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Samual Travis Stegall

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Considerations in Tenured Pentecostal Pastors' Decisions to Pursue Graduate Degrees in Ministry

by

Samual Travis Stegall

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Although multiple studies have been conducted on the considerations of midcareer pastors from Christian denominations and faiths in making their decisions to seek graduate degrees in ministry, no study has been conducted with tenured pastors within the Apostolic Pentecostal ranks. The purpose of this study was to explore what these tenured pastors considered when deciding to enroll in a graduate degree program in ministry. This interview study, using a basic qualitative method, focused on 10 tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who were recent graduates from a graduate ministry degree program at an institution that serves this denomination. The conceptual framework for this study was based largely on Cranton's, Kegan's, and Loder's theories of transformative learning. The key themes from the participants' reflections were both personal and professional and presented a better understanding of why tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors enroll in graduate degree programs. The findings of this study were that pastors had different considerations for enrolling in the graduate degree program depending upon which stage of their pastorate they were in. The younger pastors were motivated by self-identification, the mid-career pastors were interested in maintaining their congregations and the elder pastors were driven by their desire to invest in younger pastors. This research may help college and university educators tailor programs to meet the needs of this unique demographic and contribute to positive social change as pastors become more effective in leading social change initiatives in their churches and outreach programs.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my wife Ashley Stegall and to my two children, Abigail and Ellison. Ashley, I could not ask for a better partner in this life's journey. You have been my constant companion and a sense of encouragement to me since first beginning on this academic journey almost 20 years ago. I am forever grateful for your love.

To Abigail and Ellison, I am proud to be your dad. The two of you have never known a time in your lives that your dad was not taking some type of college related class. There have been many times where I have had to miss moments when I could have been spending time with the two of you. For your sacrifice I say, thank you. My hope is that in some small way I am able to make up for all the times I missed by providing a better life and greater future for you both. I love you both to the moon and back.

Acknowledgments

To my savior Jesus Christ: without you in my life none of this would be possible. Your Spirit has brought me life and your Word has brought hope and joy into my world. My greatest calling in life has been to serve you. My prayer has always been and will always be that you use me for your Kingdom and your Glory.

To Dr. James Keen: I want to thank you for your help and support through this long and arduous process. Out of all of my classes and professors at Walden your class on Leadership was my favorite. It was that class and our interaction that cemented my desire to have you as my dissertation chair. Thank you for pushing me and for never giving up on me. I want to also thank Dr. Yob whose encouragement was inspiring. Our conversations will always be remembered. Lastly, I want to acknowledge Dr. James Merritt and Dr. Nathaniel Wilson. Dr. Merritt is the man who has influenced my life more than any other and his fingerprints are on everything that I do. Dr. Wilson pushed me toward academic excellence as a young man and I am glad that I followed this journey through till the end.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Traditionally, the majority of Apostolic Pentecostal pastors have undertaken the tasks of leading their congregations without the aid of formal seminary or theological education (Wilson, 2009). In response to seeking a renewed cadre of prospective Apostolic Pentecostal pastors, denominational leaders have initiated educational institutions offering bachelor's and master's degrees tailored to developing a new generation of pastors for the Pentecostal faith (Wofford, 2014). The availability of these new educational institutions and the programs they offer has had the unintended result of drawing midcareer, tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to enroll in graduate theological programs while they continue to fulfill the obligations of their pastorate (Wilson, 2009). This study aimed to explore the considerations and perceptions of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors involved in their decision to enroll in graduate theological degree programs that were designed to prepare new entrants into the ministry rather than meet the adult learning needs of midcareer tenured pastors (Wilson, 2009). The continuous growth of their enrollment poses a challenge to these institutions: What prompts midcareer clergy to seek advanced degrees? Knowing this, these institutions can respond to the particular needs of this group in a manner that will be of the greatest benefit to these adult learners and to the communities they serve (Wilson, 2009).

Many tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors are active in their communities and promote social change through their church ministries (Wilmoth & Bradford, 2010). This includes outreach in response to community social needs, support of congregants involved in such work, and educational programs aimed at community enrichment

(Wilson, 2017). The training and education these pastors receive as graduate students may help them be more effective in their community outreach and churches (Wilmoth & Bradford, 2010).

In this chapter, I provide a background to this study, discuss the research problem and its relevance, and describe its purpose and intent. I list the research questions and define the conceptual framework that guides and supports this inquiry. I explain the nature of the study, including the rationale for its design. I define the important concepts and constructs, clarify assumptions, and describe the scope and delimitations of the research problem. I identify the limitations of the study's design and methodology and discuss bias that may influence analysis and outcomes. Finally, I explain the significance of the study and its contribution to the literature.

Background

While my library search revealed no such previous studies, it did locate research articles that addressed the question of midcareer clergy of other faiths who engaged in professional development and continuing education (O'Brien, 2016; Reite, 2015; Wroblewski, 2014). I also located several studies that explored the conceptual framework I used in this study, consisting of several theories of transformative learning in adult higher education (Foote, 2015b; Peters & Daly, 2013; Sandlin et al., 2013; John, 2016). Research indicated that transformative learning is effective in producing long-term transformations in adults (Chen, 2014; Hoskins, 2013; Mooney, 2011; John, 2016). While none of these articles examined the considerations or perceptions of Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who were contemplating enrolling in a graduate degree program, the

articles still apply directly to this study because they contribute to the greater understanding of adults in long-term transitions brought on by transformative learning. This study was expected to contribute to the literature in two ways: (a) to better understand why in-service Apostolic Pentecostal pastors enroll in graduate theological programs, and (b) to help college and university policymakers, administrators, and educators tailor courses and programs to meet the needs of this unique graduate demographic.

Problem Statement

This study was designed to explore considerations that lead tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who had earned bachelor's degrees in ministry to pursue further higher education. Specifically, this study sought to identify the reasons, causes, or motivations that these graduates perceived as having been significant in their decision-making process to enter graduate school.

With the complexities of pastoring in today's social and moral climate, there is a growing need for clergy to have a greater understanding of how to navigate social, cultural, and political events (Wilson, 2015). However, the majority of Apostolic Pentecostal pastors in America have little academic training with some of these pastors leading large congregations across the United States (Wilson, 2009). One of the reasons for this lack of academic training is that until recently, no accredited higher education institutions were endorsed by either the United Pentecostal Church International or the Worldwide Pentecostal Fellowship, the two largest Apostolic Pentecostal organizations in the United States. Both organizations did not introduce accredited graduate degrees until

2009 and 2010 (Wilson, 2009). These institutions were established to meet the growing demand for institutions that are dedicated to Apostolic Pentecostal doctrine. While these programs were designed to educate and instruct aspiring ministers, there has been a noticeable increase in enrollment of Apostolic Pentecostal pastors that are already involved in their pastorate (Wilson, 2009).

For tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have established themselves in a congregation, there is little financial gain to receiving a master's degree. Likewise, a master's degree will not typically advance their careers. Apostolic Pentecostal pastors are elected internally from the church they pastor and are not appointed based upon education (Jordan, 2016). Apostolic Pentecostal pastors operate autonomously from the national organizations with which they associate; these organizations serve as a fellowship of ministers and not as a governing body of churches (Odom, 2012). The question of why tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors would commit time and resources to complete a graduate degree when they are already established as a tenured pastor remained unexplored.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic, qualitative, interpretive, interview study was to explore the experiences and choices that led tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to enroll in graduate programs at Pentecostal College (pseudonym) even though they were already successful in their position at the time of enrollment. I interviewed graduates of the program to engage them in reflecting on the considerations and perceptions that contributed to their decision.

Research Questions

An interview-based research design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was selected to identify why these pastors decided to obtain a graduate degree in a ministry-related field. The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What personal considerations do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree perceive as central to their choice to pursue these graduate degrees in ministry-related fields?

Research Question 2: What do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree report they were seeking to learn and understand prior to enrolling in the course of the graduate degree program?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study included theories of adult development, adult education, and adult spirituality. Application of these theories helped identify considerations that motivated tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to obtain a graduate degree in ministry after an extended absence from college. Three theories of adult development formed the basis for this study: Cranton's theory of transformative learning (1996, 2006), Kegan's theory of the orders of conciousness (1994), and Loder's theory that merges human development with theology and defines the role of spirituality in the adult developmental process (1989). Chapter 2 will thoroughly examine the connections between these theorists and current research.

Transformative learning has been influential in helping educators understand the learning process since its introduction by Mezirow in 1991. The theory, in its original form, states that transformation occurs in an individual in three different areas: psychological, conviction, and behavioral (Mezirow, 1991). According to Mezirow (1991), these transformations occur as of a result of a disorienting dilemma. Cranton (2006) expanded on Mezirow's work and presented a theory that is contemporary with adult learning trends. Instead of Mezirow's singular disorienting dilemma, Cranton believed that transformation occurs as a result of singular or multiple catalyzing events that produce a period of critical reflection.

Kegan presented a theory of human development that he termed "orders of consciousness" (1994, p. 7). In this theory, Kegan stated that adults' transition from one order to the next. Kegan's orders represent a series of stages through which individuals may progress during their lifetime. For this study, the focus will be on the transition that occurs when individuals transition from Kegan's third order—the adolescent and young adult stage of consciousness—and enter Kegan's fourth order. In a mature adult it consists of three distinct lines of development: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. A person who transitions into this final order of consciousness is able to apply abstract thinking, becomes role conscious in their relationships, and emerges with a greater sense of self-direction and individualism. I explored how the transition between Kegan's third and fourth stages plays out in the experience, perceptions, and choice of seeking further education as a tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastor.

Loder (1989), both a developmental psychologist and a theologian, established a theory of transformation based on individual experiences in relation to faith. It is integral to this study because, according to Loder, transformation occurs not only through events or processes that encourage transformation and transitional growth, but also through deep and emotional personal experiences. Loder concluded that, from the point of view of adult faith development, God's Spirit guides the individual of faith through the multistep process of development.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used an interview-based qualitative approach to encourage tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to describe and explain the experiences that encouraged them to pursue a graduate degree in ministry. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the goal of qualitative research is to discover how people interpret their life experiences and how they find meaning within those experiences.

The goal of this study was to identify the considerations that tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors perceive as important in their decision-making process to pursue a graduate degree in ministry. This study is significant because it addresses an under-researched group and because it may have significant implications for religious higher education institutions that serve tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors in tailoring future programs to meet advanced learning needs of this group. No research was found that explores the perceptions and motivations of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors with graduate theological degrees as to why they undertook them.

I used a basic qualitative methodology in this study. I used an interview-based qualitative approach, which allowed the participants to explain and elaborate on their experiences. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described the goal of qualitative research as seeking to discover how people interpret their life experiences and how they find meaning within those experiences. An interview-based qualitative approach was best for this study because it allowed the participants to explain and elaborate on what experiences led to their enrollment in a graduate degree program.

I conducted one-on-one interviews using open-ended questions with 10 individuals who met the criteria for participation. After I completed each interview, I transcribed the recording and used manual coding to analyze the data. Once codes were identified the themes emerged from the codes. Throughout the transcription process, I identified elements of the conceptual framework. In the data analysis, I examined the participants' responses to determine how they fit to the conceptual framework and research questions.

Definitions

Tenured pastor: An individual who holds a permanent position as a pastor. A tenured pastor is one who has worked in the same location for multiple years. Tenured pastors are typically serving in the last church of their careers and do not intend to transfer to another congregation (Jordan, 2016).

Apostolic Pentecostalism: Pentecostalism is a movement within Christianity that places emphasis on a personal experience with God. Spirituality and reliance upon the leading of God's Spirit are foundations of Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism consists of

several subsects. For this study, all the participants are adherents to Apostolic Pentecostalism. Several differences exist between Apostolic Pentecostals and others using the term or classification Pentecostal. Doctrinally, these differences include a strict, literal interpretation of the Scriptures, an absolute belief in monotheism, and adherence to modesty and holiness practices (Wilson, 2016).

Christian college: Faith-based institutions that educate their students with the mission of preparing them for vocational ministry. Bible colleges achieve accreditation through faith-based agencies such as the Association of Theological Schools or the Association for Biblical Higher Education, both of which are national accrediting agencies. Bible colleges may receive their accreditation from regional agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Association (Wilson, 2010).

Manual coding: In qualitative research coding can be completed in one of two ways. Coding can be done manually or electronically. Electronic coding is often accomplished with the use of a program like Nvivo. The researcher uploads all the transcripts from the interviews and the software identifies the codes. Manual coding does not use any electronic means and all the codes are manually added. Codes are based upon previous research, the research questions, the theoretical framework or from emerging directly from the research. In manual coding, it is the researcher's responsibility to identify the various codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Assumptions

The first assumption of this study was that meaning and knowledge can be obtained through a close examination of the personal experiences of participants (Loder, 1989; Cranton, 2006). Through the use of interviews, this study delved into the personal experiences of the participants to find meaning and knowledge in their responses. The second assumption was that human beings strive to create meaning out of life experiences (Fowler, 1981). Third, through verbal communication, it is possible to articulate experiences and to find the meaning behind those experience (Seidman, 2013). This study attempted to analyze the verbal responses of the participants in order to find the meaning behind their responses. The scope of this study was not large enough to validate each assumption, but these assumptions were necessary as a starting point for this study.

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative study was designed to explore and identify the considerations that contributed to the decision of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to pursue graduate religious education. The participants \ fit into a small but important demographic. Because religious leaders outside of the Christian tradition, or from different denominations within Christianity, would overly broaden the research group they were not included. Over broadening could have given rise to entirely different findings and led away from the research questions.

The study was limited to those who recently earned graduate degrees (within 3 years) from Pentecostal College, and who were serving in the same pastoral capacity they held prior to enrolling in their master's degree program. This 3-year criterion was

necessary to ensure that the considerations involved in the decision-making process were fresh in memory and thus allowing the participants to respond to recent memories of their experiences. The results of the study are limited to my interpretation of the perceptions presented by the participants. To the extent that aspects of Apostolic Pentecostalism may be unique, the transferability of the results of this study to other denominations of Christian colleges are limited. Nevertheless, other institutions of religious education may be interested in comparing the results of this study with their own experiences.

Limitations

This study addressed only those who graduated with advanced degree from Pentecostal College. There may be tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who attended another college endorsed by the Pentecostal Church or who attended colleges not recognized by any Pentecostal organization. Finally, this study was limited to Christians who confessed to be Apostolic Pentecostals and conformed to its teachings. While aspects of this study may apply to other Christian denominations or those who belong to different subsects within Pentecostalism, its focus was exclusively on individuals within the Apostolic Pentecostal movement.

Apostolic Pentecostals are a small subsect of Pentecostals and a close-knit community. Although I am an Apostolic Pentecostal minister, I am not acquainted with every pastor of every church, I have personally met some of the individuals who chose to participate in this study. I had no academic or professional relationship with the participants, nor did I hold professional or pastoral authority over them.

Being that there are only a small number of Apostolic Pentecostals and due to the unique nature of this group, this study may have limited transferability. In order to address the limited nature of transferability, I provided full descriptions of the participant pool, the context of the study, and the processes used in data collection for comparison with other potential research groups.

Significance of the Study

This study may contribute to the effectiveness of theological institutions that offer graduate degrees in two ways. First, the results may identify reasons why tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors enroll in theological graduate programs. This information can help school administrators in recruiting a student demographic previously unconsidered for graduate degrees. Second, data from this study may demonstrate whether or how theological schools meet the needs of these graduate students. This information is useful for future curriculum design and implementation.

One goal of this study was to inform educators at religious colleges that serve the Apostolic Pentecostal faith regarding the decision-making process of tenured pastors as adult learners who enroll in their graduate programs. Such educators may be in a position to better support and challenge adult learners if they are better acquainted with the considerations involved in tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors' decisions to return to college. In addition, understanding the variables involved in the student decision-making process to enroll in an advanced ministry degree program may help leaders at these religious institutions better respond to student concerns.

Faith-based colleges and universities that look to attract tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors ought to be savvy about how these students may differ from cohorts who are preparing to enter the ministry. The results of this study may help theological educators in the development of curriculum, in the assessment of current programs, and in more strategic recruitment. This study has significance for theologians and clergy by contributing to their understanding of adult development. The study could also help pastors in their decision-making about graduate education. Lastly, this study has the potential to identify themes surrounding adult development and spirituality that may contribute to further research and discussion.

Many tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors are actively involved in social change through their church ministries (Wilmoth & Bradford, 2010). Earning a master's degree in ministry should help them with community involvement by providing the tools and knowledge needed to carry out their missions.

Summary

This study was designed to explore the personal experiences of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who decided to return to college to obtain graduate training. These pastors maintain pastorates but felt the need to earn a graduate ministry degree. This study sought to explore considerations that influenced their decisions. This study could help religious college educators with help designing a more effective curriculum. This study's conceptual framework consisted of theories from Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989).

In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth description and discussion of the theories that form and support the conceptual framework of this study as well as a review of current research studies pertinent to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this basic, qualitative, interpretive, interview study was to explore the experiences and choices that led tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to enroll in graduate programs at Pentecostal College. The purpose of this chapter, a literature review, was to examine research on the development of mid-career adults and their decision-making process when seeking additional learning and training through higher education. The theories addressed in this review provided a conceptual framework for the study I conducted with tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who completed master's degrees at a religious institution sanctioned by their faith tradition within the previous 3 years. It was anticipated that my findings and conclusions would inform theological educators of the needs of their professionally advanced adult students as well as spark suggestions for further research. Several theories of adult development and their relationship to adult education guided this literature review. In it, I address theories of adult development in higher education, as well as discuss life stages, life transition, theological education, and spirituality within the Pentecostal tradition.

Adult enrollment in higher education has gained popularity in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). This trend applies to religious leaders as well and is particularly true among tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors (Wilson, 2009). However, it is difficult to explain because tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors, established in their congregations, do not advance their careers or typically receive financial gain by earning college degrees. Why a tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastor

would commit time and resources to complete a graduate degree without receiving tangible benefits remains difficult to explain. There is no research literature that addresses this question. This study sought to explore these questions to determine the motivational variables involved in this pastoral process.

In this chapter, I discuss the conceptual framework for this study and the recent research literature on adult education. I present research findings regarding adult development in both secular and religious education. Finally, I discuss transformative learning and how it fits into the context of Christianity.

Literature Search Strategy

For this literature review I used the following three electronic databases: EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest. The search terms included *adult education, adult development, adult learning, theological education, continuing education, professional development, Christian education, spirituality,* and *transformative learning.* I collected and reviewed articles exclusively from peer-reviewed journals for the period 2011–2018.

Theories of Adult Development in Higher Education

Theories of cognitive and psychological development often emerge when examining the subject of adult development. In the field of andragogy, it is not uncommon to have multiple theories explain why adults seek advanced education (Peters & Daly, 2013). This study will utilize three interlinking theories of adult development. The first is Cranton's (1996, 2006) theory of transformative learning, which states that transformation is the result of a catalyzing event or experience that propels an individual into a period of transition. The second is Kegan's (1994) theory regarding the orders of

conscience. This theory details the progression or movement of adults from one order of consciousness to the next as well as identifies the characteristics of each order. Lastly, I examine Loder's (1989) theory, which merges human development with theology, to define the role of spirituality in the developmental process of adults in transition.

Other scholars and researchers have significantly contributed to the field of adult development including Levinson (1978), Fowler (1981), Parks (2011), and Rohr (2011). Levinson (1978) developed a theory of transformation that asserts adults pass through stages as they progress from adolescence into maturity. Fowler's (1981) theory detailing the stages of faith is a seminal work in adult development and posits that individuals go through six stages as they transition through life and seek meaning in their actions and thoughts. Parks' (2011) contribution to this study is her expansion on Loder's (1989) theory of transformation claiming that an individual must have access to mentoring to experience true transformation. Rohr (2011) made a significant connection between transformation and the role spirituality plays in the development process. When examining these theories in connection with the those of Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder, an array of potential descriptions emerge regarding the role that adult development plays in adult education.

While many of these theories of adult development do not directly state a connection to religious education, they provide a lens through which to interpret the perceptions of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have earned graduate theological degrees. Albertson (2014) made the observation that transitions involve leaving behind part of oneself to make room for a new self. Albertson also concluded that

no single theory fits every developmental situation or can explain an individual experience. Parks (1986) stated, "the person is always larger than the theory" (p. 41). For these reasons, I selected and applied multiple theories in this study to better understand the unique experiences of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors. Multiple theories of transformation and stages of development make it possible to identify themes useful to those responsible for designing theological programs to meet the needs of adult learners within the Apostolic Pentecostal movement. Overviews of the theories of Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989) are given primary attention because of their relevance and application to theological education.

Cranton

The theory of transformative learning has been a mainstay in education since its introduction by Jack Mezirow in 1991. The theory states that meaning exists within the individual and through external means. Through transformative learning, individuals construct meaning from their experiences; world perceptions reshape through personal experiences. Mezirow (2003) wrote that "transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 58). Transformative learning applies to the adult education at multiple levels. A foundation of the theory is the claim that learning occurs when an individual encounters an alternative perspective that causes them to question prior habits and assumptions. According to Mezirow (2000), this occurs as a singular, dramatic event he refers to as a disorienting dilemma. Mezirow

(2000) indicated that transformative learning is a theory in progress. Cranton (2006) took Mezirow's theory and expanded it for application to current adult learning concepts. Instead of Mezirow's singular disorienting dilemma, Cranton believed that transformation occurs as a result of a singular catalyzing event or multiple catalyzing events.

A significant component of transformative learning is that critical reflection is brought about by a catalyzing event (Cranton 2006). Nearly all studies that utilize Cranton's theory (Hoskins, 2013; Johnston, 2011; Mooney, 2011) noted this aspect of the transformative learning process. The idea of a catalyzing event is a common denominator in the work of several transformational theorists including Rohr (2011), who stated there may be an event or circumstance that shocks a person into a period of transition. Rohr claimed that human life consists of two halves. According to Rohr (2011), in the first half of life an individual formulates questions concerning both physical and spiritual formation. Rohr (2011) stated that a significant event causes an individual to transition into the latter half where they find their identity and answer the questions posed in the first half of their life.

Cranton (2006) proposed that a disorienting event stimulates critical reflection, which can occur inside and outside of the classroom. Some examples of these triggers include encountering a contrary viewpoint, enlightenment through literature or discussion, or a tragic event. Social circumstances can often be trigger events that precipitate critical reflection. Foote (2015a) stated that the process of transformative learning is often initiated by a disorienting event and this often leads to a period of

critical reflection. It is during this critical reflection period that Johnston (2011) argued adults develop the skills necessary for transformational growth. Johnston states that adult education, particularly online programs, are experiencing tremendous growth. This growth suggests that Cranton's theory of transformative learning (as well as other transformative learning theories) are at the center of why many adults are enrolling in degree programs.

Cranton's (2006) theory was appropriate for this proposed study because she views experience that "challenge individuals to reconsider their values, expectations, moral position, or self-concept" (p. 63) as additional means to promote transformative learning. Values, expectations, morals and the idea of self-concept are deeply rooted in the spirituality of Pentecostalism.

Kegan

Kegan (1994) offered a unique theory of human development, which he termed"order of consciousness" (p. 10). Kegan's theory applies to adult development because of the transition an individual goes through as they leave the third order (the adolescent, and young adult stage) and enter into the fourth order of a mature adult. Kegan listed transitions along three lines of development: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. On a cognitive level, Kegan's theory suggests that during the transition from the third order to the fourth order a person moves from "ideality" toward "ideology" or from "concrete" ideas toward more "abstract" ideas (pp. 314-315). On the interpersonal level, a person in the third order is "role conscious" and develops an understanding of how they fit into the group. As the person moves into the fourth order,

however, they become more aware of relationships and how they can fill "multiple roles" (Kegan, 1994, pp. 314-315). The last level of development Kegan addressed was intrapersonal. A person in this stage moves from being "self-conscious" toward "self-formation and individualism" (pp. 314-35). It is in this transition between orders that transformation occurs.

Kegan's (1994) theory of consciousness draws conclusions from the work of other theorists (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978). Kegan's theory may be a simpler way of interpreting Erikson's stages of development from childhood to adulthood. Just as Kegan attempted to explain how adults move along a linear path toward maturity, Erikson suggested that individuals have an inner drive that compels them to move from stagnation to generativity. Erikson stated that "maturity needs guidance" (p. 267). This may provide a missing component to Kegan's theory of how individuals move toward higher levels of consciousness. Kegan's theory may be used to address the motivations of adults who seek to earn graduate degrees while already engaged in their field of study.

Loder

Loder (1989) defined transformation within the framework of personal experiences. These are often deep and emotional for an individual, and it is through these profound experiences that new meanings emerge. According to Loder, this process occurs through "the logic of transformation" (p. 3). Loder's five steps of transformational logic include:

1. Conflict-in-context: This process begins with a conflict that occurs either consciously or unconsciously. The human spirit begins to become engaged in the process of finding a resolution to the conflict.
2. Interlude for scanning: The human spirit is driven to find coherence in the conflict. During this stage, human activity is broad, focusing on both inner and outward resolutions. Solutions outside the frame of the problem are not out of bounds during this stage.
3. Insight felt with intuitive force: Resolution appears in this stage and comes with a sense of meaning. At times, the resolution will be outside the scope of the framework of the original conflict, and the individual will be forced to reframe the context of the conflict.
4. Release and repatterning: This is the moment when an individual acts on the resolution and transformation occurs. It is a new way of looking at the conflict. Energy is released so the individual may step out and embrace the transformation.
5. Interpretation and verification: This is the stage of both completion and testing the resolution. Once the conditions of the conflict have been satisfied, the resolution is submitted for public testing to determine the validity of the solution (pp. 3-4).

The idea that an individual must advance through steps to achieve transformation is not new to Loder (1989). Levinson (1978) and his team established a theory of development that introduced the idea that adults pass through life stages as they progress

from adolescence into maturity. The main point of Levinson's theory is that adults continue to develop throughout their lives. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith also serve as a starting point for adult transformation. Fowler's theory explains how individuals make meaning of their experiences as they transition through different life stages. Fowler presents a spiritual look into what causes these transitions and what a person can expect to experience while moving from one stage to another. Loder's background as a theologian draws from the same concepts of spirituality that Fowler introduced a decade earlier. Loder's five steps of transformational logic, a combination of psychology and theology, have only recently become relevant in the field of adult development. Loder's logic of transformation is relevant throughout the adult development process and is a source consulted by other theorists in the field of adult development.

Parks (2011) describes Loder's (1989) transformational logic as five "moments within the act of imagination" (p.143) that lead to adult development. Parks's contribution extends Loder's theory by arguing that true development depends on an individual having access to a mentoring environment throughout the transformational period. Loder's theory implies that the individual needs guidance through the development process. Parks claimed, "Higher education is distinctive in its capacity to serve as a mentoring environment in the formation of critical, inner—dependent adult meaning-making—the formation of the consciousness, conscience, and competence needed in today's world" (p. 203). She presented the case that higher education is one of the considerations likely to aid in adult development.

In addition to being a developmental psychologist, Loder (1989) was a theologian. Loder often used theology as a lens through which to view adult development. His unique starting point helps explain characteristics often viewed outside the scope of psychology. Loder proposed that the basis of adult development centers upon God's spirit. In this sense, Loder's theory is an explanation as to how God's spirit interacts and guides the human spirit through the transformation process. The central aspect of Loder's theory is that transformation happens as God's Spirit guides an individual through a multiple step process of development. Loder claimed that individual transformation could apply to common experiences; therefore, experiences that occur in everyday life are potential catalysts for deeper personal understanding and revelation. These experiences, according to Loder, can be transformational as they offer a new awareness of God, the world, and the self. Loder argued that transformational moments need to be:

> Recognized as sources of new knowledge and God, self, and the world, and as generating the quality and strength of life that can deal creatively with the sense of nothingness shrouding the extremities and pervading the mainstream of modern living. (p. xi)

Loder's influence is evident in the works of other theorists such as Rohr (2011) who also put forward a scripturally based view of adult development. Whether intentional or not, Rohr and Loder both acknowledged and relied on God as a source for leading individuals into a period of transition.

Loder's (1989) theory is not without critique, and several of his colleagues have challenged his work. Lapsley, a colleague of Loder's at Princeton Theological Seminary, argued that people rarely change except by small degrees. Lapsley described change as slow, often accompanied by struggle, and extending over a long period. Lapsley raised this issue when he wrote about the differences he had with Loder:

> Another long-standing difference we have, which shows up in this essay, is Loder's position that transformation, a key idea for him, is more or less all of nothing change in the direction of proximate forms of the Christomorphic life. I hold that partial transformations are more usual and may be unstable (here siding with Loder's Methodists ancestors), although the proximate forms of Christomorphic life do occur (as cited in Childs & Waanders, 1994, p. 257).

Koonz (2011), who defended Loder, refuted Lapsley's critique by pointing out that Loder's definition of transformation has more to do with a person's frame of reference and their ability to conceive greater understanding of their reality than the traditional definition of a complete or positive change in direction. According to Loder, the the transformation is not the outcome, but rather the beginning of the process. Loder claimed that "within a given frame of reference or experience, hidden order of coherence and meaning emerge to replace or alter the axioms of the given frame and reorder its elements accordingly" (p. 229). In Loder's theory, the individual experiences transformation after they come through this process. The process is not the apex, but the gateway to transformation.

The second critique of Loder's (1989) theory is that it applies only to individuals who experience an extreme crisis (Barker, 1995). Koonz (2011) asserted that many of Loder's examples came from counseling sessions where the individual was in a period of crisis. A close examination of Loder's work as a whole, however, demonstrates there are applications of his transformation theory outside crisis situations. Barker (1995) noted that the spiritual aspect of Loder's theory is applicable in various situations.

Loder's (1989) theory applies to this study because of its focus on spirituality and the effect it has on transformation. The tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors used in this study will rely on their spirituality because dependence upon the Spirit of God is a foundation of Pentecostalism. Loder's theory addresses this aspect of Pentecostalism and provides a foundation to understand this important aspect of these pastor's lives.

The developmental theories of Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989) present unique perspectives that address multiple catalysts that encourage or cause transformation. These catalysts range from increased cognitive development and emotional challenges to everyday encounters and include multiple and complex variables that cause individuals to enter a time of critical reflection.

Adult Development and Transformative Learning in Secular Higher Education

Transformative learning theories have been used to help educators understand and explain the experiences of adults returning to college. Students who take 5 years or more off between earning their undergraduate degrees and starting a graduate program are called "returners" (Peters & Daly, 2013, p. 243). This portion of the literature review discusses the need to study these students as well as the effectiveness of secular

educational programs in catering to their needs. In this portion of the literature review, I examine and identify areas where the theories of Cranton (1996), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989) apply to help explain the transformation process of adult students. This section concludes with a summary of the findings of the literature as well as an explanation of how this portion of the literature review fits into the overall theme of this study.

The Emergence of Transformative Learning in Adult Education

There are several studies that explore transformative learning in adult higher education (Foote, 2015b; John, 2016; Peters & Daly, 2013; Sandlin et al., 2013). It is important to apply these theories to returners who have been active in their field of study before returning to graduate school because they bring a unique perspective to the classroom (Peters & Daly, 2013). It is also crucial that college administrators understand the reasons why these returners are enrolling in graduate programs so they can design curriculum to meet the needs of these students.

One of the reasons the term transformational learning is used to describe this process in adults instead of the more generic label of adult education is because transformational learning involves more than acquiring new information; this form of learning produces a personal change in the individual (Sandlin et al., 2013). The theories of Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989) demonstrate this by identifying areas of transformation that lead to a new individual identity. The goal of this proposed study is to discover what triggers the transformative learning process. The theorists (particularly Loder and Cranton) have shown that adults pursue education for several

reasons including personal experience, societal climate, or institutional demands. Hegarty (2011) argued that adult returners consist of two groups: those motivated by either intrinsic or extrinsic forces. Hegarty's focus is not uncommon among adult education researchers. Bohonos (2014) claimed that career context is the primary extrinsic consideration involved in returners enrolling in graduate programs.

Current literature suggests that researchers such as Hegarty and Bohonos hold the minority position regarding the considerations involved in the motivation of adults seeking graduate degrees (Foote, 2015b; Peters & Daly, 2013; Sandlin et al., 2013). Neither author established their position using research studies; they published their assessments based on observations made within their specific educational contexts. Few research projects have linked adult development with adults who earn graduate degrees or test the theories discussed here to determine if they apply to adult education enrollment in graduate degree programs. Information concerning adult development, however, can be extracted from the current literature in the field of transformative learning to determine if patterns emerge in adult development.

Foote (2015b) provided two examples of the transformative learning experience. A woman who attended college as an adult wrote about the moment she wrestled with her desires versus the pressure put upon her by her family discouraging her to go to college. She reflected on the moment she made her decision to go to school and described it as "abrupt, transformative, and spiritual" (Foote, 2015b, p. 84). Foote described graduate education as an opportunity to find a "new sense of identity" (2015b, p. 84). These observations include aspects of Loder (1989) and Cranton's (1996, 2006) moment of

transformation experience as well as Kegan's (1994) intrapersonal change toward a new self.

While Foote (2015b) shared a personal narrative that showed a transformational moment in a woman's educational journey, many researchers (Christie et al., 2015; John, 2016; Mooney, 2001; Nohl, 2015) have conducted studies that give evidence of the emergence of a transformational moment in adults who decided to earn college degrees later in life. Among these studies is one conducted by researchers at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Christie et al. (2015) tested one aspect of Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory. Christie et al. performed a case study using 12 participants enrolled in a graduate education course at a regional university. In this study, the participants were introduced to several disorienting dilemmas and their responses closely observed. After the conclusion of the case study, the participants took part in semistructured interviews to determine what aspects of the disorienting dilemmas contributed to learning. Christie et al. found that it was possible to trigger disorienting dilemmas in students and produce transformative learning.

The same principles that define a disorienting dilemma can also apply to Cranton's (1996, 2006) theory, which suggests a catalyzing event or events are the key to transformation. Christie et al. (2015) concluded that these dilemmas (events) could cause an extreme reaction in an individual leading them to seek additional education. Cranton (1996, 2006) used a similar narrative in her book supporting the work of Foote (2015b) and Christie et al. (2015). Cranton (2006) showed the effect of a disorienting event produced by a manager's colleagues. In this example, a manager for a government

program reviewed her job evaluations written by her supervisor and staff. Her supervisor's evaluation was excellent; however, the staff's evaluations were not as encouraging. Through the evaluation, she discovered that her perceptions of how she was performing her job did not match those of her coworkers. As a result, this individual sought outside assistance in leadership training, altered her interactions with coworkers, and changed aspects of her leadership style to better communicate with her staff. The catalyzing event—an unexpected negative evaluation—prompted the transformation of her leadership style. This event triggered a shift in her managerial perspective, causing her to seek additional education. This scenario supports Cranton's (2006) assertion that catalyzing events can produce personal transformation.

Shafi and Rose (2014) conducted a qualitative study in which they interviewed seven adults to explore the relationship between life experiences and their desire to return to college. Through the interviews and subsequent analysis of the data, three themes emerged from the study. Upon reflection of life experiences the returners enrolled in college because of perceived restrictions placed upon them because of their lack of education, the idea that opportunities would arise from seeking education, and through the desire for personal development. These themes all center around a period of critical reflection that proceeded the individual's enrollment into a college program.

Mooney (2011) researched a group of 15 adults who returned to higher education using a qualitative case study that included focus groups, questionnaires, and observations. Mooney charted the adults' educational journey, beginning with a description of the catalyst for the return of three students, and concluding when each

student completed their program. The students who shared their narratives demonstrated transitional moments that caused them to begin their educational journey. Three distinct themes emerged from this study based on the students' individual scenarios. One student explained that she enrolled in classes after going through an unexpected divorce. Loder (1989) and Cranton (1996, 2006) both indicated that transitions could come out of unexpected events, which would apply to the recently divorced student. Another student stated they enrolled in the program to find their identity (Mooney, 2011). This search corresponds to Kegan's (1994) fourth order of consciousness where an individual discovers their self-identity. A third student in Mooney's study explained they initiated their educational journey because of a period of critical reflection, another key component of Cranton's theory. These three themes (unexpected events, search for identity, and critical reflection) were the sum of the reasons the adults in this study returned to college (Mooney, 2011).

In addition to Shafi and Rose (2014) and Mooney's (2011) research, Nohl (2015) attempted to identify the core characteristics of transformative learning by interviewing 80 adults over a 12-year period. Nohl took Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning, which included 10 phases, and reduced them to five (the nondeterming start, experimental inquiry, social testing, shifting relevance, and social consolidation). Nohl's first phase in the transformative learning process was "the non-determining start" (p. 39), which he likened to Mezirow's disorienting dilemma. Using data from these extensive interviews, Nohl identified several narratives demonstrating that events leading to an individual's journey to pursue an education were not intentional. Nohl concluded that

forces outside of each student's control drove them toward transformation. This study does not consist of a singular narrative; it provides the experiences of disorienting dilemmas in numerous individuals, each with the same result.

John (2016) conducted a 7-year qualitative project study by doing a case study on adult learners in poor and impoverished areas. The case study results consisted of the analysis of 28 open-ended interviews as well as more than 100 collected project documents. The conclusion that John (2016) came to was that transformative learning works in the context of building and acting upon past life experiences. In the context of John's (2016) study, trauma and fear were the driving forces in the transformative learning process.

An additional study conducted by Yin (2016) used quantitative methods to research early predictors of success in adult students. Yin (2016) used data gathered from 2,392 students representing a diverse population group of adults seeking degrees across four different universities. Yin (2016) determined that pre-enrollment considerations including past experiences can be used in predicting student success.

Burns (2016) used action research methodology to study a group of graduate students who were enrolled in sustainability leadership program. Using qualitative data, Burns (2016) determined that one of the key components of success for these graduate students were their use of experience, emotions, and reflections.

There is enough evidence in the studies presented by Foote (2015b), Christie et al. (2015), Mooney (2011), Nohl (2015), and John (2016) to cast doubt on Hegarty's (2011) statement that adult students fit into two narrowly defined groups: those motivated by

either intrinsic or extrinsic forces. The studies demonstrate there is enough empirical data to merit researching the role that transformative learning (especially the early stages) has on adults who made the decision to pursue a higher educational program. It is important, however, to also determine the effectiveness of an adult's decision to seek education based on these transformational moments.

The Effectiveness of Transformative Learning in Adult Education

In adult education, transformative learning usually begins with a catalyzing event, which propels the individual toward learning. Research indicates that these transformational events are effective in producing long-term transformations in adults and not whims that quickly dissipate (Chen, 2014; Hoskins, 2013; Mooney, 2011; John 2016). In this section, I analyze the literature and its relationship to the theories of Cranton (1996, 2006), Kegan (1994), and Loder (1989). This portion of the literature review demonstrates how these theories apply to the current research.

Cranton's Theory of Transformational Learning

Mooney (2011) observed that the adult learners in his case study demonstrated "evidence of increased critical reflection and perspective transformation" (p. 136). Mooney noted that one participant specifically stated they joined the program after a period of critical reflection. Cranton's (2006) theory claimed that critical reflection is typically a result of a catalyzing event. In this case, the event goes unmentioned, although the outcome was the same as the previous example: the student completed their degree program. This experience resulted in the development of critical thinking skills, gave her a new perspective on social issues, and enhanced her feelings and opinions regarding

opposing viewpoints (Mooney, 2011). The event experienced by the student produced a time of critical thinking, which worked to assist her in completing her educational program.

Hoskins (2013) addressed the question: “Is distance learning transformation” (p. 62). Hoskins writes from her experience as a professor and director for a distance education program at a large public university. Consistent with Mooney’s (2011) study, Hoskins noted that the overwhelming number of students enrolled in distance learning programs are adults. Hoskins begins with language similar to Foote (2015) when she writes about transformational learning but takes it a step further by saying that critical reflection begins when an individual confronts their current beliefs because of a catalyzing event. According to Hoskins, this period of reflection brought about by a catalyzing event forces an individual to admit there are other possibilities beyond their current understanding or beliefs. After this confrontation takes place, the individual enters a period of transformation through learning and is left to “test the validity of his or her new perspectives through a series of interactions with others” (Hoskins, 2013, p. 63). Hoskins proposed that this is what leads adults to seek educational opportunities. For some of these adults, however, distance education is the only viable place to interact with others experiencing the same confrontations. Hoskins concluded that distance learning can be transformational but only because of the number of adults enrolling in nontraditional programs. If Hoskins is correct, there is a direct link between the growth of distance educational programs and the adults entering these programs because of periods of critical reflection brought on by catalyzing events.

Chen (2014) designed and performed a study that provides insight into the effectiveness of transformational learning. Chen conducted a phenomenological qualitative study, interviewing 10 students enrolled in an American university dedicated to the education of adults. The participants included seven women and one man; the median age of the participants was 45 years old. The intention of the study was to identify any themes emerging from the interview process. To coincide with Cranton's (1996, 2006) theory focusing on critical reflection in the developmental process, Chen found that this event took place in each student interviewed and served as the jumping-off point for the learning process. The educational program, therefore, produced a behavioral change, not just an increase in knowledge. The transformational learning process was successful in this instance because it produced a change in the individuals studied.

Prout et al. (2013) observed how a group of aboriginal people learned in a rural setting. This qualitative study included 27 participants who enrolled in a week-long educational course. The stated goal of the study was to determine what "most triggered and enhanced student learning" (Prout et al., 2013, p. 150) during the course. Each participant kept a detailed journal given to the researchers for analysis at the conclusion of the course. The information in the participants' journals assisted Prout et al. in determining what aspects of the course activated student learning. The data from the research group overwhelmingly indicated that these students viewed critical reflection as a key component of this specifically designed transformative educational situation (Prout et al., 2013). Prout et al. intended to demonstrate that medical practitioners in rural settings could learn to become effective in their communities. Similar to Foote (2015),

Christie et al. (2015), Mooney (2011), Chen (2014) and Nohl's (2015) research, this study is an example of the effectiveness of transformative learning.

Cranton's (1996, 2006) view of experience being a means to promote transformative learning can be seen in a study conducted by Levkoe et al. (2014) in which these researchers seek to determine the best methods for promoting transformative learning in adult students. In this study, which used both qualitative and quantitative data, the results determined that engaging adult learners with their past experiences is one successful method of promoting transformative learning.

Kegan's Theory of the Fourth Order of Consciousness

Kegan's (1994) theory is unique because very few studies have tested its effectiveness. Trimberger and Bugenhagen (2015) claimed to have performed the first study that tested Kegan's theory. This phenomenological study included 10 social work practitioners to discover if ethical boundaries were unique among these participants. Trimberger and Bugenhagen gave a detailed explanation for what occurs during Kegan's fourth order of consciousness and how it applies to adults in the field of social work. Trimberger and Bugenhagen suggested that participants who moved into the fourth order developed a set of professional boundaries by utilizing past experiences. Trimberger and Bugenhagen defined these individuals as having a "self-authoring mind" (p. 20). Although this study examined social work professionals, there are implications for adults who navigate the path from working professionals to college students. An important finding of this study was that past experiences moved the participants into Kegan's fourth order. There was a moment of questioning for these individuals as they reflected on past

events and sought to find ways to capitalize on opportunities for development and growth.

Poutiatine and Conners (2012) did not perform a research study, although they wrote extensively concerning Keagan's theory and how it applies to individual transformation. Poutiatine and Conners echo the findings of Trimberger and Bugenhagen (2015) by stating that, for true transformation to take place, there must be a remake of the individual. One of the ways this change can occur is for the individual to use their past experiences to shape their thought process as they move into their future. Poutiatine and Conners further stated that educators (and leaders) need to understand the role experience plays in the educational process to better facilitate learning, which supports Park's (2011) assertion that a mentoring environment best nurtures transformative learning.

While minimal research has been conducted directly using Kegan's theory, aspects of his theory can be viewed in various research projects. Burns (2016) used action research methodology to study a group of 21 graduate students who were enrolled in a sustainability leadership program. Using qualitative data, Burns (2016) determined that one of the components of success for these graduate students were their use of experience, emotions, and reflections. Beyond that, the research concluded that success of the students depended largely upon the student's change in "self-understanding" (p. 5). Developing a better understanding of one's self corresponds to the intrapersonal stage of Kegan's (1994) order of consciousness.

Loder's Theory of Transformational Moment

Foote (2015) wrote about her transformational moment, which she called “abrupt, transformative, and spiritual” (p. 84). The events leading up to this transformation pushed Foote toward education: She succeeded in earning an Ed.D. and is currently involved in educating adult learners. In this example, her a transformational moment, which was spiritual in nature, produced long-term results.

Foote’s (2015) experience is not isolated. Mooney (2011) tracked the progress of 15 participants enrolled in a course designed for adult learners. According to Mooney, all participants had unique motives for joining the program. Although Mooney did not provide details for each participant, he did discuss the motivation of three students. One participant joined the program after going through an unexpected divorce, a scenario similar to situations noted in Loder’s (1989) and Cranton’s (1996, 2006) theories. Mooney observed that all students completed the program, implying that the student who joined because of her divorce followed through with her decision. This example demonstrates that transformational moments are not fleeting and can push individuals toward a renewed future. This evidence is not conclusive, but it does provide a glimpse into the effectiveness of transformational moments for adult students.

When looking at adult transformation across multiple disciplines, several common themes emerge regarding higher education. A single event that initiates self-reflection is listed in almost all cases (when a cause is listed) as the reason for an adult to seek further education. This reflection prompts the decision for many of these adults to pursue education. The missing link in all of the studies discussed is that they approach transitions almost entirely from a secular viewpoint without consideration of spirituality.

The one exception is the study by Foote (2015), who briefly mentions spirituality as being part of the catalyst that pushed her toward education. Also, missing in these studies is any mention of reliance upon God to direct the paths of these individuals. The next section of this literature review will address both of these issues in depth, as they will be a focal point in this research project. The secular theories of adult development lay the foundation for understanding the considerations involved that lead an individual to pursue education. When these theories merge with an examination of the transitions that occur within theological institutions, a picture appears of how both spiritual and developmental variables impact the decision-making process of religious adults and the transitional moments that motivate them to pursue religious education.

Adult Development and Transformative Learning in Religious Higher Education

Bible colleges by their design, have the goal of educating and graduating students to work in ministerial or theological fields (Estep, 2012). Schreiner (2018) stated that Christian education is beneficial for the individual, the public, and for the Kingdom of God. The individual receives enrichment, the public is benefited through the involvement of the individual through social activities, and the Kingdom of God is benefited through the propagation of God's plan. In Christian college education, as in most secular educational settings, education occurs through formal institutionally designed programs as well as through formal and nonformal application (Estep, 2012). Groome (1980) suggested that there needs to be a clear distinction between religious education and Christian religious education. Groome also asserted that the term should be further subdivided for even greater specificity to include the Christian denomination sponsoring

the college. Christian colleges generally (although not always) serve a particular denomination. Religious colleges usually have processes in place to keep secularization from occurring (Ringenberg, 2016). This is accomplished by continuous assessment to ensure the college curriculum and staff uphold the religious standards set forth by the governing body or organization to which the college belongs. Estep (2012) claimed that in Christian colleges it is the faculty's responsibility to influence and guide students in what he calls "spiritual formation" (p. 343). Herr (2016) stated that Christian colleges have the goal of equipping their students for their vocation. Fernandez (2014) narrowed the purpose of Christian education to two basic objectives: to train students for the "critical exegesis of biblical text and the formal articulation of theological categories to understand God and his interaction with the world, and the training of students for the practical exercise of church ministries" (p. 339). While theological education may apply to additional career paths the most prominent groups that would enroll in theological education are those pursuing ministry as an occupation and Emslie (2016) proposes that transformative learning is ideally suited for those enrolled in theological degree programs for ministerial development. By understanding the role of Christian colleges, this may help provide a better understanding of what the student hopes to gain from completion of degree programs at these institutions.

The Role of Transformative Learning in Theological Education

Educators in Christian colleges state that transformative learning is a hallmark of theological education (Marmon, 2013). The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (King James Version). Fernandez (2014)

argues that theological institutions should design their programs with this scriptural concept in mind and that the college's purpose is to produce a "non-reversible shift in the basic presuppositions a person holds as to how the world works" (p. 343). Marmon (2013) noted that adults who enter theological education must often unlearn long-held assumptions. Although this is true of most students, Marmon argued that it is almost always true of adult learners. Adult students who enroll in theological degree programs frequently state their desire to better understand the culture and environment in which they work (Fernandez, 2014). LeBlanc and Slaughter's (2012) work supports Fernandez's perspective that theological education programs are for spiritual formation. These programs promote spiritual growth and emphasize that a student develops new views of how to best serve the world through ministry. In this context, theological education is more than just the transmission of biblical ideology; it is a curriculum designed with complete transformation in mind. Young (2013) concurred with this argument and stated that theological learning is "learner-centered" (p. 321) and designed to shape the student's worldview. Young leaned heavily on Loder's (1989) theory and stated that Loder exceeds other theorists in his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Newman (2014) stated that transformative learning theories are inappropriate for explaining adult education. Newman reached this conclusion because he "disliked the pseudo-religious tone of some of the transformative learning literature" (2014, p. 348). Newman advised against connecting spirituality and education because the concept of faith has no place in education. With this disagreement, Newman is conceding the

existence of theories that connect education and spirituality even though he may disagree with the validity of those theories.

Aspects of Theological and Secular Education

Theological higher education is not entirely different from its secular counterpart. The goal for learning institutions is to educate students in their field of study. For theology students, this means educating students in matters of theology and religious doctrine. Seminaries governed by a religious denomination or religious sect teach the doctrine established by the body that governs or endorses them. Where theological education typically differs from secular education, is the theological school's reliance on God and the role of spirituality in education. Spirituality is not something that can be quantifiable; however, theological schools design curricula capable of teaching and assessing spirituality. Sperry (2014) suggested that the transformative process includes personal transformations (personality and worldview), as well as a spiritual transformation (a change in the relationship to the sacred in the life of the student). Theological education attempts to address both types of transformations, whereas secular education typically does not.

Much of what applies to secular higher educational also applies to theological education. According to Fernandez (2014), one component of theological education that aligns with secular views of transformative learning is that the student's education corresponds to their life experiences. Aspects of Fernandez's view, such as the ideas that theological education can trigger disorienting dilemmas, is similar to the study conducted by Christie et. al (2015) who found that it is possible to create disorienting dilemmas

through secular education purposefully. Likewise, Osmer (2012), a professor of Christian education at Princeton Theological Seminary, stated that human experience almost always has a role in the development of theological construction. Critical reflection can also be seen as a key component of theological education. Patterson et al. (2015) conducted a study using grounded theory to make a case for using transformative learning in a religious college classroom. Patterson et al. (2015) found that critical reflection upon past experiences and assumptions is an important part in the early process of learning. Theological education is more than learning new information; it consists of teaching individuals to draw from their past experiences to formulate theological concepts applicable to their local ministries.

Spirituality in Theological Education

Theologians, as well as those associated with schools that dedicate themselves to educating students from a Christian perspective, can provide additional insight to determine what causes transitions in their students. As previously stated, there are researchers outside of religious education that view transformative learning theory as "spiritual" or "pseudo-religious" (Newman, 2014, pg. 348). Loder's (1989) theory, however, relies on the role of the Spirit in transforming adults and moving them toward a new identity. Kucukaydin and Cranton (2013) linked transformative learning to extrarational activities, which included spirituality. Rather than shun the role of spirituality in transformative learning, Kucukaydin and Cranton embraced it and suggested that "transformative learning writers have not been critical of the words and concepts used in the extrarational approach" (p. 48). Activities considered extrarational,

such as visions and dreams, are specifically mentioned by Kucukaydin and Cranton and have been a part of Christianity since the beginning of the Church. Beard (2017) stated that the connection and commonalities between transformative learning and spiritual formation run deep, particularity in the areas of identity, process, and experience.

Spiritual transformation in the theological classroom is not something seminaries avoid. Smith (2013) found that professors in theological classrooms were able to stimulate faith and spirituality in their students. Researchers such as Yaghjian (2013) strongly advocate for the inclusion of spiritual mentoring in theological schools and go so far as to state that it is the responsibility of theological educators to entwine academics with spiritually. Phillips (2010) stated that there is a need for instructors to incorporate spirituality into the classroom in order to create a "free" learning environment in which students who bring a diverse range of spiritual ideas can remain "open-hearted" in their quest to learn (pg. 192).

Curriculum in Theological Education

Like many colleges, theological institutions use curricula designed for, and relevant to, the fields its students seek to enter upon graduation. In this sense, theological and secular colleges share similar ideas regarding curriculum design. Theological colleges are unique because they must provide an exegesis of canonical text that fits within the religious tradition of the sponsoring organization or religious sect (Kanarek & Lehman, 2013). Among Christian-based seminaries, there is a shared belief in instruction that links the religious tradition of the institution with clergy practice; therefore, curriculum design needs to model this practice (Kanarek & Lehman, 2013). Smith (2011)

argued that the purpose of the seminary is to produce “thinking Christians,” and that curriculum design is important to this process. Smith further stated that traditional curriculum consisting of isolated subgroups of courses is not optimal for seminary training. Regardless of presentation, the curriculum used in a theological classroom must align with the student’s original purpose for seeking education. This means that in many cases, the curriculum must speak to the spiritual side of that decision.

Loder’s (1989) work applies to theological education because of his willingness to include spirituality in his theoretical assumptions. Spirituality is what makes theological education unique compared to secular programs. Not only does a theological school provide students with instruction in religious teachings, but spiritual formation must also take place for the student to be effective in their local professional ministry-related fields. One of the challenges facing theological schools is the difficulty designing curricula that address both doctrine and spirituality.

Transformative learning theories have a home in religious education because of their spiritual aspects (Kanarek & Lehman, 2013; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; Philips, 2010; Smith, 2011). Transformative learning is not only applicable to students pursuing degrees at religious colleges but in other Christian contexts as well. The next section of this literature review will focus on how the process of transformation works within the Christian context.

The Process of Transformation in Christian Context

The conceptual framework presented in this literature reviews fits into the larger context of Christianity. Parks (2011) presented a case that educational institutions are

ideal mentoring environments and promote the development of adult learners. Outside of the seminary, transformative learning also has a place in the local church, whose clergy have an obligation to disciple their parishioners.

The core message of Christianity is that people change through a relationship with God. Christians are called to "put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man" (Colossians 3:9-10, King James Version). This is a holistic change that takes place as individuals shift their allegiance away from their past and into a new worldview that focuses exclusively on God's kingdom. This concept fits into this study's framework and theories concerning the transformation in adult learners. One of the unique elements of transformative learning theories is that adults make sense of their experience as part of the transformation process (Cranton, 2006). This also happens as part of the Christian conversion experience. After careful critical reflection on past experiences and long-held understandings that an individual can unlearn assumptions and embrace new revelations.

According to the theories of Loder (1989) and Cranton (1996, 2006), the process of transformation begins with a triggering event or catalyst. Kegan's (1994) theory of transformation emphasizes reflection on daily life and the often tragic or significant moments that activate a desire and need for change. Regardless of whether it is a singular event, multiple events, or life's circumstances, transformation is an extension of an individual's emotional and cognitive disorientation concerning their current state. Multiple scriptural examples from New Testament writers addressed this concept long before people began to theorize concerning transformative learning. The apostle Paul addressed the volatile dilemmas faced by new Christians as they embarked on the process

of transformation. In the first decades after the formation of the Christian church (Acts 2-10), both Jews and gentiles had to reject or modify much of their traditional beliefs to become disciples of Christ. Marmon (2013) pointed out that these new understandings often emerged out of conflict and confusion over what it meant to forsake all to follow Christ. In both formal and informal education found in the local church, transformative learning theories can be used as a lens to view how Christian adults respond to challenges and how this may motivate them to align their life with Christian faith.

Meneely (2015) completed a qualitative research study in which he examined the use of transformative learning in a church environment to determine the viability of the theory on church attendees. Meneely (2015) concluded that the church environment was the ideal setting for transformative learning to take place among adult parishioners. Lang and Bocman (2016) also completed a research study to demonstrate the use of transformative learning theory in a church environment. In their mixed-methods research study they attempted to identify themes of growth in church parishioners that attended a specialized discipleship course offered at a local assembly. Lang and Bocman (2016) found that transformative learning can be used to positively promote growth and spiritual awareness in those that participated in the discipleship course. An added element can be viewed in a qualitative conducted by Nichols (2016) in which he compared the experiences of traditional on-campus students with the experiences of distance education students taking the same theological college course at the same college. Spiritual growth was one of the stated outcomes of the course and Nichols (2016) found that the distance education students showed greater spiritual growth than their on-campus counterparts.

This was attributed to the distance education students being involved in their local congregations while simultaneously taking the college course. This again shows that the church can be an environment that is conducive to transformative learning.

Summary

This literature review presented multiple perspectives in the field of human development as it applies to adult education. An examination of adult education using multiple theories shows the role adult human development plays in the decision-making process of learners who decide to return to college to earn graduate degrees. There has been a focus on the role of spirituality in adult education with an emphasis on examining the leading of God's spirit as it draws Christian adults toward the decision to return to college (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013; Philips, 2010; Smith, 2013;). The literature indicates that there are connections between transformative learning and spirituality (Marmon, 2013). There is a need to fill the gap in the literature and explain why adults are enrolling in graduate theological programs, what they hope to learn in these programs, and how the curricula in these programs can better meet their expectations. This study investigated these questions using an interview-based, qualitative study. The study explored the firsthand accounts of recent graduates of a master's degree program at a theological institution. It sought to discover what these students perceived to be fundamental to their choice to return to school and how well they were served by the institution once they matriculated. This literature review served as a foundation for interpreting the data gathered for this study and to provide a deeper understanding and

context for the research questions and for recommendations that may develop from this study.

In Chapter 3, I provide the rationale for the research method that was chosen for this study. I provide details of the role of the researcher as well as the logic for participant selection to be included in the study. The chapter will conclude with a plan for analyzing the data collected during the data collection phase of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore considerations involved in the decision-making process of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors as they chose to pursue a graduate degree in ministry. In this chapter, (a) I describe the proposed research design and my rationale for its selection; (b) I discuss my role as researcher and any personal and professional relationships with the participants that could influence outcomes; (c) I explain and justify the research methodology and demonstrate why it applies to the research questions; (d) I outline the procedures for recruiting participants, maintaining confidentiality, and collecting and analyzing data; (e) I discuss the trustworthiness of the study and any ethical concerns that may arose during the process.

Research Design and Rationale

The focus of this study was to provide a better understanding of what tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors consider in choosing to pursue a Master of Arts in ministry. I conducted this research using open-ended interview questions so that the participants could discuss their experiences in detail. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

> RQ1: What considerations do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree perceive as central in their considered decisions to pursue these graduate degrees in ministry-related fields?

RQ2: What do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree report they were seeking to learn and understand prior to enrolling in the course of the graduate degree program?

Research Design and Methodology

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described the goal of qualitative research as seeking to discover how people interpret their life experiences and how they find meaning in those experiences. A qualitative research study, therefore, helps the researcher and others understand the meaning individuals construct from their actions and decisions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, I used an interview-based qualitative approach, which allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences. This study sought to identify the considerations that led the participants to enroll in their graduate degree programs.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) used the term "basic qualitative research" to define a qualitative study that explores and identifies how individuals interpret and attribute meaning to personal experiences and how they construct worldviews (p. 24). In the field of education, basic qualitative research is the most common qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this study, an interview-based basic qualitative research design was the most effective method for obtaining information that addressed the research questions.

The purpose of interviewing is to collect data to gain insight into the behaviors of others when it is not possible or sufficient to observe their activities or actions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). From the accounts of the experiences of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors, this study sought to clarify the common experiences among the participants as

well as where their experiences are unique among themselves and between them and others outside of Apostolic Pentecostalism. In addition, the use of interviews demonstrates the researcher's interest to understand and appreciate the participant's stories and to help in answering the research questions (Seidman, 2013). Interviews allowed the researcher to delve into the personal reasoning, understanding, and motivations which lie behind the actions of the participants. These issues may not be evident to the participants themselves but can be revealed as the participants are questioned and asked to reflect upon their answers. This can only take place through a back-and-forth conversation that takes place in an interview.

Three other qualitative research designs—phenomenology, narrative, and case study—were considered for this study. The purpose of a phenomenology, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), is to describe the experiences of an individual or small group to determine the essence of the experience (2015). Multiple interviews to document the experiences of the participants are the primary method of data collection for phenomenological studies; however, a researcher may need to employ other methods of data collection such as observations or small group discussions (2015). Phenomenological studies often examine a very limited group of subjects. This research design would not be optimal for this study because I sought to explore the experiences of a representative sample of a larger group of people rather than the in-depth experiences of a small set of individuals. A narrative design was not as suitable as a basic interview-based study because its focus is on a single or small number of individual stories rather than on a larger set of participants. Narrative studies are best suited to exploring a line of

development or a sequence of events. A narrative design, therefore, would yield data on a small set of participants rather than focusing on a representative sample of a larger group. Case studies are frequently used to research the behavior of groups and the behavioral aspects of institutions. A case study was not adopted as the best research design for this study because I sought to examine the experiences of individuals rather than explore the behavior of a group or institution.

Quantitative research methodology was not selected for this study because its purpose is to gather and report statistical data to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Qualitative research does not test a hypothesis so one is not included in this study. This study examined human experiences, which may have been difficult to explore through statistical analysis because of the personalized responses of the participants. This study sought to explore the individual experiences and perceptions of the participants; therefore, data obtained through surveys would be less likely to provide the information necessary to achieve this goal because they offer no back and forth with the researcher and do not allow for the research to dig more deeply into the meanings behind the responses.

Role of the Researcher

I had several roles as the researcher in this study. I interviewed all participants and performed data collection and analysis. It was also my role to encourage and help participants to reflect on their personal experiences and to articulate their thoughts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is important for a researcher to be aware of any assumptions held due to prior experiences and to attempt to separate these experiences

when collecting and interpreting data. While the interview flows from a specific set of questions, the interviewer should guide its direction through follow-up questions that seek clarification or add depth to the responses to the original questions. Effective control of the interview (by the interviewer) can encourage in-depth responses that address the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To better interpret the data gathered from the participants, I analyzed their responses in relationship to findings in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The participants for this study consisted of recipients of master's degrees from Pentecostal College and hold a master's degree in ministry. Although I had a professional and academic association with this college as an adjunct professor, I had not taught at the master's degree level at any Pentecostal institution, and none of the participants were involved in any degree programs in which I have participated. Finally, I did not have a specific professional relationship with any of the proposed participants in this study, other than I, too, am an Apostolic Pentecostal minister. I made use of my personal experiences and perspectives while maintaining an awareness of any potential for bias that may affect my interpretations or analysis of the data. While it is impossible to eliminate all bias in qualitative research, it is important to recognize its existence and potential for concern (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I contacted each participant after obtaining approval from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) using email to introduce myself and informed the participants of the purpose of this study. I used only participants who fit the selection criteria, following the procedures outlined in this study.

Participant Selection Logic

The participants in this study were all graduates of Pentecostal College who have earned a master's degree in ministry and who were tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors before enrolling in their degree program. At Pentecostal College, there have been over 85 graduates from the master's degree program in ministry since 2010. At least 25 of these graduates were tenured pastors when they began the program. I intended to interview 10 of these tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors, which allowed for multiple, in-depth descriptions of their experiences.

Institution Overview

Pentecostal College (pseudonym) was founded in the early 2000s as an institution offering regionally accredited bachelor's degrees in the field of ministry with an emphasis on Pentecostal doctrine. In addition to awarding undergraduate degrees, Pentecostal College made the decision to offer a Master of Arts in ministry. I selected Pentecostal College because it is one of the few colleges in the Pentecostal tradition that offer an accredited Master of Arts degree in ministry. The program is open to anyone who has earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution regardless of prior pastoral training. Pentecostal College did not design this degree exclusively for tenured pastors.

Recruitment and Selection

To participate in the study the participants met certain criteria. They had to be a graduate of Pentecostal College's master's degree in ministry. They had also to have been a tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastor before enrolling in the master's degree program.

To ensure individuals meet the criteria of this study, with the permission of the college administration, I provided a questionnaire to each potential participant before they committed to participating in the study. This questionnaire ensured that the potential participants met all the requirements to be included in this study. Once the questionnaires were returned, and potential participants identified, college administrators were contacted potential participants to determine if they were willing to consent to the study.

The sample size of 10 participants allowed for in-depth examination of their experiences as they worked through the decision to return to graduate school and earn a master's degree in ministry. A sample size of fewer than five participants would be inadequate to achieve saturation. For this study, saturation was achieved when a pattern emerges from the responses of the participants indicating that no additional information is being presented. I set a goal of 10 participants to increase the scope of representation. If each of the 10 participants provided distinct or unrelated responses, it would have been necessary to pursue additional participants to reach saturation. Since 25 of the more than 85 graduates of this master's degree program fall into the category of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastor, this sample size was sufficient to produce saturation with no additional data needed after completion of the interview process.

I invited all tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who recently graduated from Pentecostal College with a master's degree in ministry to participate in this study. A preliminary questionnaire was sent out from the college to each graduate of this master's degree program. The questionnaire also included a consent form stating that participation in the study was voluntary. I reviewed and assessed the information in the questionnaires

provided by the prospective participants including the number of years they have participated in pastoral ministry and the size of their congregations. In choosing participants, I gave priority to pastors with the longest tenure in their current positions. Once the participants were chosen and consented to the study, I contacted each by phone and conducted a semi-structured interview.

Instrumentation

Interviewing is the most widely used technique for data collection in qualitative research because it encourages one-on-one communication between the researcher and the participant and allows the researcher to probe for information (Seidman, 2013). While in-person interviews are preferable, collecting data through phone interviews are permissible when distances are too great or when face-to-face contact is not possible (Seidman, 2013). I conducted all personal interviews by phone due to the substantial geographical distances between the participants and myself. I also considered the possibility of conducting interviews face-to-face should the opportunity arise. All interviews were semi-structured and initial interview questions were pre-written and will be shared with the participants beforehand (See Appendix). Nine interview questions were carefully crafted and each one ties back to one of the two research questions that guide this study. The following five questions all tie into RQ1 which asks recent graduates of Pentecostal College what they perceive as central to their choice to pursue a graduate degree in a ministry related field:

- What stands out about your choice at the time you enrolled in the graduate ministry program?

- What were the key considerations on your mind at the time of applying for admission to the program?
- What issues did you consider prior to seeking to enroll in the program?
- What particular reasons led you to apply for the specific program you chose?
- Can you describe any key moments that stand out to you that led to consider seeking a graduate degree in ministry?

Four interview questions were designed to address research question two which asks recent graduates from Pentecostal College to report what they were seeking to learn and understand prior to enrolling in the course of the graduate degree program:

- What did you anticipate that you might gain personally from enrolling in the program?
- What did you anticipate that you might gain professionally from enrolling in the program?
- Were there any expectations that you had for ministerial development prior to enrolling in the program?
- Did you have any additional expectations for the program to which you applied?

Two additional interview questions were designed to be asked before the conclusion of the interview and will provide an opportunity for the participants to add anything they deem important to the interview:

- What question would you ask someone like yourself if you were conducting this interview?

- Is there anything that you would like to add to what you have discussed with me?

Data Collection Steps

I used the following data collection steps for this study:

1. I began the study after I received approval from the Walden University's IRB (07-30-18-0350686).
2. I sent the preliminary questionnaire to the alumni director at Pentecostal College. This individual will forward the questionnaire to all past graduates of the master's degree program in ministry, inviting them to participate in the study.
3. I reviewed the questionnaires once they are returned to determine which individuals meet the criteria for participation in the study.
4. I assumed that at least 10 individuals will volunteer to participate in the study. Should more than 10 individuals volunteer I chose the participants that best match the criteria for participation. I sent out an email introducing myself and thanking them for agreeing to be a part of the study. I set up times with each participant to conduct their interview.
5. I collected information from the participants by phone using semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. I recorded each session using an app called TapeACall Pro which is designed for this purpose. I conducted each interview on speakerphone and as a backup plan, I used an additional external audio recording device to record each

interview. I notified each participant beforehand as well as at the beginning of the phone call that I was recording their interview.

6. I provided a copy of the transcript of each interview to the participant allowing them to check their responses for accuracy including the option to edit, remove, add, or clarify what they said or intended to say.

Data Analysis Plan

Immediately after each interview, I transcribed the recording of the interaction verbatim. I used manual coding to help in analyzing the data. Using hand-coding, I searched for themes from individual responses. Transcribing and analyzing the data immediately after the interviews take place will aid in capturing the essence of the participants' stories and identify emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Throughout the transcription process, I looked for elements of the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. During data analysis, I examined the participants' responses to determine how they compare to the conceptual framework and research questions. I used the following steps in the data analysis process:

All recorded interviews were immediately transcribed following each interview.

1. I sent a copy of the transcript to each participant and asked them to review the information for accuracy and make necessary corrections.
2. I examined the data and look for emerging codes from the participants' responses.
3. I reviewed all the data generated from the interviews and notes to look for additional themes that may emerge.

4. I synthesized all the themes and codes and formulate conclusions from the data.

Transcribing the interviews and assigning codes to emergent themes immediately after the interviews were complete allowed me to consider the participants' responses in conjunction with my personal observations.

Issues of Trustworthiness

I implemented standards in this study to help assure the quality of the findings. Specifically, I addressed four areas: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability, and confirmability.

Internal validity are the actions taken by the researcher to ensure that the research is credible. I established credibility by ensuring that the sample size is large enough to achieve saturation. At the same time, I incorporated strategies to establish transferability by having an opened-ended discussion with the participants concerning their responses which will allow for additional insights and nuances within their perspectives. This provided thick descriptions and allow for more potential transferability to similar groups in similar situations (Geertz, 1973).

External validity addresses whether the study is transferable to other contexts. To accomplish this, I provided full descriptions of the participant pool, the context of the study, and the processes used in data collection for comparison with other potential research groups. When analyzing data, I connected the findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I also recommended additional potential topics for further research.

To ensure dependability, I sent a copy of the transcribed recorded interviews to the participants for their review to check for accuracy (Patton, 2002). The participants were also encouraged to provide any additional information they may wish to share. Because this study will focus on the perceptions of the participants as they made the decision to enroll in a graduate program in ministry, it is important for the participants to verify that the transcriptions accurately portray their perceptions. I used the participants' words in presenting the research findings to improve the trustworthiness of this study (Patton, 2002).

The research questions that guided this study represent my purpose for conducting this study. My role as researcher, including awareness of potential bias and steps to eliminate it, are defined. Audio recordings of the interviews and the preservation of data collected from the questionnaires upheld the dependability of this study. I used the participants' responses when presenting the findings of the study. The steps and procedures for data collection are presented in sufficient detail so other researchers may replicate the study. I followed the sequence for the collection and analysis of the data. Lastly, I retained the data from this study and intend to keep it available for reanalysis.

Ethical Protection

I have obtained written permission from Pentecostal College to interview their alumni which will include a letter of cooperation between myself and college. I also received written consent from each participant. I consulted Walden University's IRB regarding any ethical concerns and ensure treatment of the participants is within the regulations of the university I received IRB approval (07-30-18-0350686) on July 30,

2018. I only recruited participants from Pentecostal College. If an individual declined to participate in the study or chose to exit before its completion, I agreed to destroy any data collected, and I would have recruited a replacement following the steps previously outlined. All data for this research was analyzed with no identifying markers to protect the identity of the participants. I intend to store all the data collected for this study in a secured, digital format with password protection. I am the only individual with access to the data, which I will destroy after 5 years.

Summary

This chapter focused on the research design, role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness for this qualitative study. I discussed the reasons and justification and for selecting an interview-based qualitative study and explain why other qualitative traditions did not apply. I examined my role as researcher and my relationship to the participant group. I outlined participant selection procedures, instrumentation, steps for data collection, and a data analysis plan. I discussed measures to ensure validity, dependability, and confirmability as well as address any ethical concerns. Chapter 3 concluded with a discussion on the ethical protection for the participants. Implementing these procedures along with staying within the guidelines of Walden University's IRB helped ensure the integrity of this study. Maintaining the standards presented in this chapter assisted this study to explore the developmental processes of tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors' in their quest to obtain a graduate degree in ministry. Next, Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this interview-based qualitative study was to explore the experiences and choices that led tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors to enroll in a graduate ministry degree program at Pentecostal College, even though they were well established and successful in their pastorate at the time of enrollment. I used a basic qualitative interview approach to gather data from a group of such pastors, who volunteered for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research questions for this study were as follows:

- RQ1: What personal considerations do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree report as leading to their choice to pursue these graduate degrees in ministry-related fields?
- RQ2: What do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree report they were seeking to learn and understand prior to enrolling during the graduate degree program?

In this chapter, I present the results of the study. I describe the setting of the study followed by the interview procedures I employed as well as the demographics of the participants. I discuss data collection and analysis including issues of trustworthiness and credibility.

Setting

I interviewed 10 participants, all of whom graduated from Pentecostal College with a Master of Arts in Ministry. I offered an invitation to participate in the study based on the responses to a questionnaire sent out to all alumni of the MA program. These

invitations were distributed by the academic advisor at Pentecostal College. Once contacted, the volunteers filled out a consent form.

Demographics

Since 2012, there have been 83 graduates from the MA program at Pentecostal College. Of those, 17 were pastoring at the time of enrollment and were of interest to me given my research questions. Of these 17 graduates, I was able to interview 10 for this study. All 10 participants pastored in the United States (three in Mississippi, two in California, and one each in Louisiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Colorado, and Tennessee). Of these participants, two completed more advanced degrees after finishing their MAs, and two more are currently working on terminal degrees. All 10 participants had been pastoring for over 5 years. Seven had been pastoring for 10 or more years. All were men; no female pastors have completed the graduate ministry degree at Pentecostal College. Participant 1, who had pastored for the shortest period (6 years at the time of enrollment), had been involved in full-time ministry for over 12 years before pastoring. Thus, Participant 1 had a total of 18 years of full-time ministry when entering the MA program.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, I contacted the vice president of academic affairs at Pentecostal College and sought an institutional partnership with the institution. After reading a draft of my proposal, the vice president agreed that I could seek volunteers from among the alumni of the MA in ministry program study. Upon receiving IRB approval from Walden University, Pentecostal College assigned the registrar to be the

contact person who sent out an email invitation and questionnaire form to every graduate of the program. Of those who responded, I sent consent forms to 18 individuals who fit the criteria of pastoring a church at the time of their enrollment in the MA program. I then contacted the 10 volunteers who returned the consent form via email, phone, or text to schedule a phone interview. I followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix), which included open-ended questions that aligned with the research questions. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes and I recorded them, with consent from each interviewee, using an iPhone app. I took notes during each interview and guided the discussion around the individual participant's responses to the interview questions. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked each participant and informed them that they would receive a transcript of the interview and that once the study was complete, they would receive a summary of my findings.

Data Analysis

Using the process specified by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), I aligned and analyzed the data with the research questions and conceptual framework. This process allowed me to move inductively from the participants' responses to identifying and categorizing themes I found in the data. I searched for key words and phrases from the interview transcripts identifying nine themes and aligned and separated these into three categories. The first category included themes related to the personal considerations of tenured Pentecostal pastors enrolling into a graduate ministry degree program such as *personal sacrifice*; *pursuit of knowledge; overcoming fear of, as well as prejudice against education, among Pentecostals;* and *emulation of an elder.* The second category, themes

that emerged related to professional considerations, contained the following: *leadership development, community recognition and status, future government review of tax-exempt status*, and *coping with busyness*. The third category included catalyzing events that were identified by the interviewees, for example, *revelation, observation and reflection, embarrassment about lack of education* and *progressive change*. The process of identifying codes and key words allowed me to go back and search for themes associated with the key words identified earlier in the process. I assigned specific words and phrases used by participants and aligned them with the conceptual framework and research questions. I coded the words and phrases and placed them within the theme in which they best fit.

The code words and phrases I identified in the interview transcripts most frequently used to develop the themes related to personal considerations of the participants included: *sacrifice, burden, knowledge, learning, don't need education, lose the anointing, inadequate, unprepared, unqualified, example, pattern, model, mentors*, and *elders*.

I also used code words and phrases to identify themes related to the professional considerations of the participants and included the following: *community recognition, validation, credibility, fear, government regulation, leadership, deficiency, ministry development, busy, time constraint,* and *obligations*.

In addition to personal and professional considerations of pastors enrolling in a graduate ministry degree program there were also catalyzing events that emerged from the interview responses of several of the participants. In all, I analyzed the nine themes, as

well as catalyzing events and developed a summary of the most significant findings based on the responses of the 10 participants.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I implemented quality standards for my study to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. I addressed areas of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability, and confirmability as follows.

Credibility

To confirm the credibility of the study, I took actions to ensure that I addressed internal validity. I obtained a sample size (10 interviews) large enough to achieve saturation for my study. Additionally, I incorporated strategies to establish credibility such as having open-ended discussions with each participant regarding their responses and allowing for any additional insights that developed from their replies.

Transferability

I endeavored to establish a potential for transferability by providing thick descriptions, which allows for other potentially interested scholars, educators, clergy and other subsequently interested parties to make use of my data and findings in their own local contexts. I provided full descriptions of the participant pool, the context of the study, and precise data analysis methods so that comparisons could be made with additional research groups and in further studies. When analyzing the data, I made connections to the research questions as well as to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Dependability

I worked toward dependability by providing copies of transcribed interview recordings to the participants, which allowed them to check for accuracy (Patton, 2002). I also gave the participants the opportunity to provide additional information they felt they needed to share after the interviews had been completed. The was accomplished by providing each participant a transcript of their interview to read over for accuarcy. During this process one participant clarified his remarks comcerning one of his interview responses. This was important to the dependability of my study since I used the participants' exact words in the presentation of findings.

Confirmability

I sought confirmability by systematically collecting, coding, grouping, comparing and contrasting data collected during the interviews as well as reviewing the data multiple times and cross-referencing participant responses. I worked to assure that my engagement in these processes was thorough and systematic.

Results

I organized the results of my study according to my two research questions. I asked my interviewees to describe the experiences and thoughts they had before enrolling in the MA program at Pentecostal College. I prompted them to discuss both the personal and professional considerations they experienced prior to the enrollment process. I analyzed the interviews using the conceptual framework as well as the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I generated themes when two or more of the participants

mentioned an idea as being important or relevant to their decision to enroll in the MA program.

The results of my study revealed five themes related to personal considerations of tenured Pentecostal pastors enrolling in the MA program and four themes concerning professional considerations of these same tenured pastors, and two additional areas of interest. Interspersed within these nine themes were two additional areas of inquiry.

Themes Related to Personal Considerations of Tenured Pentecostal Pastors Enrolling in a Graduate Ministry Degree Program

My interviews revealed a high level of what I term "personal considerations" among tenured Pentecostal pastors. Some of these concerned personal benefits while others concerned personal costs. All 10 of the participants made statements regarding more than one of the themes I labelled as personal sacrifice, pursuit of knowledge, overcoming prejudice against education, overcoming fear of education, and emulation of the elder. There were multiple responses from each participant that fit into each of these themes forming a pattern among the participants. I have selected responses from each of the participants to best reflect their thoughts on each of the five identified themes.

Personal Sacrifice

A question for tenured Pentecostal pastors who enroll in a graduate degree program is determining what the program will cost. Sacrifice constitutes more than financial obligations. Not one participant in this study said that they knew with certainty the kind of sacrifice that would be required to obtain a graduate ministry degree. Participant 6 summed up the consensus of the group by saying he knew he would have to

sacrifice something, but that he “didn’t know to what extent when I started.” He went on to specify “it was hours of studying and then missing this event or missing that event to meet deadlines. Then of course the cost of it, you have to get books, financial loans and you have to make commitments financially beyond the school.” Participant 10 stated that “it was a sacrifice on every level.” Participant 10 specifically mentioned time away from family and friends as well as financial sacrifice:

> You can't do it well without sacrificing your time, whether that time is time spent in your pastoral responsibilities, your family, whether it’s as a husband, as a father or as in my case a grandparent. Even my friends, I feel like I sacrificed personal time that I’ve done things in the past that I wanted to do. It cut down on my leisure time. It was obviously a financial responsibility. It wasn’t cheap.

Areas of sacrifice mentioned by several participants included family life, their ministry responsibilities and their personal finances.

An unforeseen sacrifice in obtaining an MA was the sacrifice regarding family time. Participant 8 pointedly said that while he did not feel he sacrificed, he felt his wife certainly did. Participant 1 stated, “I feel like I have sacrificed quite a bit. I would say that the education has robbed me of time with my family.” He concluded by saying, “My family has suffered.” Participant 4 explained, “At the time, I didn’t realize how much time it would consume away from the family.” Participant 3 provided insight into how he forfeited family time while obtaining the degree: “you know what it’s going to be; it’s going to be late nights and early mornings, and odd times. I have a vivid memory of sitting in a courtyard in Madrid, knocking out a paper.” Although the participants

sacrificed family time, each found ways to work through the challenge and obtain the degree. Participant 3 stated that he and his wife knew the time commitment required and they just agreed together when he began and that they worked through the time requirements knowing what it would take to complete the degree.

Participants spoke of time their degree program took away from their ministry and other church obligations as a second potential area of sacrifice. Several pastors stated that their church did not have to experience this sacrifice because they applied their knowledge and preached what they learned each week at their churches; therefore, their activities at these churches became an extension of their education. Participant 3 realized the sacrifice and worked around it: "Church is not going to go away nor the responsibilities of the church." He recognized that regardless of the demands of the degree, he would still have to maintain and perform the work required for the church. Likewise, Participant 8 said he spent 12-15 hours a week on college-related work that took away from his daily ministerial duties, but he felt like the information he gained actually benefitted the church. Participant 1 stated that "because it takes so much of my time and energy," he felt like it was a detriment "in the area of leading my church."

Financial sacrifice was an area that was a common concern to almost half of the participants before enrolling in the MA program. As this affected each pastor differently, depending upon the size of the participant's congregation, their responses varied. Participant 9, who pastored the smallest church, said that he had to make great financial sacrifices to enroll in the degree program, forcing him to take fewer classes. This decision resulted in his workload being less and time management being easier; however, it took

him much longer to complete the program than many fellow students. Participant 10, whose church falls below the average attendance rate, said that obtaining a degree "did require a financial sacrifice." "It wasn't cheap, to say that I understood how much a sacrifice it would be would probably not be truthful. I think the sacrifice was greater once I got in than I realized." Participant 2, the pastor of the largest church in the group, never mentioned financial sacrifice. Participant 6, who pastored a church whose attendance is close to the average of all participants, mentioned that while the cost of tuition was a factor, there were other outstanding costs associated with the degree such as books and travel that went beyond the tuition rates. No participant who pastored a church larger than the average congregation size mentioned finances as a sacrifice.

Pursuit of Knowledge

Most interviewees indicated that they were motivated by the pursuit of knowledge. Even among the pastors who were well into their pastorate, there was still a strong desire to continue to learn and grow. While the participants represent successful pastors who possess enough knowledge to perform at high levels within their ministry contexts, they still wanted to pursue more knowledge. Participants raised this as they described their decision to enter the MA program in ministry. They had gone as far as they could with informing themselves and were looking for something to get them to the next level in their ministry. When asked what personal consideration he had before enrolling in the program, Participant 1 stated, "I felt like it was going to give me a better biblical foundation, a deeper biblical foundation, and a stronger leadership foundation." When asked the same question, Participant 2 responded, "The personal reason I did it was

just simply because I just felt like I needed a deeper education; I felt like I had gone as far as I could go on my own." Using the responses of Participants 1 and 2, the theme of pursuit of knowledge can be broken into two distinct areas: those who desire an increase in knowledge, and those who felt that pursuing knowledge was the answer for having reached a limit in their ministry.

It was the most experienced of the group who mentioned their desire to grow through their pursuit of knowledge on a continuing basis. Among the oldest and most established members of the participants, the responses centered around a culture of life-long learning. Participant 10, who was 49 years old at enrollment and had been pastoring for 24 years, stated, "I wanted to grow myself, I wanted to broaden my base of understanding, and that was the personal drive for doing it [enrolling in the MA]." Participant 4, who had been pastoring for the second-longest time of anyone in the group and who was 47 years old at enrollment, was asked about the personal considerations he had prior to registering for the degree program: "I don't think a leader ever should quit growing. I think when the leader quits growing, whatever he's leading quits growing. So, in that aspect, I think that I was constantly looking for better ways in which to grow." Participant 3, who was the oldest participant at 56 and the participant with the longest pastorate at 25 years, had the most to say among this group. He noted that before he enrolled, "I was already a voracious reader and pursuer of truth, ideas, knowledge, those kinds of things." However, he asked, "How can I gain more knowledge that is relevant to the kingdom of God or to the pursuits that would make me better individually and more

productive professionally?" When pressed on what he hoped to gain from the program, he responded,

> I wasn't looking how to be more specifically equipped to be a counselor. But I think generalized growth in knowledge base makes you a more effective counselor. An administrative area. I wasn't looking for a specific set of information for me to grow, myself, as an administrator. But, as I grow in a general sense, in knowledge, I tend to get better in all of those areas.

The responses from these three pastors, who had been pastoring the longest and were among the oldest in the group, demonstrate that even though they had been successful in pastoring their churches, they considered enrolling in the degree program to continue to pursue knowledge.

There were also pastors who entered the MA program to pursue knowledge and sought education for a specific reason: They were looking for answers to solve a problem or dilemma they were experiencing in their pastorate. Participant 2 viewed education as a way to supplement deficiencies in his abilities: "I noticed gaps in my education and my learning." Participant 6 became reflective when asked what personally prompted him to enroll in the MA program:

> I joined because I needed to go beyond and experience more in life and in ministry than I had experienced at that point…I had experienced success, or what everybody would have called normative successes. Pastoring a big church, being on staff, everybody would say, "Well, that's success." Well, when you're 43 years

> old, and you've experienced that, if that is all there is to life then I need to die at 43, you know. I knew there was more. There was more to it.

This type of response was common among the younger half of the interview group. There was a sense of need for them to achieve more, and there was a realization that education may be the answer. Other participants understood that church growth was directly related to the growth of the pastor. According to Participant 8:

> The primary motivating factor for me is that our church had grown as big as it had ever been, and I don't know; I hit a point where I was feeling very tapped out. On one level, I know the potential of our church to grow exponentially is there, but I didn't know what to do, and I realized that if I don't do something to grow myself, personally, we're going to stay here the next 20 years and just keep polishing what we've got, and our growth will be very, very stunted if, as a leader, I don't grow.

For the younger participants and those with less experience, education and the pursuit of knowledge became a way for them to overcome periods of stagnation in their ministry.

Prejudice Against Education Among Pentecostals

A prevailing theme among many of the participants was the deep-rooted prejudice within the Apostolic Pentecostal movement that is against formal education. Because of the spiritual nature of Pentecostalism, there is a heavy reliance upon the Spirit of God and emphasis is placed on pastors to be sensitive to the leading and guiding of the Spirit. This emphasis is one of the reasons that few educational opportunities are available within the movement, and for many years, those who sought education had to do so through secular

or other denominational means. This educational prejudice is deeply rooted in the Southern states and the responses of the participants to this theme aligned closely with those sentiments.

Southern pastors reported having to overcome deep-rooted prejudice to enroll in the MA program. The participant from Louisiana and three participants from Mississippi all mentioned this as a consideration when they enrolled. Participant 1 from Louisiana stated, "The problematic issues with the Apostolic movement is an aversion to higher education." Participant 2 from Mississippi said,

> There's a group out there that thinks if you are educated or a seminary student that it takes the fire out of you. In other words, it educates the move of the Spirit out of you. And you know, there were some older guys and some guys of that frame of mind that basically said you are going to lose all of your fire. You don't need to become a seminary egghead that doesn't know how to move with the spirit.

Participant 10 faced the same criticism from his peers:

> There was a few of my peers and maybe even some of my elders that took the view that formal education could stifle the flow of the anointing. You become so focused on information and knowledge that you wouldn't give place to the anointing or to the flow of the spirit.

Participant 9, also from Mississippi, said that he encountered the same prejudice:

> Many of them had educated people either in their churches, or they believed in it for their family or what have you, but they felt like some were leaning on it in

> such a way that it was downing those who got their education going through the school of hard knocks and through experience.

Participant 6, who pastored in California but grew up in the Southeast, recognized the problem when he started the enrollment process:

> It's a prevalent paradigm east of the Mississippi versus west of the Mississippi. But yeah, because I lived right in the middle of all of that, that region and that area, the Deep South. People are intimidated by the education. And it's not because education is bad, but it's unknown.

Participant 8 lived and pastored in Tennessee east of the Mississippi River and stated that while he knew and heard about this educational prejudice, he dealt with it using rational thought:

> I'm smart enough to know that if you want to get good counsel on the value of a college degree or the lack of value of a degree, don't go talk to someone who's never done it because they don't know. They can't give an informed opinion.

The pastors on the East Coast had to contend with the negativity from those who were against education.

On the other side of the country, particularly on the West Coast, the responses were much different. While these participants may have heard of this educational prejudice, there was a different attitude concerning education. Participant 5, who had been pastoring in California for 19 years, said that he had heard the negative comments concerning education but that he had not experienced any issues, which he attributed to where he lived and the "friends with whom I associate out here on the West Coast."

Having to consider the attitudes of peers along with traditional thinking were personal considerations for the Southern pastors. Even after completing the degree, one pastor said, “You have to be careful how you celebrate it because some people will misread all that as if you’re trying to lift yourself up.” While not everyone had to overcome this education prejudice, it was a concern for participants who lived in the Southern states.

Overcoming Fear of Education

On average, the participants in this study had been away from formal education for 25.4 years. A personal concern for some of the participants was determining if they were able to handle the educational requirements that came with completing a graduate degree. After so long a hiatus from any formal education, it was a difficult decision for some of the participants to enroll in the program. Participant 2 summed up his thought process as he rationalized his decision to pursue his master’s degree:

> We talked about the fact that we had been out of school so long, that we did not know if we would have a learning curve. It was something that maybe we’d lost our learning chops. You know you’ve been out of school for 15-20 years after you graduated or 30 years. We were worried that we had lost our schooling “chops,” so to speak. You know that we’d be way behind the curve or behind the eight ball because we had all been out of school for so long.

This was not a unique viewpoint, or one based on age or other demographics. Participant 5 stated, “I had some reservation as to whether I was academically prepared to be able to enter into the forays of academia and education.” Participant 8, the youngest in the group,

said, “I didn’t know if I could perform. I didn’t know if I could write a paper at college level. I didn’t know if I could pass [a] test.” It was a challenge for the participants to overcome some of these fears. As Participant 4 pointed out, the concerns were more technical and involved grammar and writing. No one in the group stated that they found that the reality of pursuing the degree fulfilled the fears they had of higher education before they enrolled in the program. Participant 8 reflected on his initial thoughts regarding his ability to perform: “Looking back it seems silly.” Participant 5 had a similar reflection: “Looking back on it, I should have never been fearful at all.” While fear of education was a consideration for many of the participants, they found the academic challenges of the degree to be less than they had feared.

Emulation of an Elder

To understand this theme, a brief background regarding Pentecostal College (all the participants graduated from this institution) and its president is necessary. The college was founded by Dr. Williams (pseudonym) who is also the pastor of the Pentecostal Church (pseudonym) located on the West Coast. The church is one of the largest within the Apostolic Pentecostal movement, and Dr. Williams is one of the most successful pastors within this tradition. Pentecostal College was the result of decades of mentoring and training programs designed and taught by Dr. Williams. More than a few pastors, both young and old, have looked at the success of Dr. Williams and wanted to emulate this in their ministries. The desire to replicate the success of Dr. Williams was so strong that it emerged as a major theme for this study.

Six of the 10 participants specifically mentioned Dr. Williams as a personal consideration prior to pursuing graduate school. Two of the participants, Participants 4 and 5, had previous interactions with Dr. Williams in a mentorship setting before the formation of Pentecostal College, and that interaction influenced their decision to enroll in the program once it became available. Participant 5 discussed his feelings before joining the program: "The real history is that Bishop Williams…he's always been inclusive, and I have done several things with him over the years." This prompted his decision to enroll in the MA program. Speaking of a mentorship program that Dr. Williams conducted, Participant 4 said, "I, along with other young men, were Brother Williams's guinea pigs for development courses. For some reason, as a young man, he took interest, and I became a part of that." Participant 4 continued by saying that before the MA became available, Dr. Williams would have leadership summits at his church and that he attended almost all of them.

Participants 8 and 9 did not know Dr. Williams as well personally as other participants but still specifically mentioned that one of their reasons for enrolling in the MA program were in response to their observations of Dr. Williams. Speaking of Dr. Williams and his church, Participant 8 said, "I knew they had done it and I knew they had been successful." Participant 9 mentioned Dr. Williams by saying he is someone "I respect as a pastoral leader of growth [and] that I'd seen [this] in some of his background, not only at Pentecostal [Church] but [the northeast] when he was there."

Participants 3 and 10 had a personal relationship with Dr. Williams. Participant 3 stated, "When this program became available—when the master's degree program

became available—I was just instantly excited about it because I had already chosen Nate Williams as a mentor and had been following him since the late 90s." Participant 10 had a similar feeling toward Dr. Williams and viewed him as his pastor. When considering Pentecostal College, Participant 10 explained, "I look at the dynamic of church that he built there and helped grow. Who wouldn't want some of that?" Participants 3 and 10 were the oldest of the group, and both considered Dr. Williams to have a leadership role in their lives. Regardless of age or years of experience, these participants still saw the need for personal leadership and mentorship.

Themes Related to Professional Considerations of Tenured Pentecostal Pastors Enrolling in a Graduate Ministry Degree Program

All the participants in my study were pastoring churches at the time of enrollment and continued to do so throughout their education. Given the demands of ministry, there were also professional considerations emerged in their responses. I grouped community recognition, preserving tax-exempt status, leadership skill development, and busyness together in a theme I call "professional considerations."

Community Recognition and Status

Participant 10 stated, "[the MA program] gives you credibility, absolutely, and I thought about that. And it was part of the process of deciding to go ahead and spend the time, the energy, the resources to do it." Community recognition was an area mentioned by seven of the participants who wanted their churches to have more credibility in their communities. Participant 1 said that not having a degree was a detriment to his ministry because of the way he was perceived in the community:

> I felt [it] was a detriment because it limits some of my community from me reaching them because of the lack of having a legitimate higher education. A lot of people in the professional sense, doctors and attorneys, are actually interested if the pastor has seminary experience or their depth of education…I felt it would be a connector to my community. That's another reason. I wanted to have a better connection, a greater connection to my community. A better name and reputation, perhaps.

As Participant 3 pointed out, the degree can "make you more effective and productive as part of the community." From the perspective of Participant 5, the reaction was immediate:

> All the sudden there is a level of credibility that automatically you accrue onto yourself and other people within society. Politicians will start showing up. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. But the bottom line is yes, they look for that, and it's been very, very helpful.

When considering the program, knowing that the community paid attention to the credentials that a pastor had was important in the decision-making process. Participant 9 spoke at length about how having an MA would help his credibility in his local community in Mississippi:

> So, I knew that they looked to me as some type of a leader in the community. Our church stands out there on the highway. In the South, you know how it is, the politicians, they seek religious voters. So, I was always one of the churches that they looked to, to come talk to, things like that. So, I felt like it would help me,

> perhaps, have a greater degree of influence and respectability, credibility for the future while I pastored.

Having community influence was an important consideration for Participant 9.

Participant 8 presented an argument that pastors need credibility on the secular level that will match what they have on a spiritual level:

> I realized that moving forward for pastors to have credibility on a secular level. The secular world respects letters and degrees, and I need to have something to go along with what I have in the spirit to lend weight to my dealings with the secular world when I'm trying to just transact church business and things.

Participant 10 agreed that from a secular viewpoint that credibility was important: "To be credible in our world, not necessarily in the spiritual world or in the Kingdom of God…in a world guided by perception, I think people automatically give you much more credibility when and if you have a degree." Participant 10 made an additional point that he felt like having a degree would "validate" his church for individuals who are outside his congregation.

While the majority of the responses focused on community recognition outside the church, there were two interesting responses concerning the community within the church. This was something that I did not anticipate but was still a consideration for these two participants. Participant 8 summed up his expectations for his credibility within the church:

> My expectation was that there would be a degree of credibility with dealing with the community that I didn't have, and also credibility with our church members

> and that for more of the congregation on pastors becoming highly educated—many, many bachelor's degrees, many master's degrees. We've got people in doctoral programs, and I realized that I can't be country bumpkin preacher that's never done anything to pursue higher education when I'm pastoring a whole room of people that are very educated.

While for Participant 8, this was a consideration before joining the program, Participant 2 reflected on his educational journey and noticed that having more credibility within the church was an unexpected by-product of his obtaining a degree:

> And because there is a complete difference in our church, my going to school has made other people want to go to school. Not a theology degree, but there's been a number of people that said, "When you went and got your education, I decided to go get mine in my field." And so, you know, I'm just telling you that the church has grown.

Earning the master's degree did not just produce external credibility but credibility within the church community, which resulted in tangible benefits.

Future Government Review of Tax Exempt Status

One of the benefits that churches enjoy is that they operate as nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporations, which entitles them to tax-exempt status. One of the professional considerations for two of the participants was a concern that the government may tighten the regulations on churches and ministries that operate under tax-exempt status. For Participant 7, this was the primary reason for enrolling in the MA program. The church that Participant 7 pastored in North Carolina had a private school attached to the church,

and he argued that he wanted to ensure the school could continue without government interference:

> My primary reason for enrolling is that the government, I feel like, is going to come down and mandate that all private schools are…they're managed, or whatever the best word would be there, overseen by someone who has a graduate degree. I think the day of Sister Sally and Sister Sue running the school is going to come to an end eventually, and so I felt like I needed to have that graduate degree. I have people in church that have them, but of course, they're working in the secular world, and so I couldn't afford to pay them $70,000 or $80,000 a year to go look through paces. So, I felt like I needed to get that graduate degree in case the government came down and said, "Look, you're going to have to have this if you're going to operate a private 501(c)(3) school," and that's really the reason I did it.

This concern was an important consideration for Participant 7 for joining the MA program as he felt it would help him better prepare for the future.

I asked Participant 2 how he concluded that he needed a graduate degree, and he spoke about a conversation he had with a politician in his area of the country who told him churches would eventually be held accountable for proving they were viable tax-exempt entities. Participant 2 explained, "This was the first time that I had ever thought of this, and I knew [Pentecostal College] was offering a master's [degree], so I knew that I needed to sign up."

Leadership Development

Pursuit of knowledge was a theme that emerged as a personal consideration for the participants in this study. I identified leadership development as a different theme because it addresses professional development that goes beyond desiring an increase in particular knowledge.

Addressing shortcomings or deficiencies was a central professional consideration among several of the well-established pastors. Each participant answered these questions differently and brought their unique perspective to the study. For seven participants, leadership development was a major consideration, but for the three others, they felt that at their station in their ministries, they were already well equipped to handle the leadership challenges of pastoring a 21st century church.

Of the three participants who did not have a prior leadership development consideration before enrolling in the MA program, their responses indicated that they did not believe they needed to develop their leadership further. Even though this was not a prior consideration, all three of these participants noted that the program helped them develop stronger skills in this area. Participant 1 stated that he did not specifically seek out leadership development and that he was "settled" in his leadership abilities but open to growing through the program. Although he did not initially seek out leadership skills, he indicated that the leadership training portion of the program brought "some areas of revelation." Participant 2 had a similar feeling before joining the program: "I'll be honest with you; I'd thought I'd been in the ministry so many years…I honestly thought I was pretty educated, and I didn't think they were going to teach me anything." Participant 4's primary reason for joining the program was for "personal growth," but he stated that

leadership development, especially in the field of counseling, has been beneficial to his ministry. It was not a factor in his decision to join the program but a by-product of the program. Participant 10 reflected upon his enrollment and asked himself: "Is it worth four years of my life whenever I'm really hitting my most influential, impactful period of my life?" He went on to say that prior to enrolling, Dr. Williams came and tried to talk him into joining the program. Dr. Williams told him, "You don't think it will help you, but it will help you." Once he earned his degree, Participant 10 reflected on the learning that occurred in the area of leadership development:

> I think it was absolutely ministerial development. Again, I look at leadership, process actions, spiritual formation, all of that as ministerial development…There was so much that I could see that I wanted to be able to grasp. I didn't really know. I didn't fully understand what all I was given. I had an idea, and it far outstripped anything that I anticipated. I just wish I would have done it sooner.

Although leadership development may not have been a prior consideration for enrollment in the MA program, several of the pastors felt they their program benefitted their leadership even though they had thought prior to enrolling that they did not need further development.

A second group of participants recognized their need for leadership development; prior to enrolling in the MA program. These pastors' recognition of gaps in their leadership through events in their past when they felt challenged in this area. Participant 3 laid out his thoughts for leadership development during his interview: "In a very generalized way, I wanted to be better at what I was doing, more effective at what I was

doing." He wanted to obtain more leadership knowledge, which was one of his primary reasons for joining the program. This response indicates a personal consideration, but it became a professional consideration when Participant 3 relayed how an increase in personal knowledge translated into good leadership. When pressed a little further on this, he responded,

> Yeah, I wasn't looking how to be more specifically equipped to be a counselor. But I think generalized growth in knowledge base makes you a more effective counselor. An administrative area. I wasn't looking for a specific set of information for me to grow myself as an administrator. But as I grow, in a general sense, in knowledge, I tend to get better in all of those areas.

Participant 3 was not looking for specific areas of leadership growth but rather felt that a general growth in knowledge would translate into better leadership. Someone with a different perspective, Participant 5, said that he recognized "deficiencies" in his leadership abilities. A professional consideration Participant 5 had for enrolling in the program was the knowledge that the college was going to offer leadership development "in a real process of learning," which he said was "very attractive to me." He desired to address his deficiencies.

Participant 6 said he looked at the MA program, not in absolute terms of what he was hoping to learn, but rather he was open to learning new leadership concepts: "Everything I learned was just considered like a new tool." While he did not see noticeable gaps in his leadership abilities, Participant 7 said he went into the program with some expectations and hoped it would be good for personal ministerial

development. He concluded that the program offered opportunities for development even among seasoned pastors. Participant 8 stated that he wanted to address a missing "skill set," and that this was one of the professional considerations he had before enrolling in the program. Participant 9 noted, "My greatest expectation was to become a greater, more effective leader in revival and church growth." Learning new leadership concepts was a consideration for Participants 6, 7, and 9.

Coping With Busyness

Each of the pastors interviewed for this study had family obligations as well as duties to their churches. All the participants have children, and three of the 10 pastors have grandchildren. In addition to family obligations, several of these pastors have additional duties including community involvement, which includes serving on councils and city boards. Three of the pastors specifically mentioned busyness as a prior consideration before enrolling in the program. These pastors relayed that it can be difficult to find time to continue to do everything they have been doing and then add a degree program. Participant 6 said that since he was a child, he wanted to pursue as much education as possible. His parents taught him the value of obtaining an education. Participant 6 was 42 years old when he enrolled in the MA program, and when I asked him why he did not do this sooner, he said,

> After I finished my bachelor's, I got married. Then [came] the obligations of being married and creating a home on a limited income. And then, kids. And then, getting into ministry. Just not having time. So, all of that kind of fell into a place where you know you're raising little children. Then we started a home missions

> church. It was just one thing after another. And it wasn't until around 2013 that all of that kind of found its place where I didn't have to juggle it constantly, so I was able to grab one more ball and throw it into the juggling mix called school. So that's when it all kind of happened.

The obligations of his ministry mixed with the obligations of life prohibited Participant 6 from enrolling in the MA program sooner.

Another example of busyness emerging as a theme in professional considerations came from the interview with Participant 9. He relayed that he wanted to get his MA but never did because "I was busy." The church that Participant 9 pastored was one of the larger Pentecostal churches in his state, and his church split after a conflict occurred within an organization to which he belonged. Once the church split, Participant 9's congregation size was smaller and his obligations less so he was able to find time to devote to a degree program. Participant 9 reflected on his enrollment: "Now that we're through that, I got the time. I'm kind of stabilized through that. I think I'm going to go ahead and do this because it's going to help me personally, [it's] what I've always wanted." It took a change in his professional situation to enable him to find the time required to commit to a degree program.

For Participant 4, getting an MA was something he wanted to do but never pursued. After pastoring for over 20 years, he joined the MA program at Pentecostal College. When asked why he did not pursue the degree sooner, he replied, "Because I was just too busy during the day." Finding the time to devote to a degree program is difficult, and Participant 4 said that most of the work for the degree was completed "late

in the evening [at] two or three o'clock in the morning." Many of the participants felt that they were just too busy to enroll in an MA program because of the time required to complete a graduate degree program and the time required for family and ministry.

Catalyzing Events of Tenured Pentecostal Pastors Enrolling in a Graduate Ministry Degree Program

At the heart of this study is the theory of transformative learning, which Mezirow (2000) says is a theory in progress. Cranton (2006) expanded upon Mezirow's theory and believed that transformation occurred as a result of either singular or multiple catalyzing events. With this in mind, I invited my interviewees to reflect on catalyzing events that led them to enroll in their graduate degree program and was able to identify several themes from their responses as well as to use the predetermined prior themes of *observation and reflection, and progressive change* that were deducted from the theoretical framework.

Revelation

Participant 2 recalled a car ride with an elder of his church involved in politics and who warned him of the day churches were going to lose their tax-exempt status if they could not prove they were viable religious entities. He stated that the primary reason he enrolled in the program was because "I just think the day's coming that you are going to have to have a degree in your field in order to keep your tax-free status." He said that there are too many people using churches as "tax shelters." When pressed on this, he described the car ride with the elder politician: "That was the first time that I had ever thought of this, and I knew [Pentecostal College] was offering a master's so I knew that I

needed to sign up." For Participant 2, there were other considerations for joining the program but none as important as that car ride that started his enrollment process.

Observation and Reflection

While interviewing Participant 5, I asked him what he hoped to gain personally from completing the MA program. He described observing those around him pursue education as the catalyzing event that prompted him to enroll in the degree program.

> Well, I think I've reached an age. Obviously, both of my kids were pursuing higher education, and so as a result, there had always been a desire but never in my mind the time to dedicate to the study. And my house was swiftly becoming a place where everyone was in school, and everyone was studying with the exception of myself and my wife. Both my kids were [studying], and the people that they fellowshipped with and whatever, so my house was kind of like an educational hub, and so I decided at that point, well, I might as well join in.

Embarrassment About Lack of Education

Participant 8 gave the most pointed example of a catalyzing event when describing what first encouraged him to enroll in the MA program. He experienced an embarrassing moment in front of several city leaders and was determined to do something about what had happened:

> We had bought property, and I had to go. The city had ordered us to have a town hall meeting to invite the neighborhood to come give them an opportunity to voice opposition to our development. So, I was in a town hall with a lot of educated people there, and there was the leader of the homeowner association

> [who] was against us building the church on this property. So, he started asking me where I'd went to seminary, and I had to tell him I haven't been to seminary. "Where did you graduate from college?" Well, [I] never completed a college degree. And he did it in a way that was to publicly belittle me, and I can remember the condescending, belittling feeling that I experienced in a room full of successful, educated people. And I determined in that moment that I will never be put in this position again.

This catalyzing event started the process for Participant 8 to enroll in the Pentecostal College MA program. And while he did not identify this event as the sole reason for joining the program, it was what initially caused him to seek out educational opportunities.

Progressive Change

Cranton (2006) stated that catalyzing events can be singular or a series of events that produce progressive change. Participant 9 relayed a series of events that led him to pursue higher education. It began when he decided to leave one fellowship group and join another, which resulted in a lawsuit filed against the church and pastor. At the time, the church he pastored had the largest congregation in church's history. Participant 9 admitted that while he wanted to join the degree program, he could not do so because he was too busy to handle the workload. After leaving the original fellowship group, Participant 9's church was sued and a two-year legal battle over maintaining the pastorate of the church followed. This, along with other outside issues, such as members moving to other cities for work opportunities and college students returning home after graduation,

resulted in a loss of membership for the church. Participant 9 reflected on the situation: "We finally came through it [the lawsuit], but around that time because of some plant closures, some people that would have never left the church over the [legal] issue, with jobs, I lost people." Also, following the legal ruling, there was a church split and this resulted in parishioners leaving and attending another church. Participant 9 said that when it was over, "I remember counting that the lowest we got to was about 86." It was at this point that Participant 9 enrolled in the MA program. It was not a singular event, but a chain of events that led Participant 9 to the point of enrollment.

Outlying Responses

While analyzing the data, there were responses shared only by two of the participants. Participants 6 and 7 stated that upon graduation they had unfulfilled expectations of the degree program. This was not a question I asked during the interviews, but these participants volunteered this information. Participant 6 mentioned that although he went into the program without specifically knowing what the content would be, "I probably would have liked to see, have seen, in the program, maybe come out with some biblical languages stuff, which would have been helpful." Participant 7 said, "I thought there would be more about pastoring, developing. I don't want to say sermons, but more along those lines." With the MA program focusing on ministry, there were hopes that there would have been more of a theological component to the program.

All of the participants enrolled in the program primarily for personal, ministry, or pastoral related reasons except for one. Participant 7 stated that his "primary reason" for enrolling was to strengthen the case for tax-exemption for the private school attached to

his church. His response stood out since all other participants gave ministry or church-related reasons for enrolling in the program.

There was a response by Participant 5 that was both unique and surprising. When discussing central issues for enrolling in the program, Participant 5 looked to the future of his ministry once he reached retirement age. He had observed retired pastors who were in good health, but because they had resigned from their churches, they no longer had viable ministry opportunities. He witnessed this first-hand, watching his father upon his retirement. He said of his father, “He doesn’t have a formal education, so as a result, there’s nothing that he can do as far as academia, which is a much slower pace, reflective pace.” Watching this happen caused Participant 5 to think of a way he could still be effective in ministry after his retirement from pastoring: “I want to be able to be plugged in to what I’ve loved and what’s been my passion all of my life well into my twilight years.” I believe that these responses present some possible areas of inquiry for future research.

Summary

In this chapter I specified the setting, the demographics of the participants, data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures of my study. I then discussed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as ways to ensure trustworthiness of the study. By following the research questions, I was able to align the interview responses to multiple themes which I presented in this chapter.

In Chapter 5, I look back at the purpose and nature of the study, discuss the results in relationship to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and make recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this interview-based qualitative study was to explore the considerations of 10 tenured Pentecostal pastors before they enrolled in a graduate ministry degree program at Pentecostal College. Each participant was a full-time pastor at the time of enrollment and had been pastoring an average of 15.2 years at the time of enrollment. Using a conceptual framework based upon the theories of three theorists of adult transformative learning, I analyzed the responses of the participants as they relayed their personal life experiences and thoughts to understand how the conceptual framework and literature presented in Chapter 2 applied to the participants' thoughts on joining the graduate degree program. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, an interpretation of the findings, the limitations of the study, the recommendations for further study, and the implications of the study's results.

Summary of Findings

All 10 participants in this study demonstrated signs of transformative learning as well as the effects of transformational moments as they considered enrolling in the ministry degree program. The following five themes were identified as being related to the personal considerations of tenured Pentecostal pastors enrolling in a graduate ministry degree program: personal sacrifice, pursuit of knowledge, prejudice against education among Pentecostals, overcoming fear of education, and emulation of an elder. The following four themes were identified as being related to the professional considerations of tenured Pentecostal pastors enrolling in a graduate ministry degree program: community recognition and status, future government review of tax-exempt status,

leadership development, and coping with busyness. In addition to personal and professional considerations, four additional themes were identified; they stemmed from catalyzing events that emerged from the interviews: revelation, observation and reflection, embarrassment about lack of education, and progressive change. These 13 themes were extrapolated from the data or from the conceptual framework of this study. The participants' responses showed significant connections to transformative learning and tied back into the current literature reviewed for the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

Two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What personal considerations do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree perceive as leading to their choice to pursue these graduate degrees in ministry-related fields?

RQ2: What do tenured Apostolic Pentecostal pastors who have recently earned a graduate ministry degree report they were seeking to learn and understand prior to enrolling in the course of the graduate degree program?

The findings from this study fit into one of these two research questions. All the data for this study were analyzed through the research questions as well as through the lens of the conceptual framework which consisted of Cranton's (1996, 2006) theory of transformative learning, Kegan's (1994) theory of the orders of consciousness, and Loder's (1989) theory of the transformative moment. Elements of all three theories were present once the data from the interviews were analyzed. Multiple participants identified a period of critical reflection being brought about by a catalyzing event in their lives.

Many participants showed acute awareness of self-consciousness and self-formation. Additionally, several participants used as an example the steps presented in Loder's theory, including conflict, interlude for scanning, insight felt with intuitive force, release and repatterning, and interpretation and verification. Further, these participants showed an awareness of their actions in relation to existing paradigms and showed a strong understanding of what their enrollment in the MA program meant both personally and professionally.

Contemporary research has established that transformative learning has been utilized in both secular and religious education. Likewise, transformative learning has also been used in personal and professional settings. The research conducted for this study aligned largely with the current research on adult development and transformational learning in religious higher education and as well as fitting into the role of transformative learning in theological education.

Emergence of Transformative Learning in Adult Education

According to Mezirow (2000), learning occurs when an individual encounters a perspective that is different than their own and questions prior assumptions and habits. Questioning then leads the individual to a period of critical reflection (Cranton, 2006). Nearly all studies that employ Cranton's theory of transformative learning (Hoskins, 2013; Johnston, 2011; Mooney, 2011) note that critical reflection is an important component to transformative learning. One of the unintended consequences of this study was the expansion of my own faith based upon my personal reflection of the research study. I received a potential glimpse into my own future as I identified with my

contemporaries that participated in this study. In seeing how Pentecostal pastors mature caused an expansion of my view of leadership and ministry.

The participants for this study were broken up into three demographics: young pastors, midcareer pastors, and elder pastors. While age is one determining factor, total years pastoring also determines which demographic a pastor fit into. An example of this are participants 4 and 9. They are both about the same age (46 and 47) but Participant 4 has been pastoring 20 years while Participant 9 has only been pastoring seven years. Participant 4's responses more closely aligned with those of other midcareer pastors while Participant 9's responses were more in line with those of the younger pastors. The various thought processes can be viewed through the responses of these three distinct groups of pastors.

The younger pastors are primarily concentrated on themselves as individuals. They demonstrated a hunger for knowledge and personal growth along with an urgency to establish and find their place in ministry. This is demonstrated by Participant 6 saying, "I joined because I needed to go beyond and experience more in life and in ministry than I had experienced at that point." This need for personal growth was also articulated by Participant 8, "I didn't know what to do, and I realized that if I don't do something to grow myself, personally, we're going to stay here the next 20 years." These type of responses were primary for those in the younger group. The need to establish themselves through education and growth was the distinguishing factor in their lives at the time of their enrollment.

The midcareer pastors were those that had been pastoring for a prolonged time (generally at least 15 years) and they focused on their churches and congregations as being the primary objective. These pastors were midcareer pastors with several more years of pastoral ministry remaining. Their churches had already been firmly established, but they were still looking for ways to grow and protect their congregations. This does not mean that they didn't still desire to grow and have an expansion of their knowledge base because those things were still very much on their mind. Many of these participants in this group specifically mentioned growth. Participant 2 said, "The personal reason I did it was just simply because I just felt like I needed a deeper education; I felt like I had gone as far as I could go on my own." What separated these midcareer participants from the younger pastors was that in addition to the desire to grow they also demonstrated a need to protect and nurture their congregations. Participants 2 and 7 both mentioned a primary focus of enrolling in the master's program was the potential interference of government overreach into their churches and church schools. Among this group there was a marked shift in focus away from self and toward professional responsibilities.

The elders of the group (those having pastored around that 20-year mark) were nearing the end of their pastorates. Many of them may continue to pastor for 10 or more years but there has been a shift away from their churches being the primary focus. They are now focused on their involvement in the Pentecostal movement as a whole and on mentorship of younger pastors. These elder pastors also relayed that they were still interested in growing and developing and they were also interested in finding new ideas

to strengthen their churches but there was the added weight that they felt toward helping the movement and encouraging the younger generations.

Cranton (2006) presented the idea of critical reflection being brought on by a catalyzing event that begins the transformative learning process. Not all the participants specifically mentioned critical reflection during the data collection phase of the study, but critical reflection brought on by the basis of an external event emerged as a common theme during the analysis of the data. A clear example of the emergence of transformative learning brought on by a period of critical reflection is found when Participant 3 relayed noticeable gaps in his leadership skills. He was trying to find ways to address these gaps when he enrolled in the degree program. Participant 5 never mentioned critical reflection in his interview answers, but it was after seeing his father's ministry and his son's participation in higher education that caused him to enroll in the program. In addition to these two specific examples, others also demonstrated critical thinking that led them to the point of enrolling in the degree program.

In contrast of their being a specific catalyzing event that triggers critical reflection, Loder (1989) gave allowance for there to be a pause or moment that spurs the reflections stage. This is demonstrated in Participant 6 when he said, "I knew there was more." He had experienced success already, but he struggled with the idea that success was all there was to life. In a subsequent conversation with Participant 6 he was asked, "What triggered this thought?" His response was that it was a natural occurrence to his current situation. He was driven to the next level only to be disappointed. There was a continual longing to find out how far he could go in life and in ministry. After each goal

there was pause and period of reflection before trudging on toward the next mark. Given the analysis of this research data there is an expectation that there will come a time where the goal changes away from self and toward either a congregation or imparting to younger pastors. Regardless, the process stays the same.

Kegan's Theory of Orders of Consciousness

Kegan's (1994) theory of orders of consciousness outlines transitions in adults' lives as they move through various life stages. In Kegan's theory, a younger person will often focus on concrete ideas and try to solidify their own identity. As they mature, the focus is less on concrete ideas and there is a transition to more abstract ideas. As they take on greater responsibilities in middle adulthood some people move from what Kegan describes as his third order of consciousness. In the third order of consciousness an individual is focuses on concrete ideas and is more "role conscious" in attempting to understand how they fit into the group (Kegan, 1994, pp. 314-315). The process of transition occurs when what Kegan when the concrete ideas of the third order of consciousness fails to support the individual in addressing adequately the more complex challenges they face. They realize they must be more committed to their institution, or in the context of this study, their congregation, than they are to themselves, as they did in their earlier stages. This is akin to what Erikson (1963) described as being integrity versus despair. In the early stages of life, people seek integrity which addresses the individual but in the later stages of life there is despair at "feeling that the time is now short, too short for the attempt to start another life and to try out alternate roads of integrity" (p. 269). In the case of the participants for this study, education plays a role in

supporting this transition. Foote (2015b) described education as being a means of finding a "new sense of identity" (p. 84). To further this point, Poutiatine and Conners (2012) stated that as the transition happens between orders of conscience that there must be a remake of the individual. The participants in this study could be described in terms of the transition from the third order to the fourth order of consciousness. Some were still attempting to find meaning and purpose in their own life and ministry while others were well past the point of primarily focusing upon themselves and had moved into the arena of their institutional self of focusing upon the church while others were moved even beyond that to the abstract where they placed their focus upon others.

Of the 10 participants in this study, two could be described actively in Kegan's third order of consciousness. They were focused primarily on self-identification. Their interview responses were primarily about personal growth and affirmation of their peers and community. They often spoke about their future in terms of where they wanted to be. Participant 8 exampled this when he spoke of the future of the church he pastored, "I know the potential of our church to grow exponentially is there" but then he reverted back to himself, "I realized that if I don't do something to grow myself, personally, we're going to stay here the next 20 years." In Kegan's third order of consciousness, the focus is on self-identity. This order was still working for Participant 8. Participant 9 spoke in similar tones when we made the connection between personal growth and church growth. In Kegan's third order of consciousness the two (personal growth and church growth) are interconnected. The belief in this order is a concrete idea that for the church to grow the leader must grow first.

Participant 6 is unique to this discussion because he appears to be undergoing the transition between Kegan's third and fourth order of consciousness. As participant 6 reflected about what all he has done, he recounted the goals that were met and then pointed to his future. His former definition of success, "pastoring a big church," had been met but that identity no longer worked for him. When discussing his intentions to enroll in the master's degree program he stated, "I knew there was more. There was more to it." Participant 6 had not found the answers he sought as of the time of this study, but he was in the process of trying to find them.

The remainder of the seven participants in this study had all firmly transitioned to Kegan's fourth order of consciousness. This does not mean that they were not still interested in personal growth, but their focus was no longer on self-identity but was now on the institutional self. In particular, Participants 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 were all primarily focused on their institution (church). These pastors were seeking answers on church growth and church stability. They were looking to emulate elders that had been successful and to pattern their ministries after those of the elders. Participants 2 and 7 indicated that their primary reason for enrolling in the degree program was to protect their churches. In these two cases both pastors mentioned having an advanced degree could protect their churches from future governmental overreach. They were looking into the future at a potential problem and desiring to insulate their churches from a possible fallout from something that may or may not ever happen. In the responses from these participants, very little was said about achieving personal goals and they mentioned the word "church" more often than the other participants.

Participants 3 and 10 were the eldest among the group. They were the closest to retirement age and both had the longest tenure as pastors at 25 and 24 years. These two had fully and completely made the transition away from the concrete ideas of the third order of consciousness to the abstract ideas of the fourth order of consciousness. They were concerned about their churches and they both still mentioned personal growth as a motivating factor for enrolling in the degree program, but they had the added burden of wanting to ensure that the next generation of leaders and pastors were equipped to be successful. With the transition to the next level came more responsibility and these two pastors demonstrated that in their responses.

Lifelong Learning

The pursuit of knowledge was one of the major themes identified in the analysis of the interviews. This was one of the personal considerations the pastors spoke of when reflecting on their reasons for enrolling in the master's degree program. Of the 12 themes identified in the data analysis this theme was the most universally mentioned. Some pastors, like Participant 1, were looking for a better Biblical foundation while other pastors, like Participants 2 and 6, were looking for knowledge in the areas of leadership. Even the eldest pastors, Participants 3 and 10, mentioned a desire to grow and learn as a factor involved in their enrollment. Tenured pastors, even those that had pastored for more than 20 years, remained interested in learning. It has been pointed out in the literature review that transformational learning requires more than the addition of learning new material but generally involves a personal change in the individual (Sandlin et al., 2013). Continual or lifelong learning was a central part of the responses of the

participants but was not something that was widely addressed in the literature review. For this chapter I performed a second literature search using the online databases of EBSCOhost and ERIC. I used the following key search terms: *adult lifelong learning, lifelong student, continuing development*, and *continuing education*. Through this literature search, I was able to collect several recent peer-reviewed articles to connect with the data collected for this study.

Not all adults have a thirst for knowledge and a drive for lifelong learning, but all of the participants utilized for this study did demonstrate this trait. One of the questions for further study would be to research if all pastors have this desire or if is just a select group. Boeren (2017) used previous research to establish the fact that not all adults participate in lifelong learning. Boeren stated that among adults, social inequalities exist that often determine an adult's likelihood of participating in continuing education. Boeren points out two areas where this is often observable. The first area is in the correlation of the individual adult to their parents. Children that grew up in a home where they viewed their parents doing continual learning activities are more likely to participate in those activities when they become adults. Of the participants in this study, Participant 6 most aligned with this idea. It was the parental influence on Participant 6 that pushed him toward education. The second area presented by Boeren was that among white-collar workers lifelong learning was more prevalent than among blue-collar workers. Ministers and especially pastors are considered white-collar workers, which fits into Boeren's classification. Siivonen (2016) conducted a qualitative narrative study on becoming a lifelong learner, concluding that the prerequisite of becoming a lifelong learner is to be

educable, to be self-directed, and to actively pursue lifelong learning. By virtue of enrollment in the master's program after already having been successful in their pastoral ministry the pastors in this study all possess the traits and qualities outlined by Siivonen. Participant 10 made a statement that "I wanted to grow myself." This was after already being successful in full-time ministry. Participant 3 demonstrated the most pointed embracement of lifelong learning when he said, "your vision is always bigger than your physical life so, I expect, I anticipate to grow until the time that I'm physically, mentally not able to grow anymore." The pastors in this study are examples of adults who prior to enrolling in this degree program were already self-directed learners who were actively involved in the pursuit of knowledge.

Dauenhauer et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods research study to determine the effectiveness of multigenerational involvement in lifelong learning programs. The results to the study were that adults were more interested in lifelong learning programs when mingled with traditional age college students. The secondary consideration was that while older adults did better when grouped with young students, they also maintained a separation and rarely crossed over and interacted with their younger counterparts. At Pentecostal College, 70% of the graduates of the master's program were traditional-age college students while 30% were midcareer adults. The participants of this study mentioned their desire to learn and grow as a factor before enrolling in the degree program but still enrolled in a college where most of their classmates were more traditional age students. Participant 10 mentioned that he found himself asking why he was going back to school at almost 50 years old and over 20 years of full-time ministry.

Given the depth of this subject, I recommend further research concerning lifelong learning among Pentecostal pastors.

Current Research Addressing Transformative Learning in Religious Higher Education

The research results of this study confirmed much of the research presented in the literature review presented in Chapter 2. There were some areas where this study extended what was presented in the literature review and a few places where the results of this study disconfirmed previous research. Emslie (2016) proposed that transformative learning is ideally suited for those in religious degree programs for the purpose of ministerial development. While this was true for a portion of the participants the purpose could reasonably be expanded when looking at the totality of the results of this study. Transformative learning emerged as being additionally suited for learning that would impact the students beyond personal development. Schreiner (2018) stated the purpose of Christian higher education was to go beyond personal or ministerial development and added in the benefit to the public and Kingdom of God. The results of this study are more in line with Schreiner and shows all three areas being impacted thus confirming Schreiner's research. The connection between the results of this study and Schreiber is unique because while all three of these areas may be impacted by the graduates, the participants went into the program specifically to address only one of the areas mentioned by Schreiner. The younger participants went into the program to impact themselves personally, the midcareer pastors went into to impact their church (and communities)

while the elder pastors enrolled looking to impact the movement as a whole. This study did confirm Schreiner's work while also refining it into more detailed areas.

This study disconfirmed a research study conducted by Marmon (2013) where it was presented that in theological education that adult learners must unlearn long-held assumptions in order to move forward with their learning. All the participates for this study were adults and not one participant mentioned anything about have to unlearn prior assumptions. Almost every participant mentioned building upon their prior knowledge. The idea of building upon life experiences matches up and confirms research performed by Fernandez (2014). Fernandez says of theological education that it generally corresponds to the student's past life experiences.

Limitations of the Study

The limited transferability of this study is in part because of the research design and potential for researcher bias. The limitation exists because of the narrow requirements for participation in this study. All 10 participants in this study were from the same college and a part of the same Pentecostal organization. This may cause difficulty in transferability of the results. At Pentecostal College only 17 graduates met the requirements for participation in this study and 10 of those graduates were used for this research. Given that Pentecostal College is only one of two colleges endorsed by an Apostolic Pentecostal organization and that there are only a small number of Apostolic Pentecostals that have earned a graduate degree, it would be difficult to duplicate this study at a different college.

Another potential limitation of this study included the potential for my bias as the researcher. As an educator and fellow graduate of Pentecostal College, I have a personal relationship with some of the participants. While I have never been in any leadership position over any of the participants and I have never had any professional relationship with any of the participants my personal relationship does potentially allow for bias within the study. This was particularly true during the interview phase and the data analysis that was completed for this study. Because of this potential, I took steps to negate any bias from this study. These steps included having the participants read through their interview transcripts and confirm what they said during the interview process. Procedures approved by Walden's Institutional Review Board were followed along with input from my dissertation committee aided in ensuring that my study stayed aligned with the research questions. In addition to reducing potential bias, this also added to the validity and reliability of the study.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research that are based upon this study. To further validate this study future researchers could replicate this study at the second graduate school within the Apostolic Pentecostal movement. This would give results from two schools with similar demographics but are unconnected to one another. Another consideration for future research could involve a narrative study in which the researcher follows in-depth several of the pastors as they navigate the enrollment process.

Future research could expand the research questions to ask how effective the program was to tenured pastors. While this subject was touched on in the interview

responses, it was not a main objective of the study. To answer these questions would expand the research and offer greater implications for the colleges and the future students. Additionally, this study could be expanded to denominations and movements outside of the Apostolic Pentecostal faith. Further research could compare the results between denominations to see which is unique to Apostolic Pentecostalism and what is unique to other denominations.

Implications

This study could help leaders at religious colleges with the recruitment of tenured pastors that are already involved in their field of study. The results could help administrators, recruiters, and course designers be aware of the expectations of incoming non-traditional students as well as apprehensions that they might have prior to enrolling. In addressing these considerations during the recruitment phase, it could produce more enrollments from this demographic of students. Since the participants reported a series of considerations that were common to multiple participants these could be addressed when discussing enrollment of future students. Also, since some of the considerations were unique to certain geographical areas marketing could be tailored to these geographical areas as well. Program and course designers could use the results of this study to tailor programs and courses that meet the needs and expectations of tenured pastors that choose to join the program.

The results of this research also have implications to individuals, who like many of the participants for this study, have wrestled with the idea of returning to college to obtain a graduate degree. To those individuals, these results may answer some questions

or alleviate some fears they may have regarding graduate education while also remaining in their current ministry context. The results suggest that the program was overall beneficial to the participants and that future enrollees could potentially gain something from the program if they follow through on the enrollment process.

Another final recommendation would be for course writers to design a master's level course that could address several of the concerns and themes brought up by the participants of this study. This research can provide insight into what a master's program could look like based upon the research from this study. A course designed specifically for midcareer pastors may be beneficial for helping pastors to be of the greatest benefit to their congregations. Potential subject matter for this hypothetical course could be studying the role of the church in addressing the community's social needs, addressing the church's relationship to tax authorities as well as local state and federal regulations, a module on renewing and maintaining vitality in ministry, and an examination on end-of-tenure ministerial transitions and successions. Courses that contain these subject matters would have served the needs presented by the participants in this study.

Students that end up returning to college and completing a degree finish as better individuals, better pastors, and more involved in helping to shape future ministers. The pastors who enrolled in the MA degree did so for a myriad of various reasons but ultimately, they were looking to be of the greatest benefit to their congregations and to their communities. They were seeking to be attuned at advanced levels of understanding and practice of ministry. They were wanting to ensure that they were equipped for the task of ministry. Regardless of age, demographic or time pastoring the common themes

throughout the research was that these pastors were interested in their personal growth, their churches and in their communities. In every instance, it is the communities in which these pastors operate in that benefit as pastors become better equipped at leading their congregations.

In Chapter 1, it was stated that part of the mission of the church was to promote community involvement in their local communities and beyond (Wilmoth & Bradford, 2010). The core mission of the church is to be involved in social change. Community involvement and recognition became one of the themes that was extrapolated from the research and presented in Chapter 4. Of the three demographics of pastors utilized for this study, the midcareer pastors were the ones that were most interested in their communities. From the research it can be concluded that it takes time to establish oneself as a pastor and once during an established ministry midcareer pastors will turn their attention to making the greatest impact on their communities. It is the younger group of pastors whose focus was mostly inward that were trying to reach that next step of ministry that are poised to make the greatest impact on their communities. To help in the process of establishing the younger pastors it was the end of careers past that presented a desire to not only be involved in their own local churches and communities but to also be involved in developing younger minsters. The results suggest that as long as this cycle continues that advanced education can be involved in the process aiding pastors regardless of whether they are new pastors, midcareer pastors or end-of-career pastors. As educational institutions become more informed about the needs of their students that are already tenured in a pastorate the communities in which these pastors and churches

operate will only benefit and become stronger advocated for social change in their communities.

Conclusion

The responses of the 10 participants during the data collection phase of this study was fascinating to me. The variety of responses and openness of the participants revealed significant considerations that were experienced prior to them enrolling in the graduate ministry degree program at Pentecostal College. This study has provided examples of transformative learning theory at work in the lives of the participants. This investigation into prior considerations before returning to college as a graduate student sheds light on what schools can do to attract these types of non-traditional students. Through this study I see a theory developing on how Pentecostal pastors mature over the course of their pastorate. Overall, the results of this study provide insight into the thoughts and actions of an under-researched group of people and can provide the basis for future study and exploration.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

1. What stands out about your choice at the time you enrolled in the graduate ministry program?

2. What were the key considerations on your mind at the time of applying for admission to the program?

3. What issues did you consider prior to seeking to enroll in the program?

4. What particular reasons led you to apply for the specific program you chose?

5. Can you describe any key moments that stand out to you that led to consider seeking a graduate degree in ministry?

6. What did you anticipate that you might gain personally from enrolling in the program?

7. What did you anticipate that you might gain professionally from enrolling in the program?

8. Were there any expectations that you had for ministerial development prior to enrolling in the program?

9. Did you have any additional expectations for the program to which you applied?

10. What question would you ask someone like yourself if you were conducting this interview?

11. Is there anything that you would like to add to what you have discussed with me?