ (1994) recommendation of bracketing because a researcher’s experiences can be revealed and allow the reader to determine if the researcher successfully maintained the appropriate relationship between the phenomenon under study and personal experiences. Heidegger, a student of Husserl’s, diverged from this school of transcendental phenomenological thought and encouraged the embrace of the interpretivist approach in which a researcher is open

and appropriately identifies their place in the development, data collection, and interpretation of the study (Kafle, 2011). Van Manen (1990), a student of Heidegger, also diverged from the bracketing process promoted in transcendental phenomenology and promoted the practice of phenomenological reflection, which is exercised through noting former experiences, preconceived ideas or hypotheses, and objectively noting if findings aligned with the preconceived ideas or hypotheses. Even still, Van Manen (1990) recognized that interpretation should come as a result of a reflection of lived experiences and that reflection must be sober, thoughtful, and free from the influences of theoretical, prejudicial, and suppositional positions.

LeVasseur (2003) recognized this tension of preconceptions by questioning the possibility for one to be free from habits of structuring experience and suggests suspending the structure briefly enough for one to reflect, thereby generating curiosity and an ability to move toward the items of reflection themselves. As the researcher of this study who has personal relationships and professional relationships with participants of the study, it was impossible to entirely bracket myself with prior experiences and values from the data interpretation, as the interpretation was to be rendered from prior experience and education based in theory and philosophical assumptions. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach allowed for the researcher to state and apply foundational values to the study by which conclusions were drawn, interpretation was rendered, and discussion was presented (Pantic & Wubbels, 2012; Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, in an effort to practice the most neutrality possible and refrain from biases, the interviewer framed and asked questions of the participants in an open-ended, non-leading format and practiced interview techniques that refrained from interjecting personal experiences or feelings into interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This hermeneutic approach is consistent with approaching the phenomenon through a

lens of epistemological constructivist interpretation. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Bandura's (1986a, 1986b, 1991, 2001) sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory (SCT) support this type of study in establishing that a person's reality is constructed through a collection of past experiences, lessons learned from reflection, and responses to those experiences. Additionally, the research follows eight views provided by Van Manen (1990) for hermeneutic phenomenology research including viewing it as: 1) lived experience, 2) explication as dependent on description of the human, 3) description of the essence, 4) meaning described through explanation, 5) human study of phenomena through scientific methods, 6) involving attentiveness of thoughtfulness by the researcher, 7) a search for the human meaning, and 8) inseparable from writing a rich, thick, description of the lived experience. Applying Bandura's (1991, 2012) theory of SCT to aid in framing the hermeneutic approach as described by Van Manen (1990) also leads to the practice of Dewey's (1933) seminal work on the theory of self-reflection and how an individual's practice of self-reflection impacts the formation of perceived reality and the human experience. The framework for this study was ideal because pastors self-reflected on past experiences, consequently identifying themes and points of incongruence using the framework of the P-O Fit model (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Furthermore, this approach was best for this topic because it provided the opportunity to gather a deeper understanding of phenomenon and develop practices or policies related to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed following Marshall and Rossman's (2015) recommendation that questions be open-ended and nondirectional. Creswell and Poth

(2018) recommend five to seven questions, with the central (first) question revealing the phenomenological approach as suggested by Morse (1994).

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of pastors who left employment as a result of poor person-organization fit?

Sub-Question One

How do pastors describe their experience as a fit within the organization of the church?

Sub-Question Two

How do pastors describe how person-organization fit influenced their exodus from the church in which they served?

Sub-Question Three

How do pastors describe the leadership education they received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution?

Sub-Question Four

How do pastors describe the need for leadership education to improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the organization?

Setting and Participants

The setting and participants chosen in a study were considered with ethics to maintain protection of participants and the settings while identifying a setting and participants that render data useful for the study itself (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Weis & Fine, 2000). It is the researcher's responsibility to protect the identity of participants and the sites, taking care to avoid unnecessarily presenting a harmful picture with future implications (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The pre-determined settings defined in this study were directly related to the participants that

included lead/senior pastors who must have also met specific pre-determined criteria.

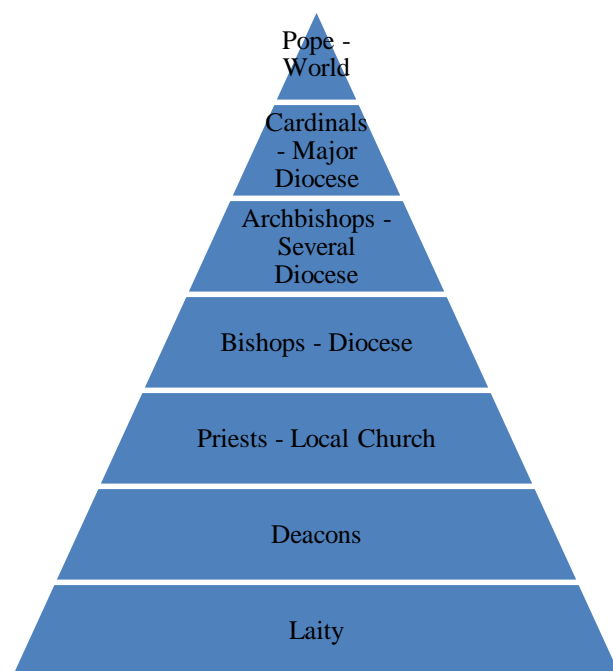
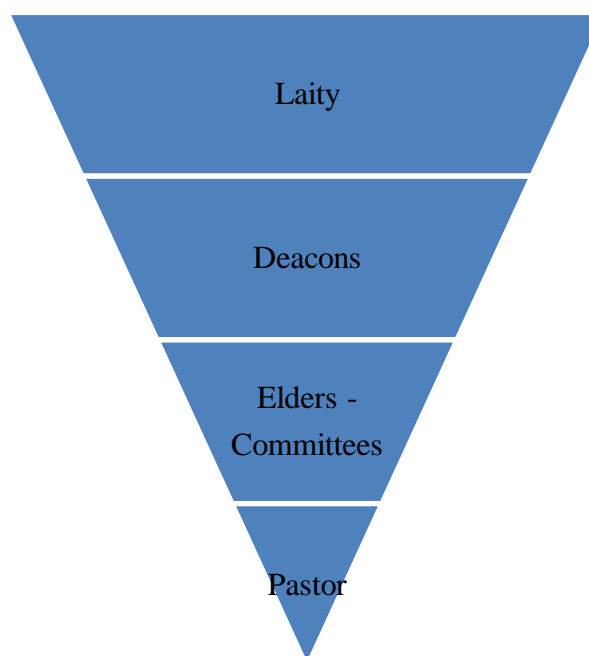
Setting

The setting for this study included Southern Baptist Protestant evangelical churches with an autonomous governance from an overarching hierarchical religious or denominational entity. While this given criterion was met, the 10 specific sites vary in geography and included churches in the southeastern United States. The sites in the study did not carry any ethical issues, including power issues, access problems, site disruption, or field issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018) because the participants associated with the sites are no longer serving/working at them. It was necessary to subscribe to the pre-determined criteria of the sites because the research was situated between the participants and the sites in which they served/worked. Furthermore, the context of each church led to an understanding of the unique circumstances and situations that shaped the events, actions, and provided depth of meaning (Maxwell, 2013).

The Southern Baptist governance is differentiated from other denominations in that each church's leadership structure and polity are formed on an independent church-to-church basis. As such, the Southern Baptist denomination is considered a cooperative of churches and not a centralized church, like that of the United Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, or the Episcopal Church. As long as a nominal Southern Baptist church operates in accordance with certain doctrines and beliefs and is held accountable to those doctrines and beliefs by a cooperating entity, it may be called a Southern Baptist church (see: Baptist Faith and Message 2000, 2022). Southern Baptist churches may be considered "cooperating" if they are either a part of a local association of Southern Baptist churches, a part of the state association of Southern Baptist churches, or a part of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program (Join the Family, 2022).

The implications of the differentiation among Southern Baptist churches include how

churches are set up governmentally, are funded, manage funds, and establish and retain pastoral leadership. An elementary model is provided for understanding the difference in church governance between the Southern Baptist church and the Roman Catholic Church in Figure 3. Figure 3 illustrates those decisions, direction, funds, and priests (equivalent of pastors in the Southern Baptist denomination) are at varying levels dictated by the governing authorities, ultimately arriving at the Pope. Therefore, priests are placed in congregations and removed based on a variety of factors. Conversely, the Southern Baptist denomination governance for churches primarily emphasizes a congregational governance in which the local church is ultimately responsible for their own decisions, direction, funds, and pastoral leadership. Additionally, Southern Baptist churches vary in forms of governance, including pastor-led, elder-led, deacon-led, committee-led, and full congregation-led, indicating what entity or group is held responsible to make decisions. Some of these governments depend on leadership from an entity or groups while reserving large, prescribed classifications of decisions for congregational support by majority or quorum. One of these decisions is often who will be called/offered the position of lead/senior pastor. In the Southern Baptist denomination, there is no hierarchical or governing entity that assigns and places pastors in a church, leaving pastors in a type of free agency position while simultaneously at the mercy of the perceived P-O Fit. Therefore, the settings for this study were limited to Southern Baptist churches with a self-governing autonomy to investigate the phenomenon of lead/senior pastors who lost or left their employment due to a perceived or even experienced poor P-O Fit. Further details were provided including the variations in congregational membership and attendance, debt, and budget for the purpose of contextualizing and identifying common themes and differences among the sites for the purpose of collecting extensive details about each site (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Figure 3*Church Governance Comparison***Catholic Church Governance Model****Southern Baptist Governance Model****Participants**

Participants in this study were individuals who have served as lead/senior pastors and who have experienced the phenomenon under study, as is required by Van Manen (2014). Ten pastors were chosen to achieve thematic saturation and follow Dukes' (1984) recommendation of participants for a phenomenological study. Participants chosen for the study have completed a minimum bachelor's degree from a seminary or an accredited four-year college-university and have been ordained into the gospel ministry by a church, denomination, or university. Pastors have served at a Southern Baptist church with the above criteria already having been accomplished in which they either voluntarily or involuntarily left employment within the last five years. Pastors served at the given church for a minimum of one year in the lead/senior pastor role full-time. Pastors who left that employment may or may not have ceased to serve in

vocational ministry altogether.

With such a list of criteria that was met to participate in the study, purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study and was considered a form of non-probability sampling due to the researcher's active decision-making concerning participants included in the sample (Oliver, 2006). Some factors and criteria that may have influenced the sample chosen by the researcher include knowledge of the issue under study and capacity and willingness to participate in the research study.

Pastors were invited using the recruitment statement from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this study (Appendix F). Pastors were asked to then complete the consent form verifying they have experienced the phenomenon and met the criteria. After utilizing this purposive and criterion sampling approach, future sampling led to a snowball sampling technique (Morgan, 2008), as this small pool led to more known pastors who were eligible to participate in the study. Additionally, while the criteria required purposive and criterion sampling techniques, maximum variation was included from different backgrounds and experiences with the shared phenomenological experience by thoroughly describing variation among participants and their experiences and similarities through core elements and shared outcomes (Patton, 1990).

Researcher Positionality

Van Manen (1990) stated that researchers identify a phenomenon as the result of an “abiding concern” (p. 31)—an issue that is of interest to the researcher. Pastors’ experiences because of turnover and the resulting effects on the church and the pastors are of great concern to me personally. The lack of leadership education in seminary and other ministry-related institutions seems to leave pastors unprepared to navigate the multi-faceted responsibilities in the church, which create person-organization value incongruence. I have a great desire to help

pastors and churches identify points of connectivity that will increase tenure and effectiveness within the church for the fulfillment of its purpose, which is to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:19-20). I am motivated having conducted this study because the information gathered and interpreted has provided a base of information by which further research may be conducted after the evidence supported that this phenomenon exists. I have developed this study, interpreted past research and literature, and interpreted findings using a social constructivist framework as is recommended from Creswell and Poth (2018). I also employed the following philosophical assumptions: from an ontological perspective of one reality with many perceptions developed from many perspectives, with epistemologically one absolute truth as defined by the authority of the Holy Bible, and axiologically making my values known and effectively bracketing them from the study.

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework used in this study clearly defines the fundamental belief system that guides the course of research in action (Guba, 1990) and provides an understanding of how the research was conducted and the findings were evaluated and interpreted (Huff, 2009). I used social constructivism (Mertens, 2015) as the interpretive framework for this research. With an approach of social constructivism, I recognized, as a researcher, I also constructed an interpretation based on my own experiences prior to and during the study, which led me to employ a hermeneutic approach (Van Manen, 1990) as opposed to a transcendental approach to this phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Using hermeneutic phenomenology as the design and social constructivism as an interpretive framework, I also defined the philosophical assumptions by which the research was designed, conducted, and interpreted, including ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Philosophical Assumptions

Huff (2009) explained that philosophy is important to reveal in research because it points from where the researcher begins, the direction of the research, and criteria by which evaluations, decisions, and findings are determined. As a researcher seeking to understand the experiences of pastors within a phenomenon, I applied a constructivist approach, which allowed for me to provide interpretive findings based on interactions with participants and to focus on the participants' views. As a researcher, I used this approach to provide both an interpretation of the participants' experiences and the research itself. A professing Christian, I believe in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Bible and the literal application of 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (*Holy Bible*, New International Version, 1973/2011). Using this verse, deductive reasoning leads me to believe that the Bible is God's written word and provides humankind with absolute authority. Therefore, the philosophical assumptions by which this study was conducted are informed based on this worldview.

Ontological Assumption

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative researchers must intentionally report the multiplicity of realities when studying individuals. Standing against this assumption of multiple realities, I employ a viewpoint that there exists a singular reality within which there are many perspectives, each one held by every individual. While reality may be deemed as multiplicative among relativists because many people have different views, perspectives, perceptions, experiences, beliefs, and values, I reason that reality is singular, and the singular reality of the world includes the multiplicity of views, perspectives, perceptions, experiences, beliefs, and

values. This assumption is based in the belief in one God who is absolute in authority, and all reality is created and sustained by Him (See Colossians 1:16-17). Presently within creation, deception, caused by sin, veils absolute truth from mankind only to be revealed divinely through progressive revelation in the process of sanctification and ultimately upon glorification (See Colossians 3:4). Recognizing the existence of absolute truth in a singular reality, and using God's authority in the Holy Bible as a lens, I assume that the pursuit of capturing and understanding an individual's experiences are necessary to reveal truth as I moved forward to fulfill my responsibility to reveal truth as I pursued Jesus' model prayer to God that "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, *Holy Bible*, New International Version, 1973/2011).

Epistemological Assumption

Within my epistemological assumption for this phenomenology, I maintain that an individual's subjective views, experiences, and perceptions are necessary to explore, rather than determine, reality in order to further understand it. In this study, I focused on individuals' views and experiences to gain knowledge of the phenomenon under study. Creswell and Poth (2018) communicated that an effective practice requires researchers to understand context in the field of study. I have a pre-existing relationship with the pastorate as a profession and institutional knowledge from church and business experience, therefore education provides a greater understanding of participants' subjective views. Additionally, this epistemological assumption informed the data collection methods I used as I sought to understand individuals' experiences and the phenomenon through rich, thick discovery and effectively removing distance from participants while not projecting opinions or exercising biases (Guba & Lincoln, 1988).

Axiological Assumption

I believe it is necessary to clarify my axiological assumption by defining my personal values that inspired the research, including my social position (Berger, 2015). It is also necessary to position myself as the researcher as it relates “to the context and setting of the research” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). The researcher positionality, ontological assumption, and epistemological assumption sections above reveal many beliefs and values regarding the existence of absolute truth, a singular reality, a supreme God, and personal purpose, along with academic, professional, and personal interest that apply to the study. Further information is provided in the Researcher’s Role section below.

Researcher’s Role

At the time of this research, I served as the full-time vocational lead pastor at a church in Western North Carolina. I received a bachelor’s degree in foreign language (Spanish) and international trade from Mississippi College, followed by earning a Master of Arts degree in Spanish literature and linguistics from Auburn University. I served as a university instructor at four universities and worked in vocational Christian ministry for the last 10 years. During that time, I served on staff at the same church and had the opportunity to meet many pastors from various sized churches in different states who have experienced challenges in their roles as lead/senior pastors. Although I had previously known some of the participants, I did not currently have any authority over them or their churches and recruited participants through posting the study on three social media sites for lead/senior pastors, based on personal knowledge, and by introduction. As a lead/senior pastor, my experiences could have created bias, but I had not experienced the phenomenon under study. To further avoid imposing bias, I asked open-ended questions in the data collection methods and maintained neutrality.

I have two passions that influenced the research: 1) organizational leadership and 2) the local church. These passions inspired me to pursue a Doctor of Philosophy in organizational leadership to bring knowledge and skills to the organized church for the purpose of consulting to constructively improve the organizational leadership, structure, and functionality of pastors. With firsthand experience in vocational ministry, I am familiar with lead/senior pastors who have left or been fired from their positions and made statements similar to the following: “If the structure had been different, I could have been more effective,” and “If I had more leadership education and training, I could have navigated the issues.” These experiences, the education of organizational leadership from the Ph.D. program at Liberty University, an increased number of requests by church leadership and pastors for me to provide help and direction, along with a lack of research for this phenomenon inspired this study. My desire is to help both pastors and churches partner more effectively to accomplish the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and to demonstrate the need for greater intentionality in leadership education in seminaries and other ministry-related institutions. I chose a hermeneutic phenomenology research design because a greater understanding of the phenomenon is needed to understand the problem so that pastors and churches can be more successful together.

Procedures

After the proposal was accepted and approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A), participants were recruited based on the sampling criteria as defined in the “Participants” section, using three social media sites, based on personal relationships and previous knowledge, and by introduction using snowball sampling techniques if necessary (Morgan, 2008; see Appendix E). Ten participants were chosen that met the criteria established to determine the participants had experienced the defined phenomenon of lead/senior

pastors who have lost or left their role at an autonomously governed protestant evangelical church. This follows Dukes (1984) and Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation of interviewing five to 25 individuals while also meeting requirements for Liberty University's School of Education. Informed consent forms (See Appendix E) were provided until 10 participants, who met the sampling criteria, agreed to participate.

Following the appropriate data collection methods for a hermeneutic phenomenological design, data was triangulated through semi-structured one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B), a questionnaire including a demographic survey (see Appendix C), and a focus group, in that order, as sampling includes the participant level, setting level, and the experience under study (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Interview questions were developed based on the purpose statement and research questions, which were open-ended and focused on the "what" and "how" of the experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The demographic information in the questionnaire was included to further confirm and identify variation among the given criteria, derivative of maximum variation sampling. The follow-up questions in the written questionnaire were the same questions posed in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and assisted in allowing participants to correct, amend, add, and affirm perceptions in written form as a follow-up to the interview. A focus group was used for participants to interact with one another and explicitly state perceptions while reflecting upon their own consonance or dissonance between community values and their values (Festinger, 1959). After informed consent forms were returned, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) with each participant, followed by a questionnaire (see Appendix C) using SurveyMonkey that was sent via email 48 hours after the semi-structured interview was completed for each participant. Next, six participants were invited to participant in a focus group interview for the purpose of allowing participants to share

experiences with one another and for me to collect more data to contribute to triangulation of data, confirmation of emerging themes, and increased trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After participants completed the one-on-one structured interviews, the questionnaire, and the focus group interview, in that order, they received a gift card as a sign of appreciation. I was not required to obtain site permissions because participants were no longer employed by the related churches, and my research was conducted based on technology-driven interviews that all took place at neutral sites where no permissions were required. This approach also served to protect those sites from further discussions regarding a past issue.

The data was prepared and organized along with a file naming system and structure and analyzed using appropriate methods (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Madison, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1984; Wolcott, 1994). Moustakas (1994) suggested analyzing data through reviewing data from interviews and highlighting significant statements in a process known as horizontalization. The next step in this process involved identifying themes and perceptions of participants as described by Van Manen (1984). Themes were then arranged to provide a rich, thick description of the essence of the phenomenon. The researcher's written description is imperative, as the researcher must usher in the presence of a phenomenon that is not presentable in plain words (Van Manen, 2016). Data saturation is considered of great importance in a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and Fusch and Ness (2015) claim data saturation is accomplished upon study replicability, new data that will contribute is unattainable or non-existent, and coding represents all present themes. Data saturation was accomplished through the interviews, questionnaires, and focus group and the subsequent data synthesis and analysis by following Van Manen's (1984) methodology of four stages for analyzing data in a hermeneutic phenomenology. These steps can be found in the Data

Synthesis section below.

Permissions

Obtaining all legal, institutional, site, and individual permissions for the study was a necessity and were obtained in the appropriate time and as needed. As Liberty University's IRB process includes any legal matters necessary, the IRB approval letter (see Appendix A) for this study is sufficient for both legal and institutional approval. No participants were recruited, interviewed, or data collected until IRB approval was granted. After IRB approval was granted, participants were recruited and asked to complete informed consent forms (see Appendix E) and were not allowed to participate in the study under any circumstance until the informed consent form was signed and returned. No site permissions were necessary because the participants were serving as senior/lead pastors of churches and no longer employed by those organizations, and because data collection methods only involved experiences from the pastors utilizing neutral sites.

Recruitment Plan

In recruiting senior/lead pastors who worked in a Southern Baptist church, a noteworthy observation is the lack of a singular database that records the number of pastors and how many churches are without pastors unless voluntarily reporting to an organization since cooperating Southern Baptist churches are considered autonomously governed. Even still, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) reported there are 47,592 cooperating churches at the beginning of 2022 (SBC, 2022). I only recruited lead/senior pastors who served in Southern Baptist churches in the southeast region of the United States for this phenomenology, and I secured a sample size of 10 participants who met the sampling criteria for the study (Dukes, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1989). I recruited participants using a variety of sampling techniques, including purposive,

criterion, and snowball sampling, and utilized purposive sampling in recruiting participants based on personal knowledge and experience, including willingness to participate (Oliver, 2006). I practiced criterion sampling, in that all participants were required to meet the following guidelines: participants had completed a minimum bachelor's degree from a seminary or an accredited four-year college-university, had been ordained into the gospel ministry by a church, denomination, or university, and had served at a Southern Baptist church where they either voluntarily or involuntarily left employment within the last five years. Additionally, pastors must have had served at the church for at least one year in the lead/senior pastor role full-time. Pastors who left that employment may or may not have ceased to serve in vocational ministry altogether. As was necessary, I also used snowball sampling, as some participants knew of others who had shared the same experience and recommended them as possible participants for the study (Morgan, 2008).

As participants were recruited, I emailed an informed consent form (see Appendix E) that was signed and returned before they were allowed to participate. Participants were asked to engage in a one-on-one semi-structured interview and an emailed questionnaire, and six participants were asked with five participating in a focus group interview. After participants completed all three of these data collection methods, participants were sent a gift card to show appreciation for their participation in the study.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection is a critical aspect of qualitative research, and the approach provided a framework by which the study may be replicated, data verified as trustworthy, and ethics of the study validated (Patton, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The implementation of various data collection methods is important to create a triangulation of data which adds to the trustworthiness

of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within this study, I implemented three data collection techniques. First, I conducted a semi-structured one-on-one interview (see Appendix B) with each participant following Rubin and Rubin's (2012) and Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) protocol. Secondly, a questionnaire (see Appendix C) was sent to each interviewed participant 48 hours after the one-on-one interview to provide information that aided in contextualizing each situation, allowing participants the opportunity to correct or build upon responses in the interview after having time for self-reflection. Lastly, I offered a focus group interview option for participants to interact, share personal experiences with prompts from the interviewer, and determine if their experiences were confirmed or challenged by the perceived experiences of the other participants (Morgan, 1997).

Data was collected, organized, sorted, and analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Madison, 2011; Wolcott, 1994). A database was developed to provide for transcribed interviews to be organized with questionnaires and focus group data. After collating data based on participants, themes were developed by hand using a theoretical point of view of organizational leadership following Madison's (2011) interpretive framework. During the data analysis, seven themes were rendered, defined, explained, and compared to recent and relevant literature for discussion (Marshall & Rossman, 2015).

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews (see Appendix B) were developed and were held where I personally interviewed each participant. Interviews were constructed and conducted using Rubin and Rubin (2012) and Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) recommendations. While the structure of the interview is the result of pre-determined questions to accomplish the purpose of the interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), questions were added as needed for prompting

responses to achieve data needed “to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). All added questions are available in the transcription of each interview. Interviews are a widely known and respected source of data collection phenomenological studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and are helpful specifically for this study, as pastors can make meaning of their experiences through answering questions about losing or leaving their positions at a church. Furthermore, this approach allowed me to describe this meaning through the lens of the phenomenon of P-O Fit.

Before each interview was held, the interview questions and procedures were tested using one pilot interview with a colleague who had experienced this phenomenon (Sampson, 2004, Yin, 2014). After the pilot interview, adjustments to time of day when interviews were conducted, location at which interviews were conducted, and data collection techniques, including recording, transcription, note-taking, and questions, were evaluated and no changes were made.

Interviews were conducted for 10 participants using purposeful criterion sampling and snowball sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants were interviewed until informed consent was provided, which explained all information, and was secured, anonymous, and represented within the study using pseudonyms. Each interview was remote using Microsoft TEAMS software. The interviews were video and audio recorded. Microsoft TEAMS interviews were recorded using the built-in software and files downloaded to a secure cloud server and to a password-secured external hard drive. A backup recording was made by an iPhone app but was ultimately not needed. The sound and video recording were checked in 15-minute intervals to ensure the interview software was recording as designed. Each interview was intended to last one

hour. All interviews were conducted within a one-month period.

After the interview was scheduled and consent was obtained, the researcher began the interview by reviewing the previously signed participant consent form, reviewing the purpose of the research study, the amount of time designated for the interview, and the participant's right to remove himself from the study at any time, the intentions for the information gathered in the interview, and offer to provide a report of the findings to the participant for member-checking (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher then proceeded to each interview question, adding questions if necessary. Lastly, the researcher confirmed the follow-up questionnaire that was received via email 48 hours after the interview. The researcher concluded the interview by thanking the participant and assuring confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about how you arrived at your experience at the church you served. (CQ1)
2. Tell me about how you fit within the organization of the church you served. (SQ1)
 - a. How did you, along with your personality traits and passions, fit into the organizational structure of the church you served? (SQ1)
3. Describe the organizational structure in the church you served. (SQ1)
 - a. Describe the lines of authority in the church you served. (SQ1)
4. Explain your effectiveness working with the organizational structure of the church toward fulfilling the church's goals and objectives. (SQ1)
5. Describe the organizational issues with the organizational structure at the church you served. (SQ1)
6. How did the organizational structure influence your decision to leave the church? (SQ2)

7. Describe the organizational environment of the church when you left. (SQ2)
 - a. How did the organizational values influence your exodus from the church you served? (SQ2)
8. How could the organizational structure have been better established or improved upon to enhance your tenure while serving at the church? (SQ2)
9. Tell me about the leadership education you received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution. (SQ3)
 - a. Describe the organizational leadership education or training you received apart from formal education. (SQ3)
 - b. Explain how leadership education influenced your experience with person-organization fit in the church you served. (SQ4)
10. Describe how leadership education can improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the church as an organization. (SQ4)

Each of the interview questions was developed based on the general research questions about the central phenomenon of pastors who have lost or left employment due to poor P-O Fit. Each question was also formed employing the factors used to evaluate P-O Fit as developed by Chatman (1989) and improved upon by Kristof-Brown (2005). Questions were peer and expert reviewed. Interview question one relates to the central research question and serves as a *grand tour question* to encourage the participant to open and share (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Interview questions two through five address research sub-question one and narrow the focus to discuss the personal experience with the stated phenomenon and describe the participant's perceptions of structure and their experienced effectiveness within that structure. Interview questions six through eight align with research sub-question two and allow for the participant to

identify experienced issues that served as breaking points within the fit between person and organization. Interview questions nine through 10 are supported by research sub-question three and four and are used to gather information on leadership education received from seminary and other ministry-related institutions and leadership education received apart from formal education.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Van Manen's (1984) approach was applied in examining data through analyzing themes, identifying descriptions, aspects, and statements among all the sources of data. Therefore, I used his approach of line-by-line and highlighting through multiple readings and reviews of each source, along with collaboration. As the researcher is responsible to describe the phenomenon as presented through writing and re-writing, I also gave participants the benefit of affirming their experiences through reiterating their experiences utilizing multiple platforms, including the interview, focus group, and questionnaire. This multiple source approach through multiple iterations and multiple descriptions accomplished what Van Manen (1984) described as the "dialectual going back and forth" (p. 68) to establish corroboration and saturation to understand and describe the phenomenon.

Before the interviews were conducted, I developed a database to locate files based on source (interview, focus group, questionnaire) and participant (Bazeley, 2013). Each interview was transcribed using a transcription software, and participants were required to verify their own transcription. The data was analyzed by hand using a theoretical point of view of organizational leadership following Madison's (2011) interpretive framework, while also including Wolcott's (1994) approach because the theory of P-O Fit involves recognizing, describing, and evaluating organizational culture and socialization of the employee and the organization. This point-of-view perspective proved valuable in the analysis. I watched and read each interview and transcription

at least three times following Agar's (1980) recommendation to apprehend an understanding of the participants' feedback in a holistic manner. The reading practices included a rapid reading (Emerson et al., 2011), detailed analysis, and common reading, in that order. I highlighted, took memos on observations, and filed document appropriate memos within the participant's file. Upon completion of initial notes and observations, I collapsed codes into categories and provided a summary of themes and observations through developing a document for each participant titled "Emerging Themes." This stage also included the explanation of the essence of the phenomenon in a collective sense. During the second and third reviews of each participant's data, I took memos in thematic categories and summary memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to provide connections of observations between analysis of participants. While memos are not considered as conclusions, they benefit as immediate observations and add to the observational validity of the study. Patton (2002) recognized that memos should not be used to draw premature conclusions but acknowledged the value in making immediate analytical and insightful observations captured by memos so that they are not lost forever. He further impressed the value of memoing by claiming that repressing of in-the-field observations misses the opportunity for even deeper data collection of authentic field insights, therefore testing the rigor of results. Memoing accomplished the textural description of the experience. From the memos that were developed, I developed codes and categories by which to provide observations within the context of the study of pastors' perceptions of P-O Fit. These observations developed into detailed descriptions and a structural description of what occurred. Detailed descriptions were examined, and themes were rendered with each theme meeting the following criteria and describing the overall composite description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994):

- a. Themes must relate to the purpose statement directly.

- b. Themes must relate to the interview questions directly.
- c. Themes must relate to the supporting literature.
- d. Themes must relate to the theories by which the study is based.

Emergent themes were permitted to accompany prefigured themes as recommended by Crabtree and Miller (1992), and theme names were determined to either be code names or “in vivo codes” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After seven themes were rendered, defined, and explained, these themes provided the opportunity to interpret the phenomenon and make assertions. The interpretations were compared to recent and relevant literature for discussion (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). I also developed a visual diagram in my code files to identify themes and communicate the comparisons among those who experienced the phenomenon (Spradley, 1980).

Questionnaires Data Collection Approach

A questionnaire (see Appendix C) was provided to assist in gathering important demographic information for contextualizing each situation and allowing participants to correct or build upon responses in the interview. An email including the link to the questionnaire was sent 48 hours after completion of the one-on-one interview to allow time for self-reflection and for the participant to correct or add information to their previous answers but not allow too much time to pass so to prevent participants from forgetting their responses. The questions were peer and expert reviewed for validity and reliability and pilot tested by the same participant used to pilot the one-on-one interview. This approach allows for triangulation of data contributing to the study’s trustworthiness and validity (Bowen, 2009). Experiences and information from the questions in the questionnaire helped provide context to the central and sub-research questions. As participants have shared their education experience and experience having lost or left their employment, these questions provided insight to what leadership areas need to be addressed

among pastoral students and pastors already in ministry that may reduce burnout, turnover, and improve effectiveness and tenure.

Questionnaire Questions

- What is your highest level of education completed? (CQ1)
- How many years have you served in full-time vocational ministry? (CQ1)
- How many years have you served as a full-time lead/senior pastor? (CQ1)
- What is the name and location of the church in which you served as lead/senior pastor?
(CQ1)
- Was this church considered a cooperating Southern Baptist church during your pastorate?
(CQ1)
- How long has it been since you served at the church to which is referred in this
interview? (CQ1)
- How long did you serve at the church to which is referred in this interview? (CQ1)
- What was the membership of the church when you arrived at the church? (CQ1)
- What was the membership total when you departed the church? (CQ1)
- What was the average attendance when you arrived at the church? (CQ1)
- What was the average attendance when you left the church? (CQ1)
- What was the average attendance during your tenure? (CQ1)
- How many people did the worship center seat? (CQ1)
- How much debt did the church have when you came to the church? (CQ1)
- How much debt did the church acquire/pay off during your tenure? (CQ1)
- How much debt did the church have when you left the church? (CQ1)

- How many other full and part-time staff members were on staff (average) during your tenure? (CQ1)
- What was the budget of the church when you arrived? (CQ1)
- What was the average budget of the church during your tenure? (CQ1)
- What was the budget of the church when you left? (CQ1)

Each questionnaire provided for open-ended responses, and the first 15 questions copied the original one-on-one semi-structured interview questions with instruction to repeat, add, or offer corrections to their previously shared responses in the interview. The questionnaire was developed using the online platform SurveyMonkey. The completed forms were returned via email and available through the online platform utilized and only accessible by a password-secure profile where data was harvested and collated within the individual's files on both the cloud-based secure drive and the password-secure hard drive.

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

Each questionnaire was placed in the appropriate data file with each participant's associated files of interview transcription, notes, and the focus group to categorize the data (Bazeley, 2013). Each questionnaire response was organized to align with each interview question for cross-check and reference purposes in a singular file. Because the questionnaire consists of two parts, the first part including questions regarding demographic and factual information about each participant and the church in which they served was used to contextualize the participant's experience and consider influential factors in the researcher's observations. The second part, consisting of the questions from the one-on-one interview, was analyzed for comparison and contrast of the one-on-one interview and the written responses. Each participant's response was reviewed at least three times with notes and memos as the interviews

and themes were entered into the “Emerging Themes” document for each participant and help to contribute to thematic saturation. Also, the survey data was assigned to each participant and cross-examined and checked for contradictions and validation of perceptions communicated by participants.

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

Focus groups are valuable to affirm themes by group consensus, thereby providing clarification and expanding on concentrated information found in one-on-one interviews (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). As the participants are like one another, the shared experienced phenomenon created an environment where memories are recalled, and interaction rendered valuable information (Morgan, 1997). A focus group appointment was made, and an invitation was sent to six participants, of which five participated in a group discussion for one hour, which was recorded and transcribed. The protocol included an initial introduction, reviewing the purpose of the study, and questions posed that served as follow-up questions from the interviews, concluding within one hour, and reminding participants to maintain confidentiality.

Focus Group Questions

1. What leadership advice would you give to a pastor when considering person-organization fit upon deciding if he will be the pastor of a church? (CQ1)
2. Describe how you evaluated person-organization fit within the church you served? (SQ1)
3. How would you describe the factors that led to poor person-organization fit and influenced your exodus from the church in which you served? (SQ2)
4. How do you describe the leadership education you received in seminary and other ministry-related institutions? (SQ3)

5. How do you describe how leadership education in seminary and other ministry-related institutions influences person-organization fit for a pastor and the church?
(SQ4)
6. In this study to this point the following themes have surfaced: 1) Leadership Conflict, 2) Leadership Education/Preparation, 3) Vision Conflict, 4) Value Conflict, 5) Hiring Process, 6) Self Reflection, 7) Fit. What are your comments, thoughts, or experiences that you would like to add to these themes? (CQ1)

The six questions created the opportunity for each participant to hear various perspectives from others who have experienced the same phenomenon, sparking new thoughts, ideas, and valuable data for the study. The first question aligns with the central research question as the participant's perspectives are now a part of the constructed reality, brought about by SCT, specifically self-reflection of past experiences, forming expectations used to navigate their present and future realities within the framework of P-O Fit theory. The second and third focus group question refers to research sub-questions one and two, respectively, as they refer to the application of SCT, as participants reflect on their specific experiences in a greater social context. Focus group question four, seeking to provide greater clarity to research question five, applies to a continuation of that same participant-constructed reality as it would apply to other people and circumstances with respect to the leadership education the participants received. Focus group question five is derived from research sub-question four that provides an opportunity for participants to share how leadership education may improve P-O Fit. The last focus group question supports the central research question as it seeks clarification on three major emergent themes while allowing participants to provide feedback.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The focus group data analysis included reviewing the transcript at least three times, the first being a cursory reading, the second involving a deep review, and the third a review for a thematic analysis (Van Manen, 1984). During each review, I highlighted, took notes of noteworthy physical body language, facial expressions, and other verbal expressions, and took memos on the transcript. All data were filed in the appropriate location per participant, source, and theme. Each participant's response was also assigned to their respective file during the data synthesis stage. Any new themes were assigned into the "Emerging Themes" files and contributed to thematic saturation.

Data Synthesis

Having established the phenomenological central research question and collected data using three methods, the first two steps of Van Manen's (1984) four-step process are complete. The third and fourth steps can be summarized by reflection and writing. As self-reflection (Dewey, 1933) is a practiced theory having been applied in the data collection by allowing for participants to reflect on experiences in the construction of perceptions, I applied self-reflection in line with Van Manen's (1984) recommendation to turn "to the nature of the lived experience" (p. 42) in the data analysis. The practice of self-reflection requires the researcher to describe positionality and situation within the study and bracket oneself from the analysis, while still applying an interpretivist, hermeneutical approach. In this practice, I combined all the information from the three sources of data.

Each participant's interview, transcription, survey/questionnaire, and associated comments from the focus group interview was reviewed as a holistic body of data. Upon completion of initial notes and observations, I provided a summary of themes for the participant, at which point all participants' documents were then analyzed. This stage also included the

explanation of the essence of the phenomenon in a collective sense. Still a part of the reflective stage from Van Manen's (1984) recommended research process, I developed codes and categories by which to provide observations within the context of the study of pastors' perceptions of P-O Fit. These observations were developed into detailed descriptions and a structural description of what occurred.

The last stage of Van Manen's (1984) research process includes the writing required to provide a definition and rich, thick description of the phenomenon. Van Manen (2014) stated the writing is a necessary practice and should be accompanied by writing and re-writing until the description is sufficient for reporting. I then identified seven themes that were used to describe the phenomenon's essence.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided a framework by which researchers may improve and achieve the trustworthiness of a qualitative study that includes a study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While efforts have been made to achieve the trustworthiness of this study, ethical considerations have also been incorporated at every step in the process. Incorporating an interpretivist hermeneutic approach to qualitative inquiry, validation is important because it provides a means by which a reader can measure trustworthiness or goodness of the research (Angen, 2000). As Wolcott (1990) pointed out that validation of a study does not serve to fulfill what Van Manen (1990) described as the "essence" of the phenomenon under study, validation is important, as it serves as a confluence of evidence that establishes credibility to the research and confidence in conclusions drawn from interpretations and observations (Eisner, 1991).

Credibility

A phenomenon under study is described in an essence based on the articulated perceptions of participants, and a study's credibility is the level of accuracy to which the description provides understanding of that phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I achieved credibility in this study by triangulation of data collection methods and foundational theories to ground the research and member-checking. Additionally, I connected the findings to current academic literature and demonstrate how the findings add to the body of research on this topic.

Triangulation

Along with the recommendation of prolonged engagement in the field of study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the practice of triangulation of data collection methods and sources. In this study, I triangulated data by using three methods of data collection, including one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants, a focus-group interview with willing participants, and a questionnaire to all participants. The methods also included a triangulation of theoretical schemes (Lather, 1991) through providing organization and analysis frameworks by including expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), self-reflection theory (1933), and SCT (Bandura, 1986). The one-on-one interviews allowed for participants to share about expectations that were met or unmet during their experience of the phenomenon under study. The focus group allowed participants to interact, operating on a foundation of SCT, and self-reflection was practiced, as participants completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for participants to correct or add to comments in the one-on-one interview.

Member Checking

As a church member, leader, and pastor at different points in life and having served in multiple churches in different leadership roles including lead pastor, I maintained an emic perspective that served as a type of immediate member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Rossman & Rallis, 2016). I bracketed (Moustakas, 1994) my own experiences from making conclusions about participants' experiences while allowing the emic perspective to serve as an advantage and guide to ask meaningful questions and reflect on participants' responses to uncover and richly, thickly describe the essence of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, participants were required to verify the transcription from their respective interview along with themes and interpretations that were noted. Lastly, the participants were invited to review and respond to the researcher's interpretations by reviewing the final publication before the final document is published. Any dissent or corrections among participants will be included in the final publication (Weis & Fine, 2000).

Transferability

Transferability is important because it determines the ability for the research findings to be applicable in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following Geertz' (1973) recommendation, I attempted to increase transferability through providing rich, thick descriptions of the participants, locations, and other elements surrounding the phenomenon. As transferability was increased through the descriptions of participants and settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), conditions for transferability were enhanced, as descriptions included a variety of settings while all sharing interconnected details (Stake, 2010). This variety of settings included different participants as lead pastors with varying education levels, ages, and experiences. Physical locations were described, including church characteristics, such as attendance, budget, and organizational structure. Lastly, varied descriptions included different times the phenomenon was experienced, such as calendar dates, time in the history of the church, and within the ministry tenure of the lead pastor. While these descriptions do not guarantee transferability of the

research findings, they do serve to build a strong foundation by which findings may be applicable in a variety of suitable contexts.

Dependability

Dependability of a qualitative study is accomplished when findings are consistent and the study can be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was achieved in this study by providing a thorough and detailed description of the procedures, including methods of data collection, data analysis, synthesis, and findings. Throughout this study, the dissertation committee provided approvals of each section of the dissertation study process, and I obtained the required IRB approvals before any data was collected. Another way of increasing dependability is through external auditors. External auditing is known as a method of accomplishing what Eisner (1991) called consensual validation and is described as “an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (p. 112). This study was audited by the dissertation committee. Additionally, the detailed description of the procedures, grounded in academic literature, are entirely replicable.

Confirmability

Confirmability is of importance because it is a degree of neutrality in the findings from the perspective of the researcher and grounded in the respondents. A researcher should not allow bias, motivation, or interest shape the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three practices used to contribute to the confirmability of this study include an audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. First, I created an audit trail by which to verify the study, including proposal, procedures, data collection and analysis, findings, and the defense (see Appendix G). The practices of triangulating data are discussed in detail above and include data collection methods, sources, and

theoretical schemes (Lather, 1991). Confirmability was also obtained through my reflexive writings that clearly state my position within the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and provide the reader to determine the success of bracketing those experiences from the interpretations. Additionally, I took reflexive notes throughout the study, which helped to bracket any bias, which should not be a challenge because I have not lost or left employment due to a perceived poor P-O Fit and, therefore, have not personally experienced the phenomenon under study.

Ethical Considerations

Any academic research must include ethical considerations to further the credibility, transferability, and dependability of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl (2016) and Creswell (2016) recommend approaching ethical issues throughout the sequential phases of a study, including formation of and activities prior to the study, collecting the data, analyzing the data, reporting the data, and, if applicable, publishing the study. In preparation and formation of the study, I sought support from a dissertation committee in the proposal process, followed by IRB approval for the study before any data was collected. During the research and final document formation, all sources and works utilized during this study were cited in the References section. After approval was granted, I recruited participants using the recruitment plan and informed them of the purpose of the study, their role, and permission using the Consent Form (see Appendix E). This consent form also informed participants their participation was voluntary, and they reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. Furthermore, the information shared might cause short and long-term harm to the participants, their families, or the current influence, reputation, and organizational function of the church in which they served and future places of employment. Therefore, all identities, including

names of participants and sites, were given pseudonyms to avoid disclosing harmful information (Creswell & Poth). Because participants were not employed by the organizations involved in the study, no people from the current church organization were interviewed, and since the nature of the study involves a phenomenon experienced by individuals, consent from the site was not necessary.

As the study was begun and conducted, participants were informed of how I would handle and use the data collected. Within the on-one-on interviews and the focus group interview, questions were open-ended and not directionally leading for participants, nor did I share personal opinions that might influence the interviews. Reciprocity (Hatch, 2002) was practiced by providing an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and receive a gift card for their time upon completion of the one-on-one interview, questionnaire, and the focus group interview. As data were collected, and since the names and responses might be harmful in data analysis and publication of the dissertation, the data collected were protected from public access and limited to the researcher and the dissertation committee. Therefore, the data collected, including video recordings, audio recordings, interview notes, transcriptions, and questionnaire responses, were stored on a password protected online server and a password protected hard drive.

In data analysis, the data is protected by password and destroyed after three years if it is not added to for further research per the direction of the Liberty University IRB. During the data analysis, I practiced member checking for accuracy and representation while presenting a report that is honest, fair, and accurate using practices such as peer review and others listed in the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability sections of this chapter. As a continuation of the member checking, I offered a final publication to participants.

Through the entire process, I did not work in any of the churches under study and, even as I may have known participants in the study, I have not worked for or have not been in a supervisory role over the participants, removing any conflict of interest or bias as the researcher. Additionally, I have not been compensated in any way for this research.

Summary

This chapter includes a thorough description and rationale for the research design, setting, participants, researcher positionality, procedures, data collection and analysis, data synthesis, and trustworthiness. This hermeneutic phenomenology is designed to explore and describe pastors' experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor P-O Fit and how seminary leadership education influenced the experience. Data was collected from former lead/senior pastors of Southern Baptist churches who experienced the phenomenon and gathered by one-on-one interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group interview. The data were secured, analyzed, synthesized, coded, and themed, followed with a rich, thick description of the phenomenon following Van Manen's (1984) four-step method for phenomenology. Lastly, trustworthiness of the study is addressed by the credibility established through practices, including triangulation and member-checking. The study's transferability, dependability, and confirmability are addressed by applying commonly accepted practices in academic research. Ethical considerations were discussed, and measures were taken before, during, and after the study to protect participants and their information.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The content of this chapter is to reiterate the purpose statement and research questions and to discuss the findings of the study as a result of the data analysis. The participant sample is described, after which each participant is made known in detail. Seven major themes were identified in the course of data analysis from the pastors' experiences. The themes are discussed and include leadership conflict, vision conflict, leadership education, fit, value conflict, self-reflection, and hiring process. This chapter also includes answers to each of the research questions.

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore and describe the experiences of pastors who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor person-organization fit. Interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group were implemented for data collection. Person-organization fit (P-O Fit) theory is a value-laden congruence model that is used to evaluate fit between a person and the organization. For this research, *values* are defined as enduring beliefs of an individual or organization that result in actions and structures “personally and socially preferable” and important (Rokeach, 1968, p. 16). The theories used to guide this study include Bandura's SCT (1991, 2012) and Chatman's P-O Fit theory (1989) and function as a framework by which pastors' experiences in a multifaceted social and organizational environment reveal values necessary to evaluate P-O Fit. The values provide insight into what leadership theory provides, what leadership education has been received, and how seminaries and other ministry-related educational institutions can improve leadership education and preparation.

These research questions were answered:

1. Central Research Question: What are the experiences of pastors who left employment as a result of poor person-organization fit?
2. Sub-Question One: How do pastors describe their experience as a fit within the organization of the church?
3. Sub-Question Two: How do pastors describe how person-organization fit influenced their exodus from the church in which they served?
4. Sub-Question Three: How do pastors describe the leadership education they received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution?
5. Sub-Question Four: How do pastors describe the need for leadership education to improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the organization?

Participants

All 10 participants met the participant criteria with no exceptions. Of the 10 participants, no participant was recruited using social media postings. All participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. From 18 contacts, 10 respondents participated. From the eight contacts that did not participate, two recruits chose not to participate for personal reasons and six did not meet qualifications based on not identifying with the phenomenon, being over five years since they left the church of employment, the church not being a Southern Baptist church, or not having at least a bachelor's degree. All participants have earned a bachelor's degree, five have earned master's degrees, and three participants earned doctoral degrees. Of the 10 participants, only one did not have seminary education but did have leadership education in a higher education institution and in a formal ministry program. Among the 10 participants who served as lead pastors, eight of the participants were initially hired to be lead pastors at the church while

two of them began on staff in student ministry and became lead pastors of the same church after the lead pastor had resigned. Participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

The various levels of education, years in full-time vocational ministry, total years served as a lead/senior pastor, and the tenure served at the church in the study are demonstrated in Table 1. Table 2 is used to communicate the range and transferability of the pastors' experiences by recognizing that the study includes pastors who have accomplished a certain education degree and have served in full-time ministry between two and 32 years, with the median number of years served in full-time ministry being 18.5 years. Another range that demonstrates the rigor of the study includes the total tenure of pastors in a lead pastor position from two to 30 years with a median of 12.5 years. The tenure of pastors at churches within the context of the study ranged from 1.6 to 15 years with a median tenure of 5.5 years. The tenure range demonstrates that the pastors' experiences from this study are not limited to short-tenured pastors but include a range of long-tenured pastors with a median tenure that is 5.5 years. Additionally, the information in Table 2 demonstrates the recency of the lived experiences with the most distant being 5 years ago, the most recent within 3 months of the one-on-one interview, and a median lived experience of 1.1 years.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pastor Participant	Highest Degree Earned	Years in Full-Time Ministry	Total Tenure (Years) as Lead Pastor	Tenure (Years) at Church in Study
Samuel	Masters	14	3	2
Joseph	Masters	10	9	4
David	Masters	22	22	4
Jacob	Masters	32	19	9
John	Bachelors	2	2	3.5
Nathan	Masters	23	20	7.5
Paul	Doctorate	31	30	15
Timothy	Bachelors	4	3	7
Luke	Doctorate	20	14	1.6
Matthew	Doctorate	17	11	8.5

Table 2

Participants Statistical Report

Numerical Value	Years in Full-Time Ministry	Total Tenure (Years) as Lead Pastor	Tenure (Years) at Church in Study	Years Since Leaving Church
Max	32	30	15	5
Min	2	2	1.6	.25
Average	17.5	13.3	6.2	2
Median	18.5	12.5	5.5	1.1

Because the setting of each church is different, the questionnaire was used to collect some important information that demonstrates the variation in participants' settings. The information in Table 3 is used to show the range in membership, attendance, staff support, and budgets among the churches where the pastors served. While membership can vary from church to church based on several requirements and definitions, pastors self-reported the membership at their departure ranged from 80 to 6,000 members. However, the median membership of churches within the study was 260 people. The study effectively included churches that ranged in size from a small, rural church to a megachurch. Average attendance was reported between 20 and 2,000 people weekly. However, the median average attendance of 135 reflects a more accurate comparison to most church sizes in the southeastern United States. Staff support was reported ranging from two employees, including full and part-time employees to 100 employees with a median being six employees. The average annual budget during a pastors' tenure was self-reported as ranging from \$70,000 to \$16,000,000 with a median being \$267,500. While these reports are intentionally misaligned to protect the identity of pastors and churches, it is important to affirm that membership, average attendance, staff support, and average annual budget are not aligned with the maximums and minimums for any particular church setting. A church of fewer attendance may have a larger budget and/or more or fewer employees. A series of questions was asked in the questionnaire regarding debt with only one participant reporting that the church was left with debt upon his exodus. However, it was significantly less than what was acquired during his tenure. No other participants reported any acquired debt, and one participant reported church debt being fully retired during his tenure.

Table 3

Context Demographics

Numerical Value	Membership at Departure	Average Attendance	Staff Support (Part and Full-Time)	Average Annual Budget
Max	6,000	2,000	100	\$16,000,000
Min	80	20	2	\$70,000
Average	1,007	494	16	\$2,630,000
Median	260	135	6	\$267,500

*These statistics are self-reported by the pastor participants via the questionnaire.

Samuel

Samuel, MDiv, served in full-time vocational ministry for 14 years. After having served in supporting ministry roles for many years at a different church in the same area, he was hired to serve as the lead pastor of a church after an interview process and being voted in by the church congregation. Samuel began as lead pastor at the church during the COVID-19 pandemic and had experienced declining attendance. Per recommendations from outside consultants, the church had transitioned from a deacon-led to an elder-led governance prior to his arrival. He described the hiring process as having “talked through experiences,” and a discussion of “some notion of what my vision might be for the church.” He described his experience while serving at the church as “challenging but formative.” He also communicated a lack of unity and vision conflict when he said it was “difficult sometimes to have a unified vision for what the church needed to do,” which ultimately led to his realization that it was time to leave his position at that church. Leadership conflict was a large issue as he faced challenges within the leadership structures and

personality conflict with certain leaders marked by one of the elders “having a volatile expression about his frustrations about the way the board was operating, and I was leading.”

Samuel’s experience was also marked by value conflict as he identified certain programs, projects, and methods that people in leadership were unwilling to change, thereby compromising the advancement of the vision and direction in which he felt the church needed to proceed. Without the needed written policies and procedures to support the church’s constitution and bylaws, the interpretation and practice of church leadership function varied and created additional conflict which revealed a poor fit over time. Samuel recognized leadership, vision, and value conflict as sources that led to the poor fit for him at that church over time. When describing his leadership education and preparation, he noted that leadership education, although present in some classes, was primarily technical and ministerial but lacked in how to affect needed organizational change and to handle the human relations that are necessary in navigating challenges in the church. His previous apprenticeship was valuable and recommended all pastors undergo some type of mentorship or internship education that would be beneficial for preparing pastors to lead their churches.

Joseph

Joseph served as a pastor at a small country church while earning a master’s degree from a seminary. Toward the end of his studies, he was looking for a pastorate and was contacted by a church in a different state. After what he described as “a roller coaster” experience marked by a short, fast, and not thorough hiring process, he and his family moved to the new state where he served as lead pastor. Joseph, passionate about mobilizing the church toward missions and evangelism, attempted to incorporate these values and vision in teaching, preaching, programs and opportunities for the church. However, the leadership of the church, primarily existing of

deacons, did not share the same passions, values, and vision which led to no support in every area as he said, “Everything fell directly on my back at that time.” The conflict was even more complex in that he was expected to accomplish everything, treated as a “hireling,” while not “allowing him to step into that leadership role” because of their control. When describing the values of the church, he said that “the lack of values was the main thing that caused me to decide that it was time” to leave. Joseph also recognized that the conflict had developed to a point where he and his family were receiving mistreatment at which point, he knew he had a responsibility to protect his family. Without values, the church had no vision among the people and did not respond to Joseph’s direction and leading which resulted in “no clear direction for the church at that time.” The church structure was defined as pastor-led on paper, but Joseph described it as deacon-controlled. He attributed this culture of misplaced control to a past experience in the church from the hurt caused by a previous pastor of which he was unaware until he arrived there. Upon reflection, he realized many of the challenges could have been resolved through mutual transparency of strengths and weaknesses as well as mutual expectations. He felt that leadership education could be helpful in preparing pastors and churches to navigate the hiring process to help evaluate P-O Fit between a pastor and the church.

Joseph left that church where he took a short respite and found himself working under a pastor with great leadership skills and received mentorship in leadership theory and practices that equipped him to serve as lead pastor in his current church. Joseph has experienced positive fit in his current environment with measurable impactful ministries. The previous church where he was not a good fit is now experiencing growth with a pastor who is a good fit, and Joseph shared he believed that he “just wasn’t the right guy for that time.”

David

David was serving as the lead pastor at a church for about 10 years in the same state of the church with which he interviewed, when he sensed it was time to move on saying he had “accomplished what I was called to do and even more.” As he shared his resume and interest with his network, he received a call from the church that is the context of this study. His initial response was a lack of interest, but after being pursued, he engaged the church leadership and was interviewed. The interview process was “fast” and was characterized as both parties putting their “best foot forward.” While understanding he followed a pastorate of 25 years who died in service, he did not understand the level of comparison that would be practiced and used to judge his leadership performance. David’s personality, passions, and leadership styles were much different from the previous pastor, but he was expected to lead the same way as the previous pastor, leading to “conflict in every situation.” The church was also a heavily deacon-led and run church to the point that “any decision of any consequence had to be looked at by the deacons first,” and he was treated as “hired help.” An engrained culture of traditionalism and preference was expressed to the pastor from the congregants with comments like, “We need to educate you on how we do it.” David communicated a passion and desired practice of missions and evangelism with a focus on community involvement but was met with resistance when he was, for example, told he was not allowed to buy groceries for a family who approached the church for assistance and was criticized when he initiated the purchase of gifts for teacher appreciation at the local public school.

David reflected he “did not fit at all” with the church. The value conflict that demonstrated this poor fit is represented in the divergence of David’s desire to initiate change that would lead to greater impact and the deacons’ desire to “not deviate from the way they did things.” David said, “Their goal and objective was to maintain. My goal and objective was to

expand.” He evaluated the church’s most dearly held value as its “legacy of the past and not the future.” This vision conflict led to David’s expression of his self-reflection as “against the grain,” which led to a dysfunctional environment of leadership conflict. The leadership conflict at the church created an even greater division which led to strong accusations regarding the motives of the pastor. The pastor ultimately left the church.

In self-reflection, he described his feelings and impressions in the last months at the church as being “so tired,” fighting “the constant undercurrent” with those in leadership in an environment where “it is hard to lead people you cannot trust.” He also noted his belief in his greater role in the lifecycle of that church was to be a “sacrificial lamb” that would allow the people to heal from their devastating loss of the previous pastor, would reveal dysfunction, and help them move forward as a church in the future. David’s formal leadership education as a minor emphasis in his master’s degree was helpful in equipping him with information to handle difficult situations. He also recognized that leadership education could be intentional in providing “practical scenarios” in how to develop and manage interpersonal relationships within the church that aid in leading organizational change and maintaining P-O Fit.

Jacob

Jacob was serving a church for about 10 years where there had been growth and measurable success when he was contacted and served another church for 9 years in the same state. During the interview process, he was informed the previous pastor had retired with over 25 years of continued service to the church. He also recognized the church as “dripping with potential” with regards to location, facilities, resources, and people. The church leadership attested to shared values of missions and outreach. However, application of missions revealed the pastor’s understanding of missions and outreach was to mobilize the people to action, and the

church's understanding of missions and outreach was primarily financial support. This revealed value conflict over time. The church was also entrenched in tradition and was content with their status. Individuals in influential leadership positions, primarily deacons, sought to maintain the church's function of previous years. The "ebb and flow" experience as described by Jacob was a result of vision and value conflict that impacted his fit at the church.

Jacob presented a vision for a missions focus at one time and another presentation for a discipleship focus and was met with a lack of support in both areas. He said, "I presented two major things that I felt we needed to do as a church, and the church fully rejected them. I saw that I [was] not being an effective leader here." Jacob had the realization through self-reflection that "this church is not going to follow" and told his wife that he felt like "God was finished using us here, and we need to be prepared" for what was next. The control of those in influence led to a further realization of misplaced leadership and authority that compromised his effectiveness, and future effectiveness would be dependent on being "a great politician." The governance enabled deacons to operate outside of "the biblical role of a deacon" and compromised the leadership authority that the "pastor needs to be given to lead the church and operate." The leadership conflict he experienced led to exhaustion "physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally."

In his self-reflection, Jacob's life experiences in the military, sports, and former ministries helped him "kind of see the writing on the wall" as he said, "I was not a good fit." He also recognized that he "probably would have still gone there" because of his role to help bridge the gap between the previous pastor and the pastor who is now there and seeing some growth and success. He recounted good relationships and impactful ministry even though "the conflict was within the leadership." His leadership education was most effective through lived experiences,

and he noted that leadership education in his bachelor's and master's degree of pastoral theology from a seminary were mostly ministerial ideals but lacking in practical application. After his experiences, Jacob recommended that leadership education take a more active role in preparing pastors and churches to be more transparent and honest with one another in the interview process. He also expressed a desire to have information on what "different church structures can look like and different strengths and weaknesses of an individual as a pastor" to "help establish understanding of where the church is," the pastor's gifts and talents, and the personality of the pastor to help determine fit with the church.

John

John had served as a lead pastor at a "very small church" and felt as if he had fulfilled his role for his tenure. Within a month of that realization, he was invited to go and serve on staff in a ministry support role at another church in the same state. He made the transition with his family and served the youth pastor for less than a year before the lead pastor resigned, and he was hired to be the lead pastor for just over three years. The church setting was unique in that John had many previous relationships, having grown up in the same town and "shared the same values." At the beginning of his tenure, he shared a vision to move the church forward. "There was a real need to revitalize," and the people were in support of the idea of revitalization until things began to lead to discomfort with the people. Vision and leadership conflict abounded as one deacon said, "I like it just the way we are," and another "elder said he felt like he was losing his church." The leadership conflict caused John to exercise self-reflection and question his methods. He felt as though the initial fit was good with shared values and communicated vision. However, the execution of the vision caused conflict and compromised the fit. The church had experienced frequent pastoral turnover and conflict in previous pastorates which led to certain church leaders

taking responsibility and authority, which impacted John's ability because "there was some conflict with the structure because the church leaders had been so used to having control of everything that was going on." The church leadership practiced "backdoor" conversations that contradicted the pastor's leadership leaving John feeling as if "they just were misguided in what the Lord was wanting us to do." This vision conflict resulted in the church "not moving together in one accord," and left John desiring a mentor and advice and practicing self-reflection.

In John's self-reflection and looking for a mentor, he was offered another job as youth pastor and made a transition to a new church. As John reflected on "the constant battle" due to there not being a good structure, not having followership, and the consistent conflict, he identified conflicting values between him and people desiring to stay in control in certain positions, the consistent use of the phrase "I remember back then," and the lack of willingness to change from traditional methodologies. For example, one church leader refused to come to church services until the start time was changed back to the previous start time.

John's life experience in the Navy and other professional positions taught him values of discipline, organizational structure, and clearly defined lines of authority. These personal values helped him to evaluate his fit within the church, but also recognized that his education in a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry did not represent or reflect the challenges of real life and primarily focused on the ideal scenario. John said, "I don't think I have ever had a class where you discuss going into a church and the structure has fallen apart. How do you rebuild that? What if the church just split? I never really received that from formal education." Also, not having the education preparedness, mentorship, and continued comradery influenced John's experience and left him feeling "alone" and "on an island with the parts for a boat to get off that island but no instructions for what goes where in order for it to be seaworthy." John stated there

was value in addressing broken structures and situations within churches so pastors can know “how to go in and lead in a broken church” and how to address prevalent feelings in the appropriate way and time.

Nathan

Nathan had 23 years of total ministry experience including 20 years serving in the role as a lead pastor. Nathan recounted he was seeking a new ministry opportunity because he “could tell his time was done at the church he was serving.” He describes himself as a “B personality” that can be timid at times. He served the church for almost 8 years. Nathan did not describe a thorough interview process but emphasized knowing that church is where he was supposed to go because there was “a great sense of excitement about it and a great sense of peace about it.” After arriving at the church, he “realized how much work the church needed to get back on the right trajectory.” His ministry and fit there “began well” to the point he described it as a “fit like a glove” with “early success” characterized by “missions, attendance, Sunday school increases, and new ministries and baptisms.” Nathan’s perceived the good fit began to “change when I started doing a little bit of revitalization and challenge them to get back to fulfilling the Great Commission and not be so inwardly focused.”

Nathan’s main source of conflict was vision conflict as the desire to become more outwardly focused led to leadership conflict with the deacons. The church organization presented challenges for Nathan’s leadership because, although the church was a congregational governance, the “deacons are kind of the lead authority.” Nathan recounted a story of asking deacons to exercise biblical service and ministry roles and was told, “We hired you to do this,” with only a couple deacons becoming involved in the service responsibilities of caring for elderly. Essentially, the church leadership was characterized by the pastor not having the

authority to lead and people inappropriately assuming leadership authority. When challenged by Nathan, one specific deacon began to look for points of conflict to discredit Nathan's leadership and ministry. In one interpersonal relationship, Nathan was accused of being too harsh with someone in a joking manner to which he responded to the accusation with humility, graciousness, and repentance. However, the one specific deacon did not engage in biblical confrontation and held the accusation against Nathan. Nathan was discouraged when he became ill and missed several weeks, only to return to a deacons' meeting and told, "You need to go because you cannot be here. The pastor is supposed to be there for the church. The church is not supposed to be there for the pastor. If you cannot be here, you need to resign." Nathan realized "they are not going to listen," and "to stay was going to be a battle." He was not healthy enough to fight and considered to what "he was exposing his family," and "how much damage it might do the church." He chose to resign upon request.

In Nathan's reflection, he described his feelings as tired, responsible for everything, and a desire "to just enjoy ministry again." While the structure was compromised, he also reflected, "I do not know if it is even a structure as much as a mindset. If you are not going to adhere to the structure it does not matter." Reflecting on his past education including a master's degree in biblical studies, he felt unprepared for the leadership needs for handling conflict and leading organizational change from a place of brokenness to wholeness. Nathan desired for formal leadership to educate how to evaluate a church, church leaders, and oneself to help with the hiring process to determine P-O Fit. Nathan also spoke to the necessity of transparency and honesty during the hiring process by saying, "It is almost like being on a first date. Nobody wants to be completely vulnerable or completely honest because you want to make a good impression."

Paul

Paul served in full-time vocational ministry for over 30 years and a full-time lead pastor for 30 years. He had personal experience and an understanding of the church that he served because a member of his family had served on staff previously, and he was a member of the church for many of his adolescent years. Paul's connection with the church was based on personal relationships, and the leadership team contacted him with interest in interviewing him for the position. He described his impressions as feeling as he was there "to help heal" some past experiences and that they "were the people to lead in this season, and it was a great season." With an initial membership of around 2,000 people, the church grew to a membership of around 6,000 people during the tenure that lasted over 10 years and required him to personally grow and change as the church required and needed change. The church leadership had a high level of trust which resulted in a lack of oversight in some policies and procedures, ultimately creating a broken trust due to a discovered indiscretion by a staff member. Before this "crisis moment," Paul described the church as growing with a dynamic of excitement, high trust, high impact, and high influence among members, the community, and around the world. He also reflected that in that time, the needed skills and passions for the lead pastor were changing. He explained, "As I would go to be with partners, I would come back and love [my church], but I sensed kind of a growing disconnect in that what had energized and even exhilarated me, at times, now required more management."

The church's leadership and governance had changed structures to meet the needs of the growing congregation multiple times during his tenure. Even still, combined with the growing disconnect between his developing passions and changing responsibilities, the "crisis moment" caused him to stop and practice self-realization, and he said, "I started realizing maybe I do not

fit for the next season.” This reflection led to a conclusion he was a good fit at the beginning, but over time his demographic changed from the church, and his “interests were moving in different places.” With this realization, Paul sought counsel and decided it was time for him to resign and step aside for another pastor to come in as a fit for the next season of the church. Paul’s educational experience from a bachelors to his doctorate degree helped bring him knowledge and noted a “natural draw to leadership” that helped him navigate challenges through experience. Paul communicated that professors’ shared experiences instead of just best-case scenarios helped prepare him to recognize some of the challenges. Paul also noted the benefit of knowing “your unique giftings and callings” and the “continued awareness of it” helped him “lead from [his] strengths.” He noted, “Maybe education helps people be okay not having to fit everything.”

Timothy

Timothy’s experience serving as lead pastor of a church for three years was unique in that he had been raised in the same community, hired to work at the church as a bi-vocational student pastor, promoted to a full-time associate pastor, and then called to serve as lead pastor after the previous pastor had resigned. The “small church” had experienced some growth in the previous years but had declined in membership, attendance, leadership, and financial support in recent years. Timothy recognized the challenge and attempted to address the “stagnant” culture that he characterized as “the mindset of the preacher is preaching. We are keeping what we have. What is wrong with this picture?” He contacted local churches about partnering together, had denominational leaders and resources come in to make evaluations and recommendations, and to realign resources to help the church enter a missional mindset. However, he “received a lot of pushback from that.” After realizing the lack of financial support and the lack of support from people in the church to move the church from the place of stagnation, Timothy made a transition

to maintain his lead pastorate role while going bi-vocational to help the church with the financial struggle. After a season in this role, Timothy reflected on his entire time and felt as if “it was a good fit,” and “it was where God wanted us to be,” and he “did what God called us there to do.”

Timothy reflected on his time at the church and recognized the vision conflict that existed between him and the people of the church. A stagnant culture and lack of support from congregants in being actively involved in church activity led to vision conflict where he felt like he “was beating his head against the wall.” The church was “okay with maintaining” without “urgency” to move forward which led to value conflict between him and the church. In his reflection, he asked himself if he was the problem while also recognizing he could have come in and more assertively initiated change that could have sparked growth, a personality trait that is not natural for him but was still needed for the church. Timothy recounted that he did not have much church leadership education in his bachelor’s pursuit but valued the years of mentorship he had under his previous pastor. He also received a great deal of leadership education in a ministry related leadership cohort program while he was serving as the lead pastor that provided much equipping. However, Timothy said he wished he had that information a couple years prior to know what leadership to provide. Timothy resigned from the church and went to serve under a pastor at another church in the same area in a supportive role.

Luke

Luke has served in full-time vocational ministry for over 20 years, earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from a seminary, and has served as a lead pastor for over 14 years. He has served under the mentorship and leadership of other pastors while also having been influenced in leadership by his father, by coaches through athletics, and through explicit leadership education. Luke was serving as the lead pastor of a growing church when he was contacted by a

professional search firm that asked him to interview with a different church. He was not looking to relocate, but after conversations with mentors and counsel, he felt as though he needed to interview for the position. After an interview process described as “incredibly copious and thorough” from the church and Luke’s thorough interview questions and meetings with leadership from multiple levels in the church organization, Luke and his family accepted the position to serve as the lead pastor at a church of around 2,000 members. The church’s history and culture were deeply engrained although the governmental structure had recently transitioned from a deacon-led and deacon-run structure to a leadership team philosophy and structure. However, the influencers in the church maintained control and power which created leadership conflict as Luke and those in leadership had conflicting values and vision.

Luke recalled the interview process as thorough but only “a wonderful summary of what the church thought they were.” Even still, as Luke felt called to serve and lead through the conflict, the church grew in membership, attendance, baptisms, outreach, and finances. The point of divergence and when it became “very clear this was not going to be a long-term place for us” was when he realized they “were out of alignment regarding mission, vision, and values,” and it “not going to be a sustainable place” for them. Luke resigned from the church and went to serve under a mentor before becoming the lead pastor where he experienced good fit.

Because of his education and experience, Luke was able to realize the lack of fit at the church he served and try not to force an incongruent fit. Noting he “had very few classes on specific leadership,” Luke believes leadership is somewhat of a personal gifting, but education and mentorship are still needed for preparing pastors to be organizational leaders “to improve your ability to truly assess your identity and who you are,” and “to help sustain you through anything to which God is calling you.”

Matthew

Matthew grew up in the church where he served as lead pastor after he left to pursue higher education and served in various ministry roles at other churches in the same state. Matthew has served in ministry for over 17 years with 11 years being in a lead pastorate position. Matthew described his experience as the lead pastor at his hometown church as “some of the hardest days of ministry.” He explained in the beginning of his tenure, “I felt like I knew something that they did not know. I knew that the Lord was bringing me there as an agent of change, and I think their belief was the Lord was bringing me there as an agent of maintenance.” The difference in original intentions led to leadership conflict, but Matthew was willing to engage and navigate the conflict with perseverance and endurance and lead through the conflict to orchestrate change which led to a new governance and new organizational values being developed. Matthew clearly had the ability to lead through vision conflict to bring unity as he said, “I think those two were very different in the beginning, but as we moved forward, those two united, and it worked well.” The church grew from a membership of around 200 to over 700 during his tenure that lasted almost 10 years. Matthew explained the great fit for him in the position because he said, “I was not cut from their cloth. I was their cloth.” He began to transition from the church because he felt as though he had accomplished what he came to accomplish, finished his job, led the church to a revitalized state, and it was time to step aside to allow another pastor to come in and lead them.

Matthew’s education and prior experience through his Doctorate in Ministry degree from seminary helped him with general ideas but was not specific and left him feeling like he “was building the plane as he was flying it.” Specific classes in revitalization and leadership were

helpful, along with some leadership cohorts and mentorships where he was able to learn from sharing lived experiences and leadership practices.

Results

The results of this study of pastors' experiences of P-O Fit included identification of seven themes. Using Van Manen's (1984) method for data analysis, themes were developed, and research questions were answered in alignment with the emergent themes. The initial coding of one-on-one interviews resulted in 587 individual codes with 51 codes from the focus group interview for a total of 638 codes. The 638 codes were collapsed into 25 categories from which seven themes were developed with two themes having sub-themes. The themes are organized from the most codes to the fewest codes. The first theme developed was leadership conflict with subthemes categorizing leadership conflict by structure, personality, and people. The second theme is vision conflict. The third theme is leadership education with subthemes of formal and informal education, mentorship, experience, conflict management, and recommendations for improved leadership education. The following themes developed include fit, value conflict, self-reflection, and hiring process.

Leadership Conflict

Participants described having experienced leadership conflict at the churches they served within the tenure of their pastorate. Leadership conflict is described as conflict with the structure of the church in both function and make-up, the personality of the leader and the church, and the people in leadership within the church. David described his time as "a constant struggle" because he was "against the grain." Because of how the church functioned and his personality, Jacob explained, "If I were to be extremely successful there, I was going to have to be a great politician." With people in the churches taking responsibility where they had not been given

authority, church leaders not taking responsibility where they were expected to act, churches operating out of past experiences, and a desire to maintain control and power, leadership conflict resulted and played a role in leading to a point of realization where pastors recognized that these types of conflict caused dysfunction and influenced their decision to leave employment.

Structure

Participants described frustrations with leadership structure that resulted in conflict due to differing causes including misrepresentation of church structure in the interview process, an incongruence between the description of governance and actual function, unbiblical polity, and a lack of structure altogether. Luke described his poor fit because of the church's presentation of and his understanding of the polity through the interview process and the conflicting function of it when he arrived. The church transitioned from a deacon-governed church to a leadership team, semi elder-led model, but he found the leadership team had been populated by deacons who maintained the same controlling influence. Luke expressed, "It [the structure] is antithetical to who I am as a leader and to where we were going as a church," thereby creating a significant incongruence between him and the organization. Nathan's experience regarding function was described as deacons in leadership "making it up as they go" when there was a conflict between him and other leaders. Nathan continued, "I do not know if it is even structure or the mindset. The structure can be in place, but if you are not going to adhere to the structure, it does not matter."

John described his conflict with leadership structure because of previous "conflict for so many years" from previous pastors where people in the church were used to "having control of everything that was going on" because they had to maintain the church. So, when John came in to provide leadership and "not just to preach and lead Bible study," those in leadership used their

positions to subvert his leadership by using “backdoor channels to try to get things done.”

Without a singular leader, there was “was some conflict there” that occurred. The conflict was a result of “everyone wanting to be in charge because they went so long with everyone being in charge that it was just hard for them to reign it back in and submit to the man God sent to lead them.”

Leadership conflict was also a result of church leadership having “a misunderstanding of the biblical definitions, expectations, and roles,” David described. The misunderstanding created a “constant battle” and made it “more of a matter of control.” Samuel spoke to the mixed understanding of leadership roles even among a group of elders in the church he served. Jacob believed clarifying roles and empowering people was needed to “first and foremost help the deacons realize the biblical role of a deacon,” and “the pastor needs to be given the leadership to lead the church, to make her decisions, and to operate.”

Lastly, when discussing structure in the church, Joseph quipped, “There was none.” The lack of structure can create conflict when pastors are then responsible for everything in the church as Joseph recalled, “Everything fell directly on my back.” Two participants reported a lack of regard for the pastor position, and six participants described a lack of leadership support in leadership direction and action. The lack of regard and lack of leadership support caused great conflict as seen in Joseph’s description of being viewed as a “hireling,” David’s description of being viewed as “the hired help,” and Nathan’s recollection of being told, “We hired you to do this.”

Personality

Leadership conflict also showed itself because of leaders' personalities and leadership styles not being the appropriate fit for the church either during the entire tenure or at some point in the tenure which contributed to or, in some cases, resulted in pastors leaving employment.

In telling his story, Timothy reflected, "I am certainly not a type A personality," and later said, "If I could go back, I would have acted more quickly to have moved the church." The leadership personality profile he self-described was, in his estimation, not what was most needed for that point in time. Nathan shared a similar reflection in acknowledging he needed a stronger leadership approach to navigate the conflict when he said he was "maybe a little too timid," and, "I am a B personality."

On the other hand, Paul described his experience in a unique way in that his personality, marked by visioneering and leading change, was the right fit for leadership for many years of his pastorate which contributed to a great deal of ministry growth. However, combined with internal evaluation at the church's systems and processes along with developing personal interests and passions, he realized, "Maybe I do not fit for the next season."

People

Naturally, leadership conflict within a structural context and personalities leads to interpersonal conflict. In some cases, the interpersonal conflict manifests itself as a result of preferences, vision, and values. The participants in the study experienced interpersonal conflict at the leadership level for various reasons. In Nathan's case, a particular deacon became disenfranchised with him based on a personal issue and subsequently leveraged a prolonged illness to oust him from his position by declaring in an official church leadership meeting, "If you cannot be here, you need to resign." Samuel recounted how one elder "had a volatile

expression about his frustrations in how the board was operating, and I was leading.” Jacob commented on the influential control of one man in the church when asked about the leadership of the church, “Go to one man, and it is not the pastor.” Joseph shared, “There was a lot of ridicule,” and his “family was attacked” because people did not appreciate his leadership. Luke shared how three men usurped his authority and “used my office for their office” even to the point of how “in the room, there would be complete consensus, but then out of the room, it was just pure chaos.”

Vision Conflict

Nine participants described having experienced vision conflict, which is interconnected with leadership and value conflict as a strong influence on a pastor’s fit at the church. The vision of the church includes overarching values, direction, speed of ministry development, programs, and emphases within the church. Samuel experienced this frustration as he explained it was “difficult to have a unified vision for what the church needed to do” because some thought “our pace needed to be slower, others faster.” The reality of the ministry and expectations of leadership were challenged due to personal preferences and long-held positions which became “incongruent with the vision strategy we had developed together.”

Joseph experienced a similar challenge in that he remembered “no clear direction for the church at the time” because he was met with opposition and ridicule with the vision he provided. David’s entire tenure was met with vision conflict “in every situation” including direction, purpose, and method. In response to casting vision and providing leadership, he remembered being told, “We need to educate you on how we do it.”

Jacob was in a church with many years of tradition and shared, “To move them anywhere forward, it was a struggle.” He presented a plan for engagement in some mission opportunities

and qualified it by stating, “This is the vision that God has given me... The church fully rejected two major things I felt we needed to do as a church... It was really difficult, and that is when things began to change.”

John was successful in initially gaining the support of deacons and elders when he presented, “The Lord really put a vision in my head for the church moving forward.” However, he was met with opposition among leaders and people in the church when he initiated action steps of the vision because “it kind of stepped on toes to where they felt like they were losing their church.” Over time he expressed that he and the church “were not moving forward in one accord.” Nathan shared a similar experience of having communicated and initiated vision for the church but remembered “the change [of fit] came when I started doing a little bit of revitalization.”

Timothy communicated the vision conflict in his experience because of a stagnant environment where the people felt “we are okay with just maintaining” after he made efforts “trying to push the church into a different mindset.” Luke’s difficulty in vision conflict was much more overt as he attested, “They [leadership] had already collaborated. They had their own vision and agenda.” He continued, “It was just clear that this was not the direction the Lord laid on my heart.” Matthew acknowledged vision conflict from the very beginning, but his awareness of it and willingness to lead through it was what he described as “his calling.” He expressed, “I think those two [visions] were different in the beginning, but as we moved forward, those two kind of united and came together, and then it worked really well.”

Leadership Education

Pastors described the leadership education they received that influenced their preparation to serve as the lead pastor at the churches in which they served. Nine participants explicitly

spoke to formal education as lacking in its effectiveness in preparing them for the leadership needed to address conflict management, lead organizational change, and provide practical skills needed to lead in ministry. Jacob recounted thinking, “I am not prepared for this, and I want to know why. I want to know more.” Each participant also made recommendations for how formal and informal education institutions may improve pastors’ preparedness to serve as lead pastors and improve the P-O Fit through evaluation and management during a pastor’s tenure.

Formal and Informal Leadership Education

Formal leadership education is lacking in helping pastors feel equipped in their roles as lead pastors to execute practical responsibilities. Joseph explained his seminary education as having received “very little practical application as far as ministries.” Jacob also shared that his seminary education provided “practically no education from a practical standpoint,” and he recounted a story of realizing he did not know what to say during a water baptism because he had never been taught. Samuel noted that he “had classes explicitly on leadership,” but they were “largely technical in orientation.” Even Matthew, who effectively provided leadership in the church that he served, described that “leadership was not in those [MDiv] classes,” but received practical leadership classes in his doctoral focus that helped equip him.

In speaking to the ministry preparedness via leadership education, Matthew was quick to note, “some ministry cohorts were helpful” for him as he shared experiences with colleagues and mentors. Likewise, Timothy said, “I received leadership education through a cohort program,” but he also noted it came during his tenure as pastor.

All participants spoke to the importance and value of leadership education for pastors to lead churches effectively and the value of evaluating their fit with churches before agreeing to serve as the lead pastor. Luke stated, “It can improve all aspects of ministry.” Matthew declared

of leadership education, “It gave me clarity,” and explained it this way, “If I could give you an analogy—until I received leadership education, it was as if I looked at a picture that was completely fuzzy and out of focus. I could see things. I could see shapes. I could make my way around, but I did not really know what I was looking at. And the more I leaned into leadership education, the clearer the picture became in front of me.”

Mentorship

Participants commented that mentorship, internship, apprenticeship, or leadership discipleship are valuable for leadership education and preparation. Learning from the experiences of people who have served in similar situations is valuable to help pastors develop a frame of reference. Additionally, mentorships oftentimes create an objective advisor amid conflict. For example, Luke remembered, “The same voice that got us there was the same voice that led us from there as well.” Samuel spoke to the mentorship he experienced having served under a lead pastor who was impactful “in equipping to appreciate the mechanics of organizational structure” while “you had exposure to so many of those things, and you were not the man in the chair to be responsible for all the outcomes.” Joseph also emphasized the value of mentorship in leadership education after he had left his lead pastorate and “got to walk hand-in-hand with our pastor, and I learned a great deal from him, more than I ever learned in seminary.”

Experience

Mentorship, as a subtheme for leadership education, led participants to discuss experience as one of the most effective teachers. Participants discussed past experiences as a result of environment, formal and information education, ministry experience, and current experience to address leadership education. Samuel said that most of his leadership education was “on the job training.” Matthew recounted that “it was almost like you are building the plane

as you fly it, and a lot of the time I did not build it well.” Luke spoke to his childhood environment having been disciplined by his parents, taught leadership skills by coaches, and disciplined in athletics. John’s professional experience before entering ministry facilitated him “learning structure and discipline and the importance of doing things on time.” And Paul explained the value of experiential learning and limitations of formal education by sharing from his own experience, “You cannot learn something that you have not really experienced because you cannot relate to it.”

Conflict Management

When discussing leadership education, five participants explicitly addressed a lack of education in conflict management. Paul asked of his situation, “How do you get past these conflicts that are substantive?” Nathan remembered, “I do not recall any training on how to deal with conflict.” Joseph also shared that he received “no training on how to handle these situations.” Samuel reflected on the conflict he faced more introspectively and noted, “I do not know that I really had a handle on the heart stuff.” Even with the sense of unpreparedness for conflict management among participants, Luke recognized that conflict management is improved when a pastor is able to make an “objective assessment” of the context. Paul named an important aspect is for a pastor to know himself as he said, “Leading from your strengths was always a helpful thing.” Participants communicated a desire to have received education in managing conflict on the interpersonal level so as to assist in navigating the leadership structure, vision, and value conflicts that arose. Nathan wished he had been taught “the tools of how to deal with conflict and how to work through things.” He wished he had been taught how “to take on the bully within a church.” John expressed his desire to be educated on “how to go in and lead in a broken church” where “a whole lot of feelings are present” and “how to address those.”

Recommendations for Improved Leadership Education

Participants shared recommendations for leadership education to help improve P-O Fit among pastors and churches including the incorporation of more practical scenarios in multiple forms than what they experienced in formal education. Jacob recalled that his leadership education in seminary was “leadership training in very ministerial driven ideas, but not very practical ones.” He shared a story of not knowing what to say when someone came forward during an invitation to receive Christ during a formal church service. Samuel recommended an improved connection between the technical and ideal approach to a “real-world” application of the ideas. John’s lived experience left him feeling unprepared to address the brokenness in the church he served as he shared, “We know churches are broken. We know that structures are broken within churches. We do not really address that as much as we should. We address the perfect church in the perfect situations.” It is important to be equipped with “how to go in and lead in a broken church... how to address those things,” John said.

With respect to improved leadership education to help improve P-O Fit, participants, like Nathan, expressed a desire to have been equipped with “the tools to evaluate a church,” including “their personality, who they are, what they are, and what they expect of you.” David said, “There is a psyche to every church” and value of understanding that culture before entering a lead pastor position. Jacob also recommended that pastors be informed of different scenarios including “different structures of a church” to help evaluate a church and “different strengths and weaknesses that an individual has as a pastor” to help evaluate fit during the process.

Timothy believed that leadership education would better equip a pastor to know himself but also “challenge them to step up” and fulfill the leadership need in the church. Leadership education could improve in helping pastors identify personal and church strengths and

weaknesses to help maintain and evaluate fit on a consistent basis. As Luke described leadership education regarding self-awareness and fit, “It can improve your ability to truly assess your identity.” For him, he felt prepared to identify the poor fit and remembered, “It was the objective assessment of who I was, who the church was, and then coordination to fit, in regard to what was best for God's glory and the Kingdom that led to this decision.”

Fit

The fit in the role of pastor with the church as an organization was described by every participant. Seven participants articulated a sense of good initial fit with the church during their tenure until realizing the fit changed due to at least one conflict of values and vision. Two participants described their fit during the church as an initial and sustained good fit throughout their tenure until it was clearly time for them to move on. David described his experience around fit as, “I would say not at all.” Every participant, except for one, came to a point of realization where the fit was not good due to a specific, or multiple, incongruences regarding personality, leadership, values, vision, and passions.

Luke stated, “The first year was tremendous.” However, the conflict around polity made it “very clear after about 12 months that this was not going to be a long-term place for us.” Timothy explained he and his wife “just felt like it was a good fit,” but he eventually departed because of a lack of financial sustainability and differing values and vision. Jacob described his initial experience as “a fairly good fit” until church leaders rejected his vision, and later in the interview said, “I was not a good fit.” He realized, “This church is not going to follow,” and told his wife, “I believe that God is done with us here.” John attributed what “seemed like a really good fit” on the familiarity with the people of the church and his history with the people. He, too, experienced a transition in fit when “it became apparent that not everyone was on board with the

vision that God gave me for the church.” Nathan said, “It began well... I just fit the thing like a glove,” but the fit changed when he began to have leadership conflict with individuals in the church.

Samuel described his fit as a “mixed fit,” meaning he felt as if he fit well in some areas but essentially the struggle with leading organizational change and vision conflict led to a decision to leave employment. Paul communicated an initial and sustained fit throughout his tenure of more than 15 years, “Early on, I fit really, really well.” Initially, he felt “we were the people in this season to lead, and it was great. It was a great season.” Paul also realized that the fit and needs changed as he and the church both changed over time. After describing diverging demographics between him and the church, passions, and skills, he said, “In the setting we were in, and the skill set that the church needed in a pastor was not the skill set that I am wired with or by which I am energized.” Paul spoke of his interest in “finding your unique giftings and callings” and a “continued awareness” of self and situation which helped him objectively evaluate his fit. He ultimately resigned after he “just really sensed the Lord saying it is time to let go.”

Value Conflict

All 10 participants addressed conflicting values between them and the church at some level. Nine participants explicitly communicated the churches’ value in tradition with two using the word “entrenched.” Value conflict was manifested in organizational direction (directly associated with vision conflict), structure and function (directly associated with leadership conflict), tradition and history, and passion. Value conflict was a determinant of measuring good to poor fit among every participant.

Samuel expressed the conflict in differing “feelings, opinions, and stances on function and responsibility, not doctrine and theology.” The church had experienced steady decline prior to his arrival as lead pastor, and he “just felt there was an urgency” to make changes, but the value of tradition among programs and projects over what he felt needed to be done caused conflict. Within a year of his resignation, the existing church was acquired as a satellite campus of another church.

John’s expression of value conflict was, “They wanted to hold on to their traditions more than they wanted to seek God... They were set in their ways and not willing to change.” He remembered a great deal of nostalgia amid comments like, “I remember back then.” This value conflict was revealed as the vision John had communicated challenged the long-standing traditions and programs of the church which led to even more conflict in structure, function, and responsibility, like that of Samuel’s experience.

Jacob’s missional mindset and high value in the biblical Great Commission was what would “allow the church to grow. They did not want that.” He described the church as “entrenched in tradition” and “content.” Timothy also faced the same value conflict in his value of “trying to push the church in a different mindset,” but he was met with the attitude of being “okay with just maintaining.”

Jacob noted another organizational value as perception of the church in the community when he said, “They live for what everyone thinks of them.” David shared a similar experience as he said, “Their greatest value is their legacy and not their future.” He said, “They value tradition.” Joseph described one of his personal values, “God has given me a heart of evangelism.” With that value in mind, he proposed a prayer walk in the community, and one leader said, “Is that not what we hired you for?” The value of religious practices over being

missionally minded created value conflict. Joseph said, “The lack of values is the main thing that caused me to decide it was time [to leave].”

Paul recognized some “competing values” at different stages in his tenure but also recognized the need to compromise and lead through those differing values at times. Although he was passionate and valued certain things, he recognized the value conflict was not anti-biblical but simply a reflection of a microcosm of time and represented a greater church need. Toward the end of his tenure, the value conflict became an objective assessment of “rowing in different directions,” leading to introspection, causing him to realize his time to leave.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection was developed as a theme primarily due to two specific practices by participants. The first practice was the point of time in which participants were met with a crisis or series of crises that led them to a point of questioning, introspection, and self-reflection of the past, their present circumstance, and evaluation of their futures at the church they served. The second practice was the point of time in the one-on-one interview and the focus group in which participants evaluated and reflected on their overall purpose and role of their tenure at the church they served for both the church and themselves.

Paul recalled “a crisis moment” where it caused the leadership teams and himself to begin evaluating systems, structures, personnel, needs, and fit, and it was in the reflection he “started realizing maybe I do not fit for the next season.” This crisis moment is like the experiences of nine participants as each faced a crisis or series of crises. Nathan faced a significant health issue that was leveraged against him to resign, and during that time he began to reflect on how the battle to stay would influence his family and the rest of the church. Timothy recognized there was a series of issues like financial shortfalls, lack of attendance, and inactive leadership that

were resulting from the stagnant environment. In that time, although he made every effort to help lead through those challenges, he said, “All of those things really just snowballed as the departure became evident and clear.” Jacob recalled reflecting on his experience at the church through the lens of his life experience in athletics, military, and ministry settings and realized the fit was not good, “I kind of saw the writing on the wall.” Joseph’s self-reflection and point of realization that it was time to leave his position was when he spoke to the mistreatment of his family by church members. Luke’s self-reflection came as a result of his self-awareness and realizing the incongruence with structures and those in leadership.

The self-reflection of each participant of their whole tenure at the church they served varied based on the experiences. David believed the church was grieving the death of their previous pastor when he arrived and said, “I do believe that I was the sacrificial lamb... they had to get past the guy that died while he was there.” Jacob, who also followed a long-tenured pastor, shared, “I really feel like there is a large potential that my role, whether super spiritual or just very physical, was to be that buffer in between my predecessor and the gentleman that would follow me.” Timothy, likewise, believed that his “season there at the church [was] to help navigate through transition.” Paul’s reflection was higher thinking when he posited, “We really are all transitional pastors,” referring to a pastor’s tenure having a beginning and an end in the overall life cycle of a church. Samuel believed his experience was “challenging but formative” and led him to grow in his evaluative practices moving forward to have a four-pronged approach to congruence by continually evaluating who he is, who he aspires to be, who the church is, and who the church aspires to be.

Hiring Process

The interview and hiring processes and experiences were a topic that participants addressed when contextualizing their experience with P-O Fit. The underlying identifiable issue from the hiring process was the lack of communication regarding knowing what questions to ask and asking those questions. Honesty and transparency between the two entities—the pastor and the church—was another matter mentioned by six participants in some form. Clarity of definitions and expectations was identified as another challenge that was a cause of poor P-O Fit. Nathan said about knowing how to navigate the hiring process will help pastors and churches be more effective at “evaluating going in instead of evaluating after going out.” Only three participants spoke to the brevity or quickness of the hiring process.

Participants agreed that knowing what questions to ask in the hiring process was very important for both the pastor and those in the interview. Joseph regretted, “I wish I would have asked some more pointed questions,” but learned, “There are things that I have made sure to ask prior to going to another church.” Timothy’s statement, “Just knowing what questions to ask,” aligned with the necessity for the honesty and transparency that help to clarify values of each organization. Nathan said of the hiring process, “Be direct, and say, ‘This is who I am. This is my personality. This is where I am weak’... And the church says, ‘You are not a fit for us,’ then that is fine. I would rather know up front.” David’s experience was more focused on his discovery about the church after the hiring process when he quipped, “There are several things you know about a church going into it—several things you do not.” While information might determine whether a pastor is employed by a church, it will also help determine fit and the approach of pastors once they arrive. Jacob thought, “If you would have told me all that I have just shared... I do not think that I would not have gone... but I would have gone with a [different] attitude.”

Luke's experience with clarity and expectation was unique in that he described the interview process as "incredibly copious and thorough" with multiple interviews and profiles for both him and the church. However, the need for transparency abounded in his testimony as he reflected, "You have the church that is presented, and then you have the church that is actualized." Luke shared no regrets in the hiring process, noting, "It [Fit] was really just impossible to assess until you were actually in it."

On communicating expectations in the hiring process, David said, "Let the pastor know before he gets there... the key is communication." Joseph remembered, "There were expectations that I never knew until I got to the church, and I am not doing what they are expecting, and it costs me some hardships and heartache." Jacob's perspective deepened the importance of clarity on definitions of values that help determine expectations. As a pastor who was passionate about the application of missions, the church self-identified as being a very mission-minded church and were quick to financially support missions. However, the church people would not become actively involved in missions which created a strong value incongruence.

The role of the pastor, while biblical, is also left to some sort of cultural expectations and should be clarified in the hiring process with responsibilities and expectations. Jacob, desiring to lead the church and met with opposition, remembered, "They wanted somebody to preach to them." David discovered an agreement that the previous pastor had with the leadership body that he would just preach, which led to a great surprise when David began to lead. He recalled, "In their mind, the pastor is the leader as long as he is not leading them to different waters." John also faced an incongruence of the understanding and expectations of pastoral roles as he

remembered thinking, “I am not just there to preach and lead Bible study,” after he had been met with opposition when trying to lead the church into revitalization initiatives.

Outlier Data and Findings

Two notable outliers became evident through the data collection and analysis. One participant’s experience, Matthew, was unique in that he acknowledged value incongruence at different stages regarding P-O Fit throughout his experience at the church he served but described his fit as great. Another noteworthy finding was only participant, Timothy, mentioned or spoke to financial compensation as being an issue as an influencer in P-O Fit.

Outlier Finding #1

Only one participant did not clearly state his leaving was the result of poor P-O Fit. However, his responses implied the prospect of poor P-O Fit had he not left the position when he did because he had accomplished what he felt like he was there to accomplish. During his tenure, he identified value conflict in what he called “pet holding” among certain groups and certain structures and functions. However, through his leadership, he believed, “Their values were my values by the time we left.” He reflected, “I would say the reason we transitioned out is because we felt like our job there was done. It was healthy. It was revitalized, and it was time for another pastor to come in and to lead them.” He had a vision to move to a different place to engage in a different type of ministry, implying that had he stayed, the church, he, and his family would have suffered negative consequences.

Outlier Finding #2

Timothy began his service at the church in a bi-vocational role in a support position. After he became the lead pastor in a full-time role, the church experienced a declining attendance and financial support. He remembered, “I began to see that there was no way that we could

sustain a full-time senior pastor position.” He subsequently volunteered to move to a bi-vocational lead pastor position to help the church. After a season of bringing recommendations to the church for revitalization and growth, he said, “I just started to come to a point where I felt like I was beating my head against the wall.” The other nine participants did not address financial compensation as a direct influencer in their poor fit. However, participants did speak to the allocation of finances as a point of contention and the control of finances by leaders in the church.

Research Question Responses

This section answers the central research question and sub-questions. The answers are in alignment with the developed seven themes with each of the central and sub-questions. Each answer is supported with curated quotes from participants’ one-on-one and focus group interviews.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of pastors who left employment as a result of poor person-organization fit?

Participants identified conflict as a defining characteristic of their experiences that resulted from value conflict which was manifested in vision and leadership conflict. Leadership conflict was described as a conflict with structure as Luke described, “It was in regard to polity.” Differences in personalities were also a major factor as Joseph described, “I would say my personality was the main thing that separated me from the congregation.” And conflict among individuals in leadership positions is a description of poor fit as evidenced by Samuel’s recollection of the “volatile expression” by one man in a leadership meeting, and Nathan’s interpersonal issue with a deacon who refused to address his frustrations.

Eight participants explicitly described vision conflict as a major contributor to their lack of fit in the church. Jacob recalled, “The church is not going to follow.” John’s experience of even communicating and having agreement with a vision was met with opposition when the execution of the vision “kind of stepped on toes.”

Value conflict was identified in all participants as a primary reason for each pastor’s departure from their position, except one participant. For example, eight participants explicitly addressed having a deeply held value of missions and being community focused. The missions value conflicted with the described values of “stagnation” (Timothy) and “contentment” (Jacob) that had developed in churches causing pastors to feel “very disheartened” (Timothy).

During the participants’ journeys, the hiring process was described, evaluating what was not communicated or established before entering the lead pastor role. Each participant shared their unique experience with a shared sentiment like Joseph expressed, “I wish I would have asked some more pointed questions.”

Self-reflection was a shared experience in the personal evaluation of each participant’s P-O Fit. All 10 participants spoke to a specific point in time they reflected on their experience and realized it was time for them to move from that place of employment. Paul shared of his realization, “It was painful to realize that this is being cut away from our lives... so that they can continue to flourish, and so that we can continue to flourish.”

Participants’ descriptions of their fit varied from “not at all” (David) to “at first, I just fit the thing like a glove” (Nathan), with Matthew stating, “It was a great fit.” In the case of each participant, the measure of fit was determined by value congruence as expressed in ministry function.

Sub-Question One

How do pastors describe their experience as a fit within the organization of the church?

Participants described their fit within the organization of the church based on their perception and context. The varying experiences of fit ranged from poor fit shortly after arriving at the church in the lead pastor position to good fit until the end of a more than 15-year tenure. The one outlier was Matthew who described “a great fit” throughout his tenure. Matthew said, “We felt like our job there was done,” and the prospect of poor fit by staying beyond the call would have been a poor fit for him and the church.

David described his fit as “not at all,” “against the grain,” and marked by “constant struggle.” Joseph shared a similar experience in that he felt as though his values, personality, and vision for the church did not fit with those in the church which is why he “did not have the support of the church.” Luke said, “The first year was tremendous,” but then realized, “We were out of alignment in regard to mission, vision, and values,” and that was partly because “the organization was driving the mission as opposed to the mission driving the organization.” Other participants also described an initial good fit with the church, but over time, a growing poor fit because of diverging personalities, leadership structure, values, vision, and passions.

Sub-Question Two

How do pastors describe how person-organization fit influenced their exodus from the church in which they served?

P-O Fit was found to be a strong determinant on whether a pastor continued to serve at the church. When pastors recognized their personal values conflicted with values of the church, specifically with those in leadership in the church, leadership conflict and vision conflict arose. Timothy’s experience of a “stagnant” environment conflicted with his desire to “grow,” and David’s explanation, “their goal and objective was to maintain. My goal and objective was to

expand,” demonstrates a strong value incongruence which led to conflict among individuals in leadership.

P-O Fit was also found to be a strong influence on motivation among pastors, which influenced their decision to leave the church. Timothy noted, “the values that developed were very disheartening.” Paul shared, “I was very, very much burned out.” David said, “I got so tired.” Nathan remembered thinking, “I just want to enjoy ministry again,” representing the lack of motivation and the influence motivation has on perseverance among pastors.

The participants’ motivation and sense of fit led them to a point of self-reflection where they would then evaluate their purpose, position, and effectiveness. Six participants noted effective leadership during their fit at their church, and two participants noted effective leadership even during poor fit. Nathan remembered, “It began well,” and spoke to new ministries, increased attendance, and financial support. Despite Joseph’s observation that he did not fit at all, he noted, “[God] used me in that setting to win a lot of people to Jesus,” noting over 100 professions of faith in 3½ years in a church with an average attendance of 55 people. However, all 10 participants identified a point in time when they recognized it was time for them to leave employment, with only one of those participants being asked to resign and choosing to do so without opposition. Through Jacob’s reflection he shared, “I kind of saw the writing on the wall.”

Sub-Question Three

How do pastors describe the leadership education they received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution?

Participants described education regarding leadership in seminary as lacking to prepare them for the challenges they would face. Five participants including Jacob explained how there

was “no education from a practical standpoint. I think from a ministerial standpoint—yeah—I got some of that.” John also said of leadership education from his seminary experience, “It was not relevant... not the way real life is.” Participants described the leadership education in seminary as limited to addressing “the perfect church and the perfect situations” (John).

Participants also described the lack of training in how to deal with conflict in the church. Nathan did “not recall any conflict training.” And Paul determined, “I do not think most churches know how to organizationally handle significant conflict that impacts the whole body.”

Three participants shared that valued input from exceptional professors who shared real-life experience helped prepare them for “practical church experience” (Paul). Participants continued with the theme of the value of lived experiences in preparation for leadership as seen in David’s comment, “The greatest education you get, though, is on the field. So much of what you learn [in formal education] is theory, and the theory is good, and the theory works in an ideal situation. But, sometimes A+B does not always equals C in ministry.” Five participants attributed much of their valuable leadership education to some form of cohort. John gave insight into the aloneness that three participants shared when they were facing challenges when he said, “You kind of feel alone, like you are on an island trying to do it all by yourself.”

All participants spoke to leadership education being the result of varying forms of mentorship with only one participant referring to a mentorship program associated with formal education. Joseph said of his mentorship when speaking to learning day-to-day operations of the church, “I learned a great deal from [the mentor], more than I ever learned in seminary,”

Sub-Question Four

How do pastors describe the need for leadership education to improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the organization?

Participants described the need for leadership education to be greatly improved to help prepare a pastor to be self-aware of strengths and weaknesses, passions, and values. Furthermore, leadership education should help prepare a pastor to objectively evaluate a church's leadership structure, past, values, and vision during the hiring process, during the tenure, and to realize when the fit has moved to a point when it is time to move from that employment. Jacob said of evaluating P-O Fit, leadership education should "help establish an understanding of where they [the church] are, and what your gifts and talents are, and what kind of a pastor you are." Nathan said those evaluations should include knowing "how to ask tough questions." Paul's comment represents the greater answer to this question of leadership education when he said, "Maybe education helps people be okay with not having to fit everything." The leadership education of self-awareness and situational awareness should be a tool provided to objectively evaluate P-O Fit for a pastor and have a "continued awareness of it" (Paul) and to have "the humility to recognize there may be times we do not fit" (Paul).

Pastors also described the importance of leadership education in being prepared to help lead organizational change within a church while also navigating conflict management. Five participants called for leadership education to include more practical scenarios with John specifying, "How to go in and lead in a broken church." David addressed the desire to be trained in public relations, more specifically, "how to build trust."

Participants agreed that forming a mentorship program within formal education like that of student-teaching might be beneficial. Joseph suggested great value in "forming some sort of mentorship program for a seminary student to be able to shadow a pastor and learn what is expected from you in the church because that was never portrayed truthfully."

Summary

The content of this chapter includes a review of the purpose statement and research questions along with a presentation of the data analysis and findings. Each participant is described in detail. Additionally, the seven themes of leadership conflict, leadership education, vision conflict, value conflict, hiring process, self-reflection, and fit are presented and supported by rich, thick descriptions and in vivo quotes. The findings presented in this analysis highlight the connection between pastors' experiences of poor P-O Fit and these themes as a framework by which to evaluate fit. The seven themes were used to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore and describe the experiences of pastors who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor person-organization fit. This chapter includes a discussion and interpretation of findings in light of derived themes and related to the literature review and theoretical framework. Implications for policy and practice are described. Theoretical and methodological implications are discussed along with limitations and delimitations. Lastly, recommendations for future research are presented.

Discussion

The findings of this study were derived from a hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology and presented in Chapter Four. As Van Manen (1990) recommended, each participant's experience, their settings, and the derived themes were presented using rich, thick description to describe the essence of the phenomenon under study. The phenomenon is pastors' experiences of leaving employment due to poor person-organization fit (P-O Fit). To research this phenomenon and describe the values of pastors that influenced their experience of poor P-O Fit, research questions were developed using Bandura's (2012) social cognitive theory (SCT) and Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory as a framework. The research questions served as a basis for the methodology of collecting data, after which the data were collected, analyzed, and organized. The data were organized into themes and the research questions were answered. The themes are presented and summarized below along with the researcher's interpretation of findings with implications for policy and practice that provide a base of knowledge needed for

formal recommendations for future research aimed at improving P-O Fit between pastors and churches.

Interpretation of Findings

The analysis of the lived experiences of the 10 pastors who participated in the study revealed the following seven themes that describe the characteristics of the phenomenon of poor P-O Fit: leadership conflict, vision conflict, leadership education, fit, value conflict, self-reflection, and hiring process. Leadership conflict was divided into subthemes including conflict descriptors of structure, personality, and people. These findings supported the extant literature stating that leadership conflict has a negative effect on pastoral motivation and increases burnout and tenure (Joynt, 2019). Leadership conflict is determined to be a cause of poor P-O Fit but may also be the symptom or cause of the greater effect of diverging values, vision, or lack of preparedness to lead or respond to needed leadership between a pastor and a church.

Overarchingly, the findings support existing literature and research on the topic of pastoral turnover and burnout (Barna, 2021; Beebe, 2007; Rainer, 2014). The construct of P-O Fit (Chatman, 1989) was a successful framework by which to evaluate the influential factors of fit, values, and vision between a pastor and the church while also recognizing the bidirectional influence of an individual in a social context as Bandura's (2012) SCT and sociocultural theories allow.

Participants expressed thoughts on leadership education's influence on P-O Fit including the following subthemes: formal and informal education, mentorship, experience, conflict management, and recommendations for improved leadership education. Also, pastors expressed a desire for improved leadership education and equipping to prepare them for the leadership required to know themselves well, to evaluate their fit with the church, and to successfully lead

churches they serve (Speight & Speight, 2017; White Smith, 2020). The information derived from these findings provide a strong base for academic and practical implications for pastors, churches, and ministry-related institutions along with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The findings from this study were presented in seven themes through a lens of what pastors described as their values and the congruence of those values within the churches they served. Values are enduring beliefs of an individual or organization that influence perspective, perception, and directional action and structures. Values may be defined as any number of matters and may be subjective depending on the perspective of the individual describing or defining values (Rokeach, 1968). Within P-O Fit, the values identified are included within the themes derived from the data including leadership structure, interpersonal relationships, personality congruence, theological beliefs, and vision. The varying values and incongruence of values described by pastors in this study revealed the importance of evaluating value congruence in determining whether a pastor and a church are a good fit. The determination that a pastor is not a good fit is the same as saying the church is not a good fit for the pastor. The findings in this study can be determined that P-O Fit provides a platform for an objective evaluation of fit through self-reflection without the requirement of finding fault with the person or the organization. One participant stated, “It was the objective assessment of who I was, who the church was and then coordination to fit in regard to what was best for God's glory and the Kingdom that led to this decision” (Luke). In some cases, fault, in a negative sense, may be found in either the pastor or the church. In any case, P-O Fit provides a more objective value-laden congruence model when attempting to predetermine fit and evaluating fit throughout tenure. The findings of this study reveal value conflict as a base for the expressed experience of

leadership conflict and vision conflict among pastors. Aligning with current research, leadership conflict and vision conflict are predictors for pastoral burnout and turnover (Beebe, 2007; Spencer et al., 2012; Adams et al., 2017; Joynt, 2019).

The theme of fit is also an important matter that revealed a deeper issue of unpreparedness. Participants shared they felt unprepared to lead in multiple ways organizationally during their tenure. Additionally, participants as a majority felt unprepared and unsure when engaging the hiring process with a church. The research points to a potential value in improving leadership education and preparing pastors and churches to evaluate P-O Fit with a church both during the hiring process and as often as the pastor and church deem appropriate.

Leadership Conflict as a Value Predictor of Poor Fit.

Participants confirmed Chatman's (1989) assertion that shared values between a person and an organization are predictors for a fit. Using the P-O Fit model as a framework, participants confirmed what are predictors for poor fit in recent literature but mostly described those predictors for burnout and turnover. Pastoral poor fit and pastoral turnover are not entirely inseparable. The value incongruence may be the leadership conflict in the form of church leadership structure like in Luke's case when he recognized that the structure of the church he served was "antithetical" to what he believed. Luke's experience confirmed White Smith's (2020) assertion that leadership style of the leader and structure of the organization may produce conflict. Knight Johnson's (2018) research also supported this study's findings in that lack of pastoral support created leadership conflict as expressed by Joseph when he recognized the lack of structure in the church and by Nathan, Jacob, and John when they expressed the disregard for operating within the formal leadership structure as it existed. On the other hand, Matthew was able to navigate a challenging structure well during his tenure as lead pastor because the vision

of the church dictated the organization of the church. The data suggested that continuity in vision in leadership of a church may be a factor that supersedes leadership structure as a predictor of poor fit. However, when those in leadership are not united, leadership conflict is more likely to occur as in Samuel and Luke's experiences.

As church organizations lean heavily on volunteer support to execute the responsibilities of the church, the lack of volunteer leadership support leads to significant isolation and burnout among pastors. Other studies confirm this interpretation (Bligh, 2017; Speight & Speight, 2017; Joynt, 2018). The values of pastors and churches may be expressed in terms of leadership conflict from differing beliefs on how a church should be structured to the support exercised within the structure. In practical terms, the data reflected that in many instances, leadership conflict arises from deacons and elders not fulfilling leadership roles as defined in biblical terms or even withing the defined expectations of a specific church's policies and procedures. Nathan expressed that their church had a difficult time even finding people qualified to serve as deacons and leaders, and others were simply not willing. Conversely, leadership conflict arises from people in leadership roles assuming authority and responsibility against biblical roles that creates an undercurrent working against pastoral leadership, creating conflict and possibly leading to a conflict management incongruence. Leadership conflict also includes a difference in preferred conflict management style as noted by Beebe (2007) and Spencer et al. (2012). A preference in conflict management style is not necessarily correct or incorrect but differing in expectation.

Leadership conflict also results from poor leadership empowerment which can be a bidirectional issue depending on the circumstance. Overwhelmingly, however, the participants in the study described their experiences as not being given the freedom to lead. Jacob said, "The pastor needs to be given the leadership to lead the church, to make her decisions, and to operate."

The lack of leadership empowerment may be a direct result of a poor organizational structure but may also be implicative of the people within the structure. Nathan said, “I do not know if it is even the structure versus the mindset.” Abernethy et al. (2016) posited that when pastors are not empowered to lead, it can negatively impact their motivation, increasing job burnout and turnover, but Fischer and Schultz (2017) noted leadership empowerment improves job engagement and has positive effects on motivation and the organization. Conversely, some churches operate based on the void of leadership during interim periods, and the adjustment when a pastor-leader comes into the church is challenging for those who had power and control as John experienced.

Furthermore, leadership conflict resulting in poor P-O Fit may result from a mismatch in personality and leadership styles as determined by Joynt (2013). Joseph explicitly stated, “Personality wise, I did not mesh with the congregation.” Samuel’s leadership style was found to conflict with one of the church members in leadership, and Nathan experienced personality differences with a deacon in leadership. The findings showed that there was a negative influence on motivation for pastors as described by Jackson-Jordan (2013), and decreased motivation tends toward burnout as expressed by participants using the words, “burned out, tired, and disheartened.”

Essentially, the values within leadership that provide congruence include but are not limited to structure, leadership styles and personality, people within the organization, and vision. Vision is discussed in the following section. Even still, these values can be assessed and evaluated during the hiring process and monitored during a tenure to determine fit and offer foresight to mitigate potential issues.

Vision Congruence and Conflict.

Vision is a strong factor in evaluating P-O Fit. Vision includes but is not limited to a future aspired state of existence, the current and future organizational structure needed to accomplish the vision, and the tradition and history to be navigated during vision pursuit. As a determinant factor, it is necessary for pastors to evaluate vision congruence as a value. However, the data reflected that most pastors' hiring process failed to incorporate a thorough evaluation of desired vision for both the church and the pastor. While it might appear that the two would be the same based on being in a common field, pastors' experiences reveal this is a major point of divergence as shown in research (Spencer et al, 2012; Adams et al., 2017). Vision conflict arises because of pastors and church leadership teams not addressing vision in the hiring process, only addressing vision conceptually, not addressing the implications of implementing a vision, and not addressing the clarification of definitions and role expectations for vision accomplishment. Another cause of vision conflict results in the change of passions, desires, and interests among church leadership whether it is the pastor or those in leadership. In Jacob's case, he shared a vision with the church that had come to him during his tenure as lead pastor only to discover the church leadership outrightly rejected the two major components of vision casting he presented to the church, both in concept and practice. In John's case, he received a welcomed reception to the vision he presented to the church with respect to organizational direction in alignment with the Great Commission, but the lived expression toward fulfilling the vision was rejected and ultimately resulted in his leaving employment due to vision conflict. It is necessary for pastors and churches to understand that vision is a forward direction but is informed by values that must be communicated during the hiring process and throughout the tenure.

Vision congruence, when handled well, can affirm P-O Fit and assist in endurance among other pastor-church conflict. For example, Matthew communicated a vision for the church and a

path to see the vision accomplished. The leadership and church congregation supported the vision, and each step toward the vision was supported with the reminder that the church had agreed to move forward with the presented vision. This approach to vision congruence and casting vision follows models like Kotter's (2012) leading organizational change model and reduces turnover while increasing continuity (Spencer et al., 2012).

Self-Reflection.

While Frederick et al. (2021) called it practicing mindfulness, participants show that self-reflection during their experience played a critical role in their evaluation and determination of their own fit. Each participant explicitly referred to a certain point in time where they realized their good fit had ended, and the time had come for them to leave. In some instances, the self-reflection was a prolonged season but still resulted in a moment in time when the determination was made that the fit had ceased. This practice aligns with Bandura's SCT (2012) and sociocultural theory as it provides for individuals to practice self-awareness while also situating their own self into their organizational/cultural/social contexts. The most effective practices of self-reflection may be experienced when a pastor knows his strengths, weaknesses, passions, values, and vision. These metrics may serve as a standard of fit evaluation that will reveal diverging points and then allow a pastor to determine if the path forward is to endure and navigate the incongruences or leave employment due to incompatibility. The practice of self-awareness is a necessary component in being able to effectively implement a P-O Fit model and view it objectively. Two participants confirmed this interpretation by noting their self-awareness and ability to recognize their situation which allowed them to make an objective decision that was best for them and the church. Conversely, two other participants shared they expressed a desire to have had the skills and knowledge to be more self-aware to evaluate their fit more

objectively during their season at the church they served. Paul showed an ability to navigate incongruences for a long tenure but still realized it was time to move on due to internal and external diverging points. Matthew, on the other hand, navigated incongruences all the way through his tenure until he felt as if he had accomplished all that was needed to be accomplished, at which point he felt it was time to move on at the prospect of poor P-O Fit.

Defining Values.

The research points to a general categorization of values when determining P-O Fit with regards to value congruence. Values can differ from church to church and pastor to pastor, and while they are defined as enduring beliefs by Rokeach (1968), they include but are not limited to tradition, history, legacy, comfort, methodology, missions, revitalization, leadership support, leadership style, leadership empowerment, conflict management, vision, structure, facilities, programs, and finances. When addressing values for a pastor and a church, each of these may fit into Chatman's (1989) model under the two categories of structure and norms with the added topics of person and organizational needs as suggested by Vveinhardt and Gulbovaite (2017).

As important as values are to define and evaluate, the evaluation is only as useful as the description and expectation associated with the value. Data revealed that lack of clarity between the two entities—pastor and the church—was experienced by pastors who experienced poor P-O Fit. Joseph said, “There were expectations of me that I did not know until I got to the church, and I was not doing what they were expecting, and it cost some hardships and headaches.” Jacob expressed that he and the church had a shared value of missions through his interview process only to discover over time that the church's definition of mission as a value and his were differing in the application and practice of that value which led to value, vision, and leadership conflict resulting in poor P-O Fit. Defining values leads to clear expectations and fewer surprises

between the pastor and the church, improving P-O Fit. While pastors and churches may conceptually and abstractly address values in the hiring process and beyond through evaluations, a clearly communicated and defined set of values and preferable normative behaviors must be defined to help maximize the objective evaluation of P-O Fit. Pastors and churches who determine a poor fit in a short period may be suffering the consequence of a faster and less thorough interview process where values and norms were not clearly communicated and defined. Matthew and Paul's situations provide a converse example in that they both were raised with mutual familiarity between them and the churches they served. Values, although not explicitly stated and defined, were known between the two, and each person found themselves in successful tenures until their values differed based on changing ministry callings.

Although pastors and churches may conduct a "copious and thorough" hiring process that includes multiple assessments, evaluations, and interviews as in Luke's case, a guaranteed long-term fit is not guaranteed and reveals the necessity for pastors and churches to be self-aware. Self-awareness is achieved through self-reflection and utilizing third-party tools such as personality, spiritual gifts, and abilities assessments for pastors and organizational audits for churches. The self-awareness of pastors and churches must be communicated with honesty and transparency during the hiring process to avoid surprises and may enhance the chances of initial and sustained positive P-O Fit.

Leadership Education

The current core curriculum of leadership education in seminaries and other ministry-related institutions does not sufficiently prepare and equip pastors with organizational leadership skills needed to navigate the needs in churches. This finding supports the existing research on the topic of leadership education for pastors (Abernethy et al., 2016; Speight & Speight, 2017;

Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk et al., 2017; White Smith, 2020; Wong et al., 2019).

Participants communicated a lack of practical skills in leading organizational change as needed to further the church along a communicated vision. Leadership education is also needed to improve the interpersonal relationship skills of pastors to navigate the diverse personalities and backgrounds that make up a congregation. David said of a desire to be more educated to navigate the relationships and conflict management, “There is a psyche in every church... it would be more of how people are, good or bad, whether that is psychology or sociology, or interpersonal relationships.” Leadership education can be improved to equip pastors to lead organizational change more effectively toward a united vision at the spiritual, organizational, and interpersonal levels.

A strong desire for mentorship in the field of pastoral leadership was expressed among the participants who had not experienced mentorship. Other pastors reflected of the value of mentorship they had received, and others expressed a regret after their experience of poor P-O Fit that they had not experienced mentorship sooner. Each participant spoke to the value of mentorship in that it allows, as Samuel explained, a pastor to learn from the lived experiences of another without facing the burden of responsibility for the decisions being made. Paul noted that leadership education is limited in knowledge transfer, and sometimes the only teacher is experience, which implies the importance of lived experiences through mentorship, cohorts, and internships for pastors. The findings from this study and the current literature support the conclusion that pastors be educated on practical ways to lead organizationally (Charles & Duffield, 2018; Wong et al., 2019).

A great need exists for leadership education in ministry-related institutions and beyond to include a practical methodology on how to evaluate P-O Fit between a pastor and a church

during the hiring process. Nathan said his desire of leadership education was “to have the tools to evaluate a church.” Beyond the hiring process, a continued evaluation of P-O Fit between a pastor and a church is healthy for pastors and churches to objectively evaluate the fit. Luke noted, “It will allow you to see within the lens of God’s calling of you making a decision based truly on faith for his glory as opposed to faith in your glory.”

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings in this study provide implications for both policy and practice. As pastors and churches seek to become paired with one another to maximize fit, providing an evaluative tool that is not required but suggested may serve to empower pastors and churches to measure fit initially and evaluate fit with some determined regularity. The implications for policy are discussed below for formal institutions that exercise influence in education and policy among pastors and churches including seminaries and other ministry-related institutions who seek to prepare pastors to serve in churches. Denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and any other denominational institution at any level, for example, international, national, state, county, and parish, that provides resources to churches in hiring or placing pastors might benefit from this information.

Implications for practice are also discussed including a new congruence model for pastors and churches to consider for implementing during the hiring process. Additional practical implications are discussed for pastors and churches that may serve to improve the likelihood of positive P-O Fit and reshape the situational perspective of pastors and churches when poor P-O Fit is determined.

Implications for Policy

As participants in this study were limited to the inclusion of SBC churches, the SBC denomination is referred to for representation. Regardless, the implications for improving policy may be transferable interdenominationally including but not limited to nondenominational churches that do not work under denominational oversight or have higher institutional affiliation. While cooperating SBC churches are known to be governed autonomously, without direct oversight apart from an individual church itself, the SBC, cooperating state conventions, and county associations are known to provide resources that seek to maximize church health and effectiveness. Supporting conventions, whether limited to providing resources for churches and pastors, or involved to the point of placing a pastor or minister with a church, should offer a practical resource and training for pastors, churches, and specifically church leadership teams, to guide and aid in the hiring process and evaluation of a pastor with a church. As SBC churches are autonomously governed, a P-O Fit resource would not be required or mandated. However, a resource could be adopted as a standard operating procedure among SBC churches that may improve consistency and familiarity as pastors and churches evaluate fit. Additionally, churches may choose to share resources and information that may improve pastoral placement and fit thereby furthering the cooperation among churches for a Kingdom purpose of improving church vitality, decreasing pastoral turnover, and increasing pastoral tenure and effectiveness as discussed by Rainer (2014).

Seminaries and other ministry-related institutions whose mission is to prepare pastors and ministers to lead in a church should improve education and preparation of pastors to engage in the hiring process and objectively evaluate P-O Fit. Most pastors are unprepared and ill-equipped to engage in a hiring process. Therefore, this study showed the importance of denominations and

seminaries teaming together to educate students and adopt a standard P-O Fit model for hiring and continued fit evaluation. A prospective model is discussed in the next section—implications for practice. The pastors in this study who engaged in a thorough hiring process had been exposed to leadership training and found that fit diverged from good to poor because of a progressive change in the church's needs and their passions, skills, and abilities. Their ability to make such an assessment was attributed to leadership education, mentorship, and previous experience.

Pastors place great value on practical experience and mentorship as reflected by all 10 participants in this study. Practical experience and organizational leadership skills have been proven to be a shortfall for seminaries and ministry-related institutions in preparing pastors to lead (Strunk et al., 2017). Five participants recommended that seminaries and other ministry-related institutions implement a mentorship/internship program for students seeking to serve in pastoral and ministerial roles. Pastor-students would not be limited to lead pastors and would serve under an active pastor. A mentorship/internship program should include a credentialing process for active pastors who serve as mentors along with some compensation and a reporting accountability established by a curriculum. The experience a student would receive in a mentorship program may improve preparedness among pastors to experience practical scenarios, a concern addressed by participants Samuel, Jacob, John, Nathan, Joseph, and Timothy. A program may parallel the student teaching model currently used in the education field composed of a standardized set of training experiences including but not limited to administrative practices such as budgeting, key leadership practices in varying organizational leadership structures, how to lead a church from stagnation to revitalization, and conflict management.

As pastoral burnout and turnover has increased in recent years and a greater number of pastors and ministers contemplate leaving not just a church but the ministry altogether (Barna, 2021), the implication is that churches experience a decrease in vitality and even death (Rainer, 2014). Additionally, conflict within the church due to the increase in polarizing social issues and a cultural shift in the landscape of evangelical Protestantism in the United States of America has led churches to experience declining attendance, leadership, and influence (Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020) which may be defined as brokenness amid an identity crisis. As brokenness, defined by a participant in this study, is a pervasive issue in churches, the concepts of revitalization and leading out of a place of brokenness in a church toward healing should be a requirement in curriculum in seminaries, not just an area of specialization. Matthew noted he lacked the practical skills and knowledge to know what to do amid brokenness in the church he led, “It was almost like you are building the plane as you fly it, and a lot of times I did not build it very well.” However, he noted that when he entered an academic specialization in revitalization during his tenure, “It was immensely valuable. Every single day I went to class I could come back and apply what we had just talked about.” John described it simply about his desire for knowledge and practice, “How to go in and lead in a broken church.” Seminaries must realize the glory days of the church as a cultural and societal cornerstone are diminishing, and a great urgency exists to equip leaders to lead from a state of brokenness into a state of restoration as opposed to leading from a place of wholeness and prevention.

Seminaries and other ministry-related institutions should incorporate a greater focus on equipping pastors in conflict management and what leadership approaches to implement when needed. Pastors and churches should be educated on how to evaluate if conflict is a sign of bad fit or an issue that needs to be navigated. John, David, and Samuel all expressed a desire to have

been more equipped to manage conflict they encountered, and Paul reflected, “I don't think most churches know how to organizationally handle significant conflict that impacts the whole body.” Vision conflict and organizational conflict are shown to increase pastoral burnout and turnover (Knight Johnson, 2018). Conversely, McKenna et al. (2007) noted skills in conflict management were common skills among long-tenured pastors. Skills in conflict management contributed to a supportive organizational environment (Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013) and helped contribute toward a unified future organizational direction of the church (Adams et al., 2017). Incorporating conflict management in formal education may improve pastoral fit as it may serve to help pastors navigate conflict as opposed to experience poor fit and lose employment as the result of conflict.

Implications for Practice

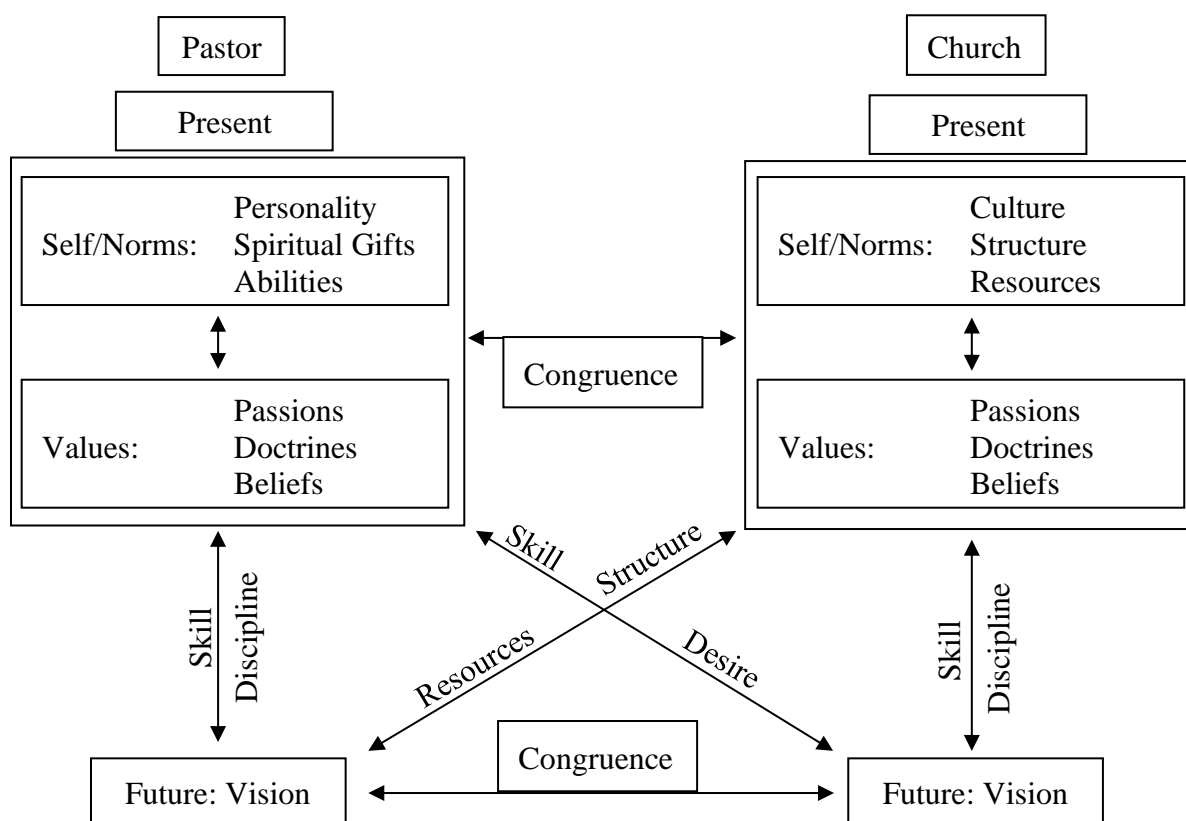
As pastors are unprepared to lead organizationally in the church (Speight & Speight, 2017; Strunk et al., 2017) and church leaders are volunteers in need of training (White Smith, 2020), organizational leadership in the church must be improved to improve the health of churches. As participant Paul noted with reference to the church, “The church is both an organism and an organization.” The implication of Paul’s statement is that every organism has organization and requires practice of organizational structure, function, and leadership. The implications from this research reveal organizational structure is required for a church to be healthy. Every organizational structure requires people to serve within it to function, and no organizational structure is healthy unless the structure is honored by those in leadership. Coexisting realities of organization and organism of the church are analogous to the skeleton of a body and the flesh, blood, muscle, and organs of the body. The pastor and the church, as two integral parts of the organization and the organism, must be evaluated for fit. Church leadership

teams responsible for the search and facilitation of hiring a pastor and pastors themselves should be equipped and trained with a standard tool for hiring and evaluating fit including assessments for self/normative behaviors, values, and vision.

Using Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit model as a framework and implementing the literature review and current research from this project, I developed and present an original Pastor-Church (P-C) Fit model in Figure 4 that is recommended as a model for pastors and churches to evaluate fit during the hiring process and evaluate fit with some determined regularity.

Figure 4

Pastor-Church Fit Model



This P-C Fit model provides a framework by which pastors and churches may evaluate fit and, at a minimum, pre-determine a level of fit between the two entities during the hiring process. Additionally, the information provided in this model may allow pastors and churches to

evaluate fit beyond the hiring process. The P-C Fit model is an 8-way congruence model. The word congruence is intentionally used because it allows for pastors and churches to recognize that not all elements must be equal or the same but may complement one another allowing for effective functionality. For example, a church may have a culture of many passive people but need a pastor with strong personality and the spiritual gift of leadership. The combination of factors produces a congruence and complementary relationship.

Using Chatman's (1989) value-congruence framework, the P-C Fit model first considers the person as pastor and the organization as church. However, a significant number of new elements are present. The incorporation of present and future states in the model addresses the large influence that vision conflict has on pastoral burnout and turnover (Barfoot et al., 2005; Spencer et al., 2012). The implication for pastors and churches is an experienced improved fit when vision congruence exists. Another important difference in the uniqueness of this model is the internal congruence between pastors and churches. Self-awareness is required to arrive at the internal congruences of self/norms and values. Additionally, self-awareness is required to arrive at internal congruence of present and future. The success and effectiveness of this model is contingent on the honesty, transparency, and vulnerability of both the pastor and the church. Data in this study revealed a tendency for both entities to impress and leave difficult topics and undesirable information for later discovery. One participant compared the hiring process to a dating experience, and another suggested that the truth about both entities is not fully known for up to three years. Another participant decried the common hiring process where both parties seek to impress one another and said, "Let us put our warts out there in front of each other, and then let us see if we are going to fit." Furthermore, to achieve a realistic picture in lieu of a perception, the use of objective assessment tools and consultants is recommended throughout the

process whenever possible. The eight ways of congruence are defined below and discussed in function and practice:

Pastor Present – Self/Norms = Values

Greenleaf (1970) spoke of the importance of self-awareness of a servant leader. More recent research claimed effective leaders practice social context awareness (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018; White Smith, 2020) and mindfulness (Hulsheger et al., 2013; Luken & Sammons, 2016; Frederick et al., 2021). Supported by Bandura's SCT (2001) and sociocultural theory (2012), the practice of self-reflection to arrive at knowing oneself including one's own personality type, spiritual gifts, and abilities, is important in helping a person also recognize that values, one's passions, doctrines, and beliefs, are influenced by sociocultural influences. Strunk et al. (2017) recommended pastors develop a philosophy of ministry, an expression of values, that will aid in pastoral resilience. To maximize a predetermined fit with a church, a pastor must exercise internal congruence through self-reflection. Self-reflection is not limited to an individual's own thoughts and observations, but it is recommended to include positive mentoring relationships (Son, 2016). It is strongly recommended that outside resources including spiritual gifts, personality, and abilities assessments and objective consulting be utilized to ensure a pastor is internally aligned and self-aware to the point that self-perception aligns with reality.

Church Present – Self/Norms = Values

Churches are the most at risk for experiencing incongruence at the internal level due to a multiplicity of individuals with varying personalities, ever-changing resources, structures dependent on the people within them, changing beliefs, passions, and debatable doctrines. Participants in this study reported conflicting elements within the churches they served that contributed to the determination of poor P-C Fit as the call for pastors to lead a divided group of

people within themselves creates a nearly impossible task. For churches to truly assess what is needed in pastoral leadership and what profile might be the best fit, the self-awareness of a church is necessary. For example, if a church identifies as having a value of missions, however, the church's resources are all directed inwardly, an incongruence has been found that must be addressed. If a stated doctrine and belief is in the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, yet teachers in the church teach the Bible is not inerrant and infallible, that incongruence must be addressed. As people within the church may serve to complete such an internal assessment/audit of the culture, structure, resources, beliefs, passions, and doctrine, it is equally important for a pastor to have such an assessment performed by an objective and neutral source to help bring awareness to any discrepancy between perception and reality. The church should also provide an extensive history of the church including summaries of quantifiable and qualifiable measures of previous pastorates and interim periods for the pastor to evaluate internal congruence. While assessments including objective observations have been known to be conducted by interim pastors and other consultants working with committees and leadership teams within churches, implementing the P-C Fit model may help to provide layers and a common language of comparable congruences between a pastor and the church.

Pastor – Present = Future (Vision)

After a pastor has determined internal congruence in the present, vision must be congruent with a pastor's present state and can be achieved through reflecting, conceptualizing, and articulating vision. To determine congruence between a pastor's present and aspirations of a futuristic vision, two elements may be used to evaluate the congruence—skill and discipline. What skills are needed to accomplish the vision must be articulated and measured and may include interpersonal, technology, practice, knowledge, and leadership skills. Discipline may be

measured in the drive and desire to do what it takes to move the pastor from the present to the envisioned future. A recommended practice for this stage is to write an executable plan of how the pastor can move from the present assessment to the articulated vision.

Church – Present = Future (Vision)

After a church concludes there is present, internal congruence between self/norms and values, the introspective practice of self-reflection must occur to evaluate any, if present, vision for the future. While a church's vision may be abstract and consist mostly of a reiteration of values and passions allowing for a pastor to cast vision, the church's vision might have limitations regarding changes in culture, structure, and desired resources to accomplish past, present, and future goals. Any vision a church has felt or expressed should be articulated and be included in the P-C Fit process. It is then recommended for a church to use an outside source to help write a thorough job description for a pastor, including clear expectations and definitions, reporting lines, and compensation including ideal work-life scenarios following Knight Johnson's (2018) suggestions. Data in this study revealed conflict arises when job descriptions and expectations are not clear for pastors and aligns with Joynt's (2013) findings and subsequent study that retention improves with clear job descriptions and expectations (Joynt, 2019).

Pastor Present = Church Present

A pastor and church, in the process of determining and evaluating fit with one another, must practice self-reflection (Dewey, 1933) which is shown to result in improved prosocial impact for leaders (Lanaj et al., 2019), social context awareness (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018), and mindfulness which is moment-to-moment reality awareness (Hulsheger et al., 2013). During this phase in the P-C Fit evaluation process, clarity and definitions for all self/norms and values must be clearly articulated with definitions, explanations, and examples to provide clear understanding

between the two parties. Jacob said, “It is important that we be honest about definitions.” When self/norms and values are congruent, the two entities may move forward to the next phase of P-C Fit.

Pastor Future (Vision) = Church Future (Vision)

As vision conflict is shown to be a predictor of pastoral burnout and turnover in the literature (Barfoot et al., 2005; Beebe, 2007; Jackson-Jordan, 2013; Knight Johnson, 2018; Spencer et al., 2012) and the data in this research supports these findings, it is necessary for vision to be communicated clearly. The variations of vision conflict should be addressed including expectations and perceptions of a church’s well-being (Spencer et al., 2012), organizational direction and preferable structure (Adams et al., 2017), and expected pastoral-church support including professional and personal support (Burns et al., 2013).

Pastor Present = Church Future (Vision)

While a pastor and church might be congruent in paralleled present-to-present and future-to-future categories, the next step in evaluating holistic P-C Fit is to evaluate if the pastor has the skills and desire to lead a church in their present state to the church’s articulated future state of the congruent vision. While a pastor might have the desire, skill may be lacking, or conversely, skill may be present, but there may be lack of desire. Two participants in the study expressed a realization during their tenure that they experienced changing passions and desires, and the changing desire led to P-C incongruence. On the other hand, five participants reflected it was possible they did not possess the skills needed at the time to lead the church toward the vision but possessed the desire. If it is determined that a pastor possesses the skills, potential to acquire the skills, and the desire needed to lead the church, the next step in the P-C Fit model may be engaged.

Church Present = Pastor Future (Vision)

At this point in the P-C Fit process, it would have been determined that a pastor and the church are congruent internally at the present, internally toward vision, between one another at the present, between one another toward vision, and the pastor has the skill and desire or potential to acquire what is needed to move toward a congruent vision. As the pastor is to be the spiritual and organizational leader of the church as described in Chapter Two, congruence between the church's present state and the pastor's vision for the future is the last and most important congruence in determining longevity of pastoral effectiveness and tenure. Eight participants described good fit at the beginning of their tenure, and five participants noted the church leadership and congregation were supportive of the vision communicated. However, the incongruence came when the church and leadership were unwilling to adjust systems, processes, and structures to achieve the vision and to commit needed resources toward the vision. In the P-C Fit model, a pastor might not be able to fully detail a long-term vision for a church until after serving a period of time in the social context. Regardless, it is necessary to conceptualize a vision and what resources and organizational structures are needed to accomplish a vision and the willingness of the church and church leadership to support the vision.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

As the literature suggested, findings within this study confirmed P-O Fit is influenced by value congruence between two entities (Chatman, 1989). Bandura's (1991, 2012) SCT and sociocultural theory and Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory served as strong theoretical foundations for the research in this hermeneutic phenomenology exploring experiences of pastors who left employment due to experienced poor P-O Fit. SCT functioned well by providing theory to support the understanding of the bilateral influences of people and the past and present

sociocultural context. SCT also provided for the theoretical understanding of self-reflection (Dewey, 1933) as practiced by participants during their experiences in evaluating and determining their fit while serving at their churches. Self-reflection also influenced the development of the P-C Fit model as self-reflection, social context awareness, and mindfulness are important practices to determining internal congruences between a pastor and church.

P-O Fit theory served as a strong theoretical framework for the research inquiry. Additionally, the P-O Fit model (Chatman, 1989), served as a substantial moderator in developing research questions and interview questions to study the phenomenon. The findings from the study supported prior research implementing the P-O Fit theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Vveinhardt & Gulboviate, 2017) by demonstrating the correlation between experienced fit and value congruence. The context and findings of this study build on previous research by extending what had previously been applied in corporate environments into the church as an organization and applying organizational leadership principles that offer implications for practice in educational institutions. The P-O Fit theory is a strong framework for the evaluation of fit and allows for the change in people and organizations, considering both as dynamic and not static entities. This study shed new light on the P-O Fit theory as the findings of this study showed a significant influence of vision in the congruence between pastors and churches, leading to the inspiration and the development of the P-C Fit model.

Through the study, the empirical literature surrounding self-reflection (Dewey, 1933; Nesbit, 2012) provided an understanding of how pastors achieved social context awareness (Lloyd & Mertens, 2018), thereby helping pastors identify their own values and place them within a context of fit (Frederick & Muldoon, 2020). The data supported the literature in that vision conflict is a significant point of incongruence for pastors and churches. The incongruence

is a predictor for burnout, turnover, and poor fit. Further data from this study corroborated the findings that pastors do not perceive themselves prepared with organizational leadership skills to meet the needs within the church. Therefore, seminaries and other ministry-related institutions should improve organizational leadership education (Abernethy et al., 2016; Charles & Duffield, 2018; Joynt, 2019; Momeny & Gourgues, 2020; Noullet et al., 2018; Speight & Speight, 2017; Stetzer & MacDonald, 2020; Strunk, 2020; White Smith, 2020).

As the literature calls for increased and improved organizational leadership training to improve fit, the data gathered from participants in this study suggested pastors receive great value from organizational leadership mentorship. The recommendation to incorporate a standard mentorship for pastors in seminaries and other ministry-related institutions corroborates Charles and Duffield (2018) implemented mentorship program within a small subsection of the Presbyterian denomination. No results have been reported from their research at this point.

Limitations and Delimitations

Participants in this study included ordained pastors who served as lead/senior pastors of an SBC church for at least one year and left employment in the last five years due to experienced poor P-O Fit. Participants were not fired due to immoral or illegal reasons. Churches in the southeastern United States were represented. Limitations and delimitations were applied to the study and presented below.

Delimitations

Specific delimitations were implemented to limit the boundaries of the study. The study included ordained pastors which created some level of recognition of the participants by a governing entity. The participants were required to have at least a bachelor's degree to permit all data to be included into the leadership education evaluation of the research. The southeastern

United States was defined as the region of study to limit the varying social and cultural influences that might influence poor P-O Fit. Participants had to have experienced the phenomenon within the last five years to allow for limited variation in social or cultural influences to arise in the data.

Limitations

Certain limitations existed in the study and limitations to the application of the proposed P-C Fit model. While a delimitation was the phenomenon occurred in SBC churches, SBC churches are autonomously governed and vary in culture from church to church. For example, the P-C Fit model provides a framework to identify areas for potential divergence among churches. Next, as an ordained pastor who works in an SBC church, my experiences and values may have influenced my interpretation of data, despite my efforts to bracket my experiences and the fact that I have not experienced the phenomenon.

Another limitation of this study was that it does not account for the spiritual relationship between a pastor and God and the subsequent “call to serve” in a role, at a place, or for a given period. Because this element is limited to the experience of individual pastors without any measurability, it was assumed that each pastor, attesting to have answered a spiritual calling, was responding to the call from God to the church they served. Participants expressed various experiences and confirmations of their perceived calling to and from the churches they served. For example, one pastor said he felt as if it was time for him to move on from his current church, his wife shared the same sentiment with him, and within a month, he met someone who offered him a job although he had not been actively searching for a job. The developed and recommended P-C Fit model is in no way meant to substitute the call of God for a pastor to serve

in a church. The P-C Fit model is intended to be a tool to substantiate the spiritual call that exists between a pastor and God, the church and God, and the pastor and the church.

The effectiveness of the P-C Fit model and any instrument used to determine and evaluate fit between a pastor and a church is limited by the transparency, honesty, vulnerability of sharing past experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and agendas between the two entities. This limitation of determining fit is empirically supported by participants' expressed frustrations after reflecting upon the hiring process of learning new information about the church that was not necessarily intentionally removed from the interview process but would have influenced the perceived fit. One participant reflected on the interview process, "It is almost like being on the first date. Nobody wants to be completely vulnerable... because you want to make a good impression." Therefore, transparency, honesty, and vulnerability are recommended to be expressed by both parties which may increase trust which Bligh (2017), Joynt (2018), and Speight and Speight (2017) claimed positively influences motivation in the workplace.

The effectiveness of the P-C Fit model is also limited to self-perception if only employed internally and not administered by a neutral, objective third party who can provide insight and oversight to the process. Empirical evidence through participants' experiences demonstrated both pastors and church leadership teams involved in the hiring process had a perception that differed from reality. One participant said of the church description that he received, "The interview process was a wonderful summary of the idea of who the church thought they were."

The academic rigor and validation of the participants' experiences was limited to each person's individual testimony and not substantiated by any other witness or testimony. However, a phenomenology is a study culminating with a description of the essence of individual's lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). To confirm the participant's stories as much as possible, the

research was accomplished using triangulation, including one-on-one semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group interview.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on the pastors' who left employment due to experienced poor P-O Fit. The research confirmed findings of prior research on contributors to pastoral burnout and turnover and served as a base for new model by which to determine and evaluate P-C Fit. Additionally, the findings provided a base for multiple recommendations for future research.

Three case studies implementing the P-C Fit model should be conducted to test its rigor and effectiveness in the field of practice. First, a case study utilizing the P-C Fit model in the context of a church in the hiring process as the primary evaluative tool would be beneficial to study its implementation and effectiveness of predetermining fit. Second, a case study utilizing the P-C Fit model in the context evaluating fit during the tenure of a pastor at a church could be helpful to assess its effectiveness as a tool to evaluate on-going fit between a pastor and a church. Thirdly, a case study applying the P-C Fit model after a pastor has left a church to assess its functionality as a tool to retroactively gain insight to potential issues in the future might prove helpful.

As pastors who served in SBC churches in the southeastern United States were chosen to participate in the study, replicating this hermeneutic phenomenology in other denominational settings and in other regions in the United States could increase the transferability of the findings. Another method of increasing the transferability of the findings is to apply the same methodology while increasing the participant base and including multiple denominations and geographic regions to provide for a comparative analysis of results.

While the phenomenon has strong implications for policy and practice, the profoundness and urgency of the issue might be considered by policymakers if a quantitative survey were developed using the P-C Fit model as a framework to reflect how widespread the threat is of person-organization and pastor-church fit.

As research exists in the corporate and educational realm exploring values and value congruence among those in leadership, a deeper study is recommended specifically studying the generalizability of values. Values should be identifiable and definable so that a clear understanding exist between a pastor and the church. For example, participants identified missions as a personal value and churches claimed the same value. However, the incongruence came when the two methods of practicing those values became the point of conflict. The data in this study provided a foundation to study the perception, understanding, and definition of key values that influence P-C Fit.

A long-term recommendation for future research is to conduct a comparative analysis of pastors' reactions to determining poor fit in churches after having utilized the P-C Fit model for the hiring process and on-going evaluations versus pastors' reactions to determining poor fit who did not use this model. Such a study may suggest the effectiveness of the P-C Fit model while also providing insight into the objectivity exercised through implementing P-C Fit and how it influences emotional, mental, and spiritual experiences.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology was to explore and describe pastors' experiences who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experiencing poor P-O Fit. Bandura's SCT (2012) and sociocultural theory along with Chatman's (1989) P-O Fit theory served as the

theoretical foundation for the study. A review of literature addressed the problem of the increase in pastoral turnover and lack of pastoral leadership education in preparing pastors to lead. The central and sub-research questions were developed using the theoretical framework. After the data had been collected, analyzed, and organized, seven primary themes were identified among pastors' experiences of poor P-O Fit including leadership conflict, vision conflict, leadership education, fit, value conflict, self-reflection, and the hiring process. The central and sub-research questions were answered in Chapter Four.

Ten participants were interviewed all having served as ordained, lead/senior pastors at an SBC church in the southeastern United States within in the last five years for at least one year and had earned at least a bachelor's degree. All 10 participants participated in a one-on-one semi-structured interview, a questionnaire, and five participated in a focus group interview. All protocols were followed according to Chapter Three.

An interpretation of the findings is included in Chapter Five along with implications for policy and practice. The development of a new fit model, the P-C Fit model, provides an implication for practice for seminaries, ministry-related institutions seeking to prepare pastors to serve in churches, denominations, conventions, associations, and networks of churches, churches, and pastors, to apply an evaluative tool to determine and evaluate pastor-church fit during the hiring process and continue to use the same instrument as an evaluative tool for the future. Theoretical and empirical implications are presented, followed by limitations and delimitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 6, 2022

Stephen Buys
Janet Deck

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-328 A Phenomenological Study of Pastors Leaving Employment Due to Experienced Poor Person-Organization Fit

Dear Stephen Buys, Janet Deck,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Interview Questions/Guide

1. Tell me about how you arrived at and your experience at the church you served. (CQ1)
2. Tell me about how you fit within the organization of the church you served. (SQ1)
 - a. How did you, along with your personality traits and passions, fit into the organizational structure of the church you served? (SQ1)
3. Describe the organizational structure in the church you served. (SQ1)
 - a. Describe the lines of authority in the church you served. (SQ1)
4. Explain your effectiveness working with the organizational structure of the church toward fulfilling the church's goals and objectives. (SQ1)
5. Describe the organizational issues with the organizational structure at the church you served. (SQ1)
6. How did the organizational structure influence your decision to leave the church? (SQ2)
7. Describe the organizational environment of the church when you left. (SQ2)
 - a. How did the organizational values influence your exodus from the church you served? (SQ2)
8. How could the organizational structure have been better established or improved upon to improve your tenure while serving at the church? (SQ2)
9. Tell me about the leadership education you received in seminary or any other ministry-related institution. (SQ3)
 - a. Describe the organizational leadership education or training you received apart from formal education. (SQ3)

- b. Explain how leadership education influenced your experience with person-organization fit in the church you served. (SQ4)
10. Describe how leadership education can improve person-organization fit between the pastor and the church as an organization. (SQ4)

Appendix C

Questionnaire

Questionnaire – Participants will be emailed a 35-item questionnaire after the initial interview at least 48 hours after the interview is completed. The questionnaire will remain static for each participant and will include the eight questions from the interview session in writing with open field boxes for participants to provide responses. This will provide participants the opportunity to add any additional information they may have failed or forgotten to share in the initial interview.

The additional items with open responses will include:

- What is your highest level of education completed?
- How many years have you served in full-time vocational ministry?
- How many years have you served as a full-time lead/senior pastor?
- What is the name and location of the church in which you served as lead/senior pastor?
- Was this church considered a cooperating Southern Baptist church during your pastorate?
- How long has it been since you served at the church to which is referred in this interview?
- How long did you serve at the church to which is referred in this interview?
- What was the membership of the church when you arrived at the church?
- What was the membership total when you departed the church?
- What was the average attendance when you arrived at the church?
- What was the average attendance when you left the church?
- What was the average attendance during your tenure?
- How many people did the worship center seat?
- How much debt did the church have when you came to the church?

- How much debt did the church acquire/pay off during your tenure?
- How much debt did the church have when you left the church?
- How many other full and part-time staff members were on staff (average) during your tenure?
- What was the budget of the church when you arrived?
- What was the average budget of the church during your tenure?
- What was the budget of the church when you left?

This questionnaire will be emailed back to the researcher and filed securely to be compared with the face-to-face interview.

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. What leadership advice would you give to a pastor when considering person-organization fit when deciding if he will be the pastor of a church? (CQ1)
2. Describe how you evaluated person-organization fit within the church you served. (SQ1)
3. How would you describe the factors that led to poor person-organization fit and influenced your exodus from the church in which you served? (SQ2)
4. How do you describe the leadership education you received in seminary and other ministry-related institutions? (SQ3)
5. How do you describe how leadership education in seminary and other ministry-related institutions influences person-organization fit for a pastor and the church? (SQ4)

In this study the following themes have surfaced: 1) Leadership Conflict, 2) Leadership Education/Preparation, 3) Vision Conflict, 4) Value Conflict, 5) Hiring Process, 6) Self Reflection, 7) Fit. Do you have any comments, thoughts, or experiences that you would like to add to these themes? (CQ1)

Appendix E

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of Pastors Leaving Employment Due to Experienced Poor Person-Organization Fit

Principal Investigator: Stephen Buys, Lead Pastor of The Orchard Church in Waynesville, North Carolina, Ph.D. Candidate from the School of Education specializing in Organizational Leadership at Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must identify as having experienced leaving employment due to experienced poor person-organization fit. You must be 18 years of age or older, have completed, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree from a seminary or an accredited four-year college/university and have been ordained into the Gospel ministry by a church, denomination, or university. Participants must have served at a church in the full-time lead/senior pastor role within the last five years and have departed the church either voluntarily or involuntarily. Participants must have served at the church from which they departed for a minimum of one year. Pastors will be permitted to participate if they left the church and are no longer serving in vocational ministry. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore and describe the experiences of pastors who have served full-time in a lead/senior pastor role in evangelical churches after having lost or left their employment as a result of experienced poor person-organization fit. For

this study, pastoral staff turnover is defined as the employment of full-time pastoral staff employed for at least one year who have resulted in voluntary or involuntary resignation from their place of employment because of value incongruence. This research is an investigation of pastors' perceptions of how organizational structure and leadership education influences their tenure and turnover at a church. For this study, pastoral staff turnover is defined as the employment of full-time pastor employed for at least one year experienced voluntary or involuntary resignation or firing from their place of employment.

<p>What will happen if you take part in this study?</p>
--

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Agree to and schedule either an in-person or on-line one-on-one semi-structured interview that will last no more than 1 hour. Interviews will be recorded using audio and video recording equipment. The recordings will be used to transcribe the interview and maintained in a password protected online server and a password protected hard drive.
2. Forty-eight hours after the face-to-face interview, the participant will receive a questionnaire via email and asked to click on the link and complete the questionnaire. This questionnaire will take no longer than 30 minutes. The questionnaire is necessary to provide demographic information that will contextualize the information gathered in the interview. Additionally, the questionnaire repeats the interview questions allowing for participants to repeat, correct, or amend any statements made during the face-to-face interview. Participants are asked to complete the questionnaire and click "SUBMIT" only once. The responses will be emailed to a password protected email address and retrieved and saved on a password protected online server and a password protected hard drive.

3. After the one-one-one interview, completion of the questionnaire, a focus group interview will be scheduled and conducted for all participants on-line for all participants. The focus group interview will be concluded within 1 hour and include a series of questions intended to allow participants to share experiences with one another and encourage interaction. During the focus group, individuals will have the opportunity to maintain confidentiality of their identity by not turning on cameras and using pseudonyms for the interview.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study other than a gift card after completion of the one-on-one interview, questionnaire, and focus group to show appreciation for participating in the study. Benefits to society include providing helpful information that explore and explain a phenomenon specific to pastors who experience poor person-organization fit. This information may lead to implications for future research and the development of practices to increase pastoral tenure and improved person-organization fit for pastors at churches.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private including your name and the name of the church discussed. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject or the church discussed. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in

future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant identities and the churches discussed will be kept confidential through the interview, questionnaire, and publication process. Participant responses will be protected using pseudonyms for participants and the churches discussed. Interviews will be conducted in a private location where others will not know the identity nor hear the interview responses. Participant questionnaires will be kept confidential and not viewed on screens where private identifiable information will be accessible or viewable.
- The data collected from the consent forms, interviews, questionnaires, and the focus group will be stored in two password protected sources immediately after it is collected and for at least three years upon completion of the study. The first location will be on a password protected online server. The second location will be a password protected external hard drive. The researcher, dissertation chair, and committee member are the only people with the password and access to these sources. This information, if utilized for future studies/publications, will be confidential.
- Interviews will be video recorded for the purpose of observing body language during the interviews. Audio recordings will be used as the source to transcribe the interviews to procure accurate participant responses. Both sources will be stored on a password protected online serve and a hard drive along with the transcriptions which will provide the information needed to establish themes and explanations for the phenomenon being studied. Only the researcher, dissertation chair, and committee member will have access to these recordings.

- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the instance that a participant shares his participation with others related or unrelated to this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email and/or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Stephen Buys. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Janet Sue Deck, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers

are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You are asked to save a copy of this completed consent form to your computer as a copy of this document for your records. Please type and/or sign the document and return this completed document as an attachment to sbuys@liberty.edu. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature and Date

Appendix F

Recruitment Email Letter

Dear Pastor:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in organizational leadership. The purpose of my research is to better understand the experiences of lead/senior pastors who left employment as a result of poor person-organization fit in the churches, how they fit within the organization of the church, the influence of their fit on their departure from the church, the influence of leadership education on their ministry, and how leadership education can equip pastors to better determine person-organization fit. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must identify as having left employment due to experiencing poor person-organization fit. Participants must be 18 years of age or older, must have completed, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree from a seminary or an accredited four-year college/university, and have been ordained into the Gospel ministry by a church, denomination, or university. Participants must have served at a Southern Baptist church in the full-time lead/senior pastor role within the last five years and have departed the church either voluntarily or involuntarily. Participants must have served at the church from which they departed for a minimum of one year. Pastors will be permitted to participate if they left the church and are no longer serving in vocational ministry. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in either an in-person or online one-on-one semi-structured interview, complete a questionnaire online after the one-on-one interview, and participate in a focus group interview. Participants will be asked to check the transcriptions from their interviews and the focus group to verify accuracy. It should take approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me by phone or by replying to this email to set up an interview.

A consent document will be provided via email before any further participation. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document physically or electronically and return it to me via mail or email before the time of the interview.

Participants will receive a \$25 gift card via email upon participation and completion of the one-on-one interview, questionnaire, and focus group interview.

Sincerely,

Stephen Talbot Buys, Ph.D. Candidate

Lead Pastor, The Orchard Church

Phone: [REDACTED] | Email: [REDACTED]

Appendix G

Audit Trail

Date	Title	Description
3/22/22	Proposal Development	Began writing dissertation proposal
8/22/22	Paired with a Dissertation Chair	Dr. Janet Deck
8/29/22	Secured a Second Reader	Dr. Susan Stanley
9/22/22	Proposal Defense	Passed
9/22/22	Submitted IRB Application	First application was submitted and sent to committee
9/26/22	Certified IRB Application	Certified by committee members
10/6/22	IRB Approval Received	Received an email notification
10/6/22	Began Participant Recruitment and Sent Consent Forms.	Recruited using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Contacted 18 people; 10 agreed to participate
10/10/22	Pilot Interview	Successful pilot interview with no recommended changes.
10/13/22-Samuel 10/18/22-Joseph 10/19/22-David 10/20/22-Jacob 10/20/22-John 10/25/22-Nathan 10/27/22-Paul 10/27/22-Timothy 10/28/22-Luke 10/31/22-Matthew	Conducted one-on-one interviews	Began participant interviews and questionnaires
10/15/22-Samuel 10/20/22-Joseph 10/21/22-David 10/22/22-Jacob 10/22/22-John 10/27/22-Nathan 10/29/22-Paul 10/29/22-Timothy	Sent Questionnaires	Sent questionnaires via Survey Monkey and analyzed data

10/30/22-Luke 11/2/22-Matthew		
11/16/22	Data Analysis – Completed Coding	Used Microsoft Excel to code one-on-one interviews - 587
11/26/22	Data Analysis – Completed Collapsing Codes to Categories	Used Microsoft Excel to collapse codes to categories - 25
11/26/22	Data Analysis – Completed Identifying Major Themes	Used Microsoft Excel to identify major themes - 7
11/29/22	Data Collection – Focus Group	Transcribed by Microsoft Teams
11/30/22	Data Analysis – Completed Focus Group Coding, Categorizing, and Aligning with Themes	Incorporated analysis into Microsoft Excel Emerging Themes file
12/01/22	Began Chapters 4-5	
12/21/22	Completed First Draft of Chapters 4-5	
1/8/23	Sent Qualified Participants Gift Card	
3/20/23	Dissertation Defense	Approved without revisions