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Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Public Policy in the African American Pentecostal Church

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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James B. Smith

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Abstract

Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Public Policy in the African American Pentecostal

Church

by

James B. Smith

MPA, University of Baltimore, 2000

BS, Coppin State University, 1997

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Public Administration

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Abstract

Although many U.S. faith-based organizations have become partners to the government, the African American Pentecostal Church (AAPC), which holds spirituality as a means of serving humanity as its theological framework, has remained a silent partner in public policy engagement. With the framework of spiritual intelligence, this qualitative case study addressed the perceptions of African American Pentecostal leaders regarding how the church's theology may have an impact on the public policy engagement of its parishioners. Twelve African American Pentecostal Bishops were interviewed, and data were coded and analyzed to identify themes. Results revealed that participants use their spirituality to connect with public policy issues that relate to their personal experiences. Findings also indicated that the AAPC is not an organized denomination, but rather a conglomeration of factions. Lack of an organized epicenter and lack of training and development of its leaders prevent this church from engaging in the public sphere. Although members embrace their responsibility to care for the needs of others, the church lacks a collective response to community issues. Findings may be used to prepare the next generation of AAPC leaders to unify the church to offer spiritual solutions to public policy issues.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my village—all of the people who have influenced and impacted my life; some of whom have transitioned from labor to reward. The members of my village are too many to name. I carry each of you in my heart, and thank each of you for your consistency and unwavering support. I am because of each of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The U.S. is framed on the principle that each person has uncontested freedoms. Among those privileges is the notion of a complete separation of church and state. The two entities have maintained a degree of autonomy in which each has been guided and governed by its ideologies. However, the two institutions have come to rely on each other to advance their mission and causes. Faith and public policy are two institutions in the U.S. that have worked together for decades to address the public's social, civil, and economic needs. In modern times, faith-based institutions have played a significant role in developing, advancing, and implementing legislation. Recent examples in the U.S. include the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

Literature provides examples of how some religious institutions have used their theological framework to support or oppose legislation. From conservative movements to liberal reformations, some religious organizations have taken an active role in advancing public policy. Those actions of direct engagement are usually framed from an institutional context. Mainstream faith-based organizations tend to galvanize their entire religious system to influence public policy.

Although some faith-based institutions have been on the forefront of public policy engagement, many have taken an indirect approach in the political arena. The African American Pentecostal Church (AAPC) is one religious institution that has remained on the outskirts of the political landscape. Though this church provides for the spiritual direction of millions of people of color who are directly impacted by public issues such

as health care, education, and housing, the influence of the AAPC in public policy has been minuscule (Butler, 2014; Pitt, 2012). The AAPC, like other faith-based institutions, is not required by its church canon or civil law to play a role in the American political system. This reformation, however, holds a theological framework different from its counterparts. The AAPC advocates the notion that individual behavior is derivative of a person's understanding and embracing of spirituality. In other words, the AAPC teaches its parishioners to live their lives according to a personal sense of spirituality, which evolves over time and requires intentionality.

The spiritual principles to which the AAPC subscribes are closely related to the characteristics of spiritual intelligence (SI), a human phenomenon that suggests that individuals possess a deep connection to a higher power that guides their thoughts and influences their behaviors (Albursan et al., 2016; Hyson, 2013; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). This study was designed to explore how the principles of spirituality equate to public policy engagement, if at all. At the epicenter of the AAPC's theology is the notion of care and concern for others. Other faith-based institutions have used their religious convictions to influence public policies, and the AAPC may also have had an impact through indirect means of embracing SI by community volunteerism (i.e., care for the poor).

This chapter addresses how faith-based institutions, using various theological frameworks, have played a role in the American political system. Further, I explain the connection between the principles of spiritual intelligence and the religious context of the

AAPC to establish a conceptual framework for the study. The chapter concludes with a description of how spiritual intelligence can effect change in communities.

Background

Faith and public policy are distinct entities. Faith is the application of spiritual principles to life. Public policies emerge as a result of legislation from all levels of government. The separation of church and state attempts to keep spirituality and government contained in their appropriate silos. Both entities have a common focal point: the welfare of the community (Campbell, 2011; Clemenger, 2003; Grzymala-Busse, 2016). Despite deliberate efforts to mandate that each remain separate from the other, faith and public policy find ways to connect. Former U.S. Presidents have used their influence and power to create opportunities for church and state to partner and advance social and political agendas (Dinham, 2010; Persons, 2011). All levels of government have relied on faith-based institutions to advance their legislative agendas (Tucker-Worgs & Worgs, 2014). Government and the faith community are partners on many levels. The manifestation of how faith-based institutions engage in public policy work varies (Duff and Buckingham, 2015).

Religious systems have embraced public policy initiatives. The literature points to reformations such as conservative evangelical movements, the Catholic Church, and Jewish sects that used their influence to guide the development and implementation of public policies. Several examples provide a context for faith-based community involvement in advocacy and public policy. Dunn (2012) shared that the conservative evangelical Christian movement in Colorado Springs attempted to influence local

legislation around education, medical marijuana, and gay rights. Mihut (2011) added that the church, in some communities, was a major stakeholder in shaping public policies. Recent public issues such as immigration and HIV/AIDS have become societal causes for which the faith-based community has staked a claim (Dyer, 2014; Smyers, 2011).

Like all other Bible-teaching churches, the AAPC ascribes to the foundational instructions of Jesus Christ including salvation, baptism, and communion. Born out of racial inequality and social injustice, this church has a profound empirical understanding of social issues that divide and separate (Butler, 2014; Pinn, 2013). From a theological context, the AAPC also embraces social justice as a critical part of its responsibility to the community but does little to manifest its belief (Nel, 2016). Early church leaders believed that the followers of Christ are endowed with his spirit for personal spiritual development through the evidence of speaking in tongues, a language that believers could not study, but rather was supernaturally given as a manifested sign of personal spirituality. At its inception, the Pentecostal church was fully integrated attracting both White and Black followers. Almost immediately, the divisiveness of race plaguing the country separated the movement, causing African Americans to develop their reformations throughout the country (Samuel, 2011). The AAPC was conceived as a direct result of social inequalities of that period.

The AAPC's theological context holds its believers personally responsible for the care of the community. This church has not taken a leading role in addressing macro level public policy issues because this endeavor is counter to the church's doctrine and theology of personal responsibility (Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013; Ha, 2015; Rousseau,

2014). Members of this church are expected to devote time to their spiritual development that includes a genuine care and concern for members of the community (Randolph, 2011). This concept directly mirrors the ideals of SI, the notion that people's spirituality influences their behaviors and practices (Brice & Hardy, 2015). The review of the existing literature revealed three concepts that establish the role of faith in public policy advocacy: (a) the underlying connection between religion and public policy, (b) faith-based organizations as providers and advocates of the common interest, and (c) public participation in public policy.

As early as the 17th century, African American churches have been engaged with public policy frameworks. The aftermath of the civil rights movement of the 1960s influenced African American church theology (Butler, 2014). The 1970s ushered in a new energy and framework into churches that primarily attracted African Americans. The change transposed moral frameworks in this community as champions of economic empowerment and divided the community resulting in the emergence of several micro factions of the mainstream denominations (Pinn, 2013; Samuels, 2011). A decade later, the African American religious community experienced further separation from mainstream religions as the conservative evangelical Christian movement rose and developed a new political agenda for the country (Watkinson, 2015). Key issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and education began to play out as political ideas fueled by the conservative perspective of the scriptures (Tucker-Worgs and Worgs, 2014). Former Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush hailed from this movement and took full advantage of advancing conservative Christian values through

their presidencies (Dyer, 2014). Consistent with the spiritual theology of the AAPC, the Obama administration's message of hope and change aligned with the principles of SI (Barnes & Nwosu, 2014). Instead of relying on political systems to create policies, individuals began to see their role in shaping and impacting legislation on a personal and practical level (Mainwaring, 2015).

Faith-based institutions and government entities have over time become partners to advance prospective organizational missions (Levin, 2013). The interdependence has been driven by the government's ability to fund public initiatives and the religious community's ability to deliver services. The range of services provided by this partnership includes work in human services, the penal system, and educational enterprises. With the complexity of the needs of the citizenry, the challenge often is the degree to which the faith-based institutions can create and sustain appropriate infrastructures to accommodate the needs (Campbell, 2011). Larger, well-funded religious systems tend to receive government work given their ability to understand complex grants systems, including reporting and economic structures (Grzymala-Busse, 2016). Smaller, urban churches tend to be attracted to societal issues that present the opportunity to build coalitions of support rather than assuming a leading role in managing change (Campbell, 2011).

With the emergence of SI as a conceptual, spiritual framework, individuals are beginning to engage in projects that focus on supporting others' needs. Kelly (2011) explored the concept of public theology, a notion that individual spirituality drives public engagement of societal issues. Clemenger (2003) added to the understanding of religion

in the context of freedom and equality. Individual engagement in the community is connected to people's level of spirituality (Braunstein, 2012). The context of societal issues is placed within the framework of the spiritual and becomes the lens through which people perceive their level of involvement and the degree to which they stay connected to public issues (Clemenger, 2003; Eggers & Macmillan 2013).

Members of the public have a history of involvement in the public policy debate. Green, Barton, and Johns (2012) noted that personal reconciliation of spirituality drives engagement at various levels. Dietrich and List (2013) explained that behavior as the theory of rational choice. People who consider themselves spiritual beings connect to community issues that are consistent with their values, and once that connection occurs, individual expressions of engagement are converted into tangible outcomes (Green et al., 2012; Trouset, Gupta, Jenkins-Smith, Silva, & Herron, 2015; Welch & Clark, 2015). Two factors tend to drive personal involvement with public engagement: cultural belief system and existing level of political activity. Further discussion is provided in Chapter 2 regarding these factors.

The literature provides several examples of the connection between faith-based institutions and public policy engagement. Religious systems and legislative bodies have worked in tandem for years and have managed to meet the complex needs of those in need of specialized services (Grigg, 2017; Keller, 2011; Levin, 2013). Partnerships have been developed and sustained among these groups. An apparent gap in the literature is how spiritual principles taught in churches and other places of worship translate to personal action at the individual level in the public policy arena. Religious institutions

use their theological framework to guide their public policy work (Clemenger, 2003). What remains unclear is the motivation at the individual level. Because doctrine guides institutional-level participation for religious systems in governmental affairs, I explored the extent to which SI informs personal engagement in the teachings and actions of the AAPC. There are complex societal issues that have significant implications for communities around the world. From global terrorism to racism, and from environmental issues to hunger, governments are expected to solve world problems; however, bureaucracies do not have all of the answers (Papouras, 2016; Tenai, 2016; Watkinson, 2015; Welch & Clark, 2015). SI can be a mechanism that offers meaningful solutions to chronic dilemmas.

Problem Statement

Societal issues such as housing, education, drug abuse, mental illness are complex and multidimensional. In the U.S., different levels of government assume the leading role in assessing and addressing public issues. Even with access to public finances, the government cannot adequately tend to the myriad public problems facing communities across this country.

The emergence of partnerships between the public sector and faith-based institutions has helped to alleviate some, but not all, of the burden on government systems to treat social problems (Duff, Battcock, Karam, & Taylor, 2016; Duff & Buckingham, 2015; Grigg, 2017). The relationship among these groups invites innovative thinking for the creation of new policies, involves religious leaders as thought partners on social problems, and engages faith-based institutions as change-agent organizations (Duff

et al., 2016). These sectors continue to work collaboratively at the macro level to build and sustain safe and healthy communities (Eggers & Macmillian, 2013; Lee & Clark, 2013). Researchers have not explained how spirituality at the micro level addresses social problems. In this qualitative case study, I explored how the principles of SI translate into effects and change within a community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how AAPC leaders use SI to impact and change communities. The role of the AAPC is consistent with other faith-based institutions: to provide spiritual guidance and to be a voice of reason in matters that affect the human condition (Butler, 2014; Samuels, 2011; Wenk, 2002). This church's theological framework, however, is different from other religious sects. The AAPC teaches that each person is spiritually endowed to lead a life consistent with Jesus's demonstration of care and concern for others.

Through exploring the application of SI at the micro level with African American Pentecostal faith leaders, I aimed to identify how this denomination effects change in the community through its members' utilization of SI principles and to reveal potential barriers that prevent the AAPC from engaging in a direct role in public policy. Findings from this study may be used to assist in preparing members of the Pentecostal clergy in their position as spiritual leaders by connecting theological frameworks to public policy initiatives to bolster efforts from the AAPC as social change agents.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do leaders within the AAPC perceive that they use the principles of spiritual intelligence as a framework to engage their members in public policy initiatives in their communities?
2. What barriers prohibit leadership within the AAPC from engaging in direct public policy initiatives?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

SI explains individual behavior, and although the church is not a person, it comprises people who collectively become a unit (Kaur, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2013). SI was applied as a means of understanding how individual members of a church utilize principles of spirituality as a means of public policy engagement. Rousseau (2014) defined *spirituality* as the mechanism by which meaning, value, and purpose are derived and by which outcomes, behaviors, and beliefs are formed.

Churches and religious orders define and dictate social constructs for their members. Usually, those norms and behaviors draw upon religious and spiritual principles from the specific reformation. Political engagement, both corporate and personal, is a social activity that has been influenced by religious institutions. Smith (2008) noted that in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, several faith-based entities were invited to provide input into the development of foreign policy about the U.S.'s reaction to acts of terrorism. Churches were called upon by the President to elicit their guidance on elements of the policy that affected the notion of the country's responsibility of being global citizens. Frank (2014) added that religious-social constructs are often used to justify retaliation to acts of national terrorism. The Uniting and

Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA Patriot) Act of 2001 is a legislative example of how religious institutions were called upon to influence public policy. The language inserted in policies surrounding the controversial issue of same-sex marriage also draws from religious constructs to justify certain actions (Daly, 2013). Churches have also played a role in influencing social service public policies. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 reformed social welfare by term-limiting those who were eligible to receive benefits and gave rise to the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, a consortium of churches and religious institutions that received federal grants to serve welfare recipients (Persons, 2011).

The complete separation of church and state is a principle upon which this country prides itself; however, over time, the two entities have relied on each other to advance their needs. Religious institutions are perceived as the social organizations that provide the moral compass in society (Clemenger, 2003; Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013). Although morality and public policies may not always align, the faith community has used its voice to be the consciousness of equality and bring to light issues that divide rather than unify (Gaskins et al., 2013; Martin, 2014).

One of the hallmarks of the church is to provide a spiritual context to a person's life. A defining framework helps the individual to perceive and experience life through a spiritual lens (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spirituality is not defined by religious rules and practices, but rather by a person's spiritual intelligence, an internal moral compass that regulates behaviors and choices (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is the

personal, intrinsic indicator shaping a person's understanding of right and wrong and can be used to explain personal engagement of behaviors and norms (Flores, Green, Duncan, & Carmody-Bubb, 2013; Nita, 2014). In the current study, the theory of spiritual intelligence was applied as a means of understanding why individual members of a church choose to connect principles of spirituality to public policy engagement. Rousseau (2014) defined spirituality as the mechanism by which meaning, value, and purpose are derived and by which outcomes, behaviors, and beliefs are formed.

SI explains individual behavior, not group norms (Kaur et al., 2013). Dunn (2012) pointed out that a group of conservative Christians used principles of their faith to influence public policies in education, medical marijuana, and gay rights. A group of nurses depends on spiritual intelligence as it provides care to the critically ill (Kaur et al., 2013). Others have connected their religious convictions to workplace values and higher education (Flores et al., 2013; Gliebe, 2012). Spiritual intelligence was used to explain African American Pentecostal Church leaders' perceptions of their role in public policy formation.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative methodology was applied in this study. Qualitative methodology is used when an investigator seeks to explore the phenomenon of human behavior as a means of explaining rather than predicting (Creswell, 2013). There are various ways in which qualitative research can be conducted, and the design should be selected based on the nature of the research question (Creswell, 2013). I used the case study design to answer the research questions. A case study allows the researcher to study a particular

unit of analysis as a means of fully understanding aspects of the group's characteristics, including language, norms, and meaning of specific cultural elements (Creswell, 2013). Using a case study model, I approached this study with the objective of understanding how African American Pentecostal church leaders connect, if at all, the principles of SI to community change.

The research question drives the selection of the study design and its methodology (Yin, 2014). The methodology is a function of the research question (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding the meaning of experiences and is used to describe and discover as opposed to predict and test (O'Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008; Patton, 2015).

Definitions

Several terms were used in this work, and each is listed and defined in this section.

African American Pentecostal Church: A religious institution that holds Pentecostalism as its primary theology and historically has attracted African Americans as members of its system (Pitt, 2012).

Pentecostalism: A belief in salvation through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and a further understanding and embrace of the presence of God's Spirit in full operation through the life of each believer of the faith (Duffield & Cleave, 2008). Pentecostalism holds that each believer has been given the gift of God's Spirit as a spiritual guide, comforter, and teacher to assist maneuvering through life's journey.

Public policy engagement: A notion that governments, communities, and members of the citizenry can work together to solve complex issues and achieve meaningful change (Newman, 2011). Public policy engagement includes initiatives at all levels of government by which individuals are directly involved and have a vested interest (Duff & Buckingham, 2015).

Religion: An institution that creates and defines doctrine, or rules and laws by which members of a sect frame their personal moral and ethical conduct (Rousseau, 2014).

Spiritual intelligence: An innate, divine quality that each person possesses that informs and guides their behavior and engagement toward others (Hyson, 2013). The phenomenon is often connected to research on intelligence quotient and emotional intelligence and, in some cases, the three are perceived as one attribute.

Spirituality: The framework by which individuals entreat others, engage human connections, and understand self-awareness in the context of others (Albursan et al., 2016). Whereas religion is driven by church polity and organizational structure, spirituality is immersed in personal relationships between a person and a supreme entity.

Assumptions

I used a qualitative approach, which allowed me to explore a phenomenon to understand or seek how best to change a particular behavior (see Creswell, 2013). Each research framework includes philosophical assumptions that ground a study in a context of how reality is defined (Sutton, 1993). Philosophical assumptions drive how a researcher derives conclusions and guide how realities are discovered and explained

(Blair, 2015; Gelo, Braakmann, & Gerhard Benetka, 2008). I applied the relativist approach and assumed that multiple realities exist and that truths emerge from different experiences. There is no one way in which the application of the principles of SI should be considered as the absolute reality. The various teachings of SI lend themselves to multiple outcomes, which is consistent with the relativist approach to research.

The qualitative approach has three criteria to explain these assumptions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology. These three compose a constructivist frame in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Goduka, 2012). Ontology is the element that focuses on identifying patterns through emergence rather than testing an assumption through a controlled environment (Gelo, Braakmann, & Gerhard Benetka, 2008). Through this lens, the researcher can explore the behavior of a group and make meaning of those findings (Creswell, 2013). The AAPC may have different methods of applying SI as a means of public policy engagement. The ontological approach allowed me to follow the patterns and describe the findings from a learning perspective rather than a testing stance.

Epistemology is the aspect of a study that frames how subjects construct their realities (Gelo et al., 2008). This approach allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon from the subjects' perspective. A significant part of epistemology is the researcher seeking an internal perception of behavior to understand how the knowledge frames from and at multiple levels (Sutton, 1993). I assumed there would be different perspectives on how the principles of SI should be taught and applied in the AAPC. This lens permitted me to see each of those dimensions to understand better how SI emerges within this group.

The third dimension that was applied to this research study is axiology, which focuses on the role that values play in shaping how research is influenced (Goduka, 2012). One of the fundamental issues in axiology is whether the researcher seeks to understand behavior or to comprehend how to change the pattern. In my study, I proposed to do both. Because the AAPC places a value on serving humanity (as evident in its biblical teachings), axiology was used to reveal factors that have an impact on the church's understanding of SI as an institution.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a qualitative research project is defined as the boundaries of the study outlining what elements are included and which are not (Simon & Goes, 2013). I explored the application of SI to a segment of the Pentecostal faith that holds the tenets of the theory as the framework of its doctrine and practice. The literature indicated that SI impacts a person's behavior and how that behavior influences the human condition. Delimitations are factors that frame the parameters of the study (Simon, 2011). A delimitation of this study was its focus on one religious group located in the U.S.. The results can only be applied to this group and not applied to other Pentecostal reformations. The research findings revealed the practical applications of SI within the context of the AAPC. In theory, spirituality is a concept that all religious institutions inculcate; however, the nature of AAPC religious doctrine and practice distinguishes this church from other spiritual organizations.

Limitations

The AAPC was the focus of this study. This church is only one religious group within the Pentecostal faith. Two characteristics of this group, race and geographic location, are elements that may influence how the group perceives its connection to SI principles. These factors were beyond my control and may have affected participants' answers to the interview questions. That which is beyond the purview of a researcher is considered a limitation in a study (Simon & Goes, 2013). There are practitioners of this faith from various races and ethnicities and who reside in different geographic locations. This study was conducted in the context of the African American perspective of the faith, and findings were limited to this segment of faith. The findings may be used to understand the impact of SI within a particular religious community. I considered race and place when exploring the ways in which members of the faith apply SI. I believed it may have been difficult for research participants to solely answer the questions as believers of the faith who happen to be of the African American persuasion, rather than focus their answers from a theological perspective. As such, the findings were limited by race and geography.

To address some of the concerns about race and location, I recruited AAPC leaders from all parts of the country. Although race is an element over which I had no control, I attempted to include participants who live in different locations to safeguard against the influence of geographic location. Pentecostalism is practiced throughout the world and is affected by the community in which it is placed. There was an intentional

selection of leaders who were dispersed throughout the country to address the limitation of geography.

As an AAPC bishop, I was aware of biases I brought to this study. Biases are personal, preconceived thoughts that influence a researcher's design, questions, and interpretation of data (Creswell, 2013). The concept of SI is a framework I use to teach others how to live their lives. With that personal recognition, I remained aware of how my convictions may have influenced participants' responses to the interview questions. To mitigate this bias, I tested the interview questions with AAPC leaders who were not included in the study. I asked these leaders to examine the language of the questions, clarify the intent of the inquiry, and identify potential bias built into the interview questions. Feedback from leaders was used to modify interview questions to eliminate potential bias.

Significance

For decades, government and religious systems have attempted to work together to solve public problems. From poverty to war to homelessness, both systems have combined their efforts to change social outcomes. This study offered another perspective through the use of SI to frame a spiritual connection to the human condition. By studying SI's potential impact within this church, I explored the possibility of understanding ways in which individuals can use their spirituality to effect social change in the world. As political systems change and world becomes more global, it is essential that people see themselves as being connected rather than being different and apart from each other (Anbugeetha, 2015). SI is a concept that can ground a new reality of interaction in the

human system and perhaps introduce a different level of thinking to develop new solutions to old paradigms (Campbell, 2011; Cones, 2016; Duff et al., 2016). Spirituality can be a power tool that can help bring about positive social changes in communities.

The study of SI is not new; however, exploring it as a way of leveraging public policy engagement was warranted. Educational systems help children to unveil their intelligence (Flores, Green, Duncan, & Carmody-Bubb, 2013). Family structures teach children to harness their emotional intelligence. Religious institutions teach from a theological framework. SI is different than religion (Jack, Friedman, Boyatzis, & Taylor, 2016). If more individuals are exposed to SI and its potential, it may be used to engage people in many different ways including at the human, group, and institutional/systems levels. Spirituality (as opposed to religion) can influence and impact complex social problems (Grzymala-Buse, 2016). SI is designed to expose individuals to a deeper consciousness of the human condition and the role each person can play in creating paradigm shifts. This study was conducted to understand the extent to which SI is being used and how further exposure to the subject matter can broaden its impact in the world.

Summary

SI is a concept that provides an explanation of spirituality and its impact on a person's actions and behavior. The principles of SI do not constitute a religion, but rather offer a construct of how theology can be used to shape an individual's sense of self in relation to others. Building on the conceptual work of Zohar and Marshall (2000), I explored how the AAPC applies its understanding of spirituality to engage in public policy initiatives. Using a qualitative case study approach, I used the AAPC as the unit of

analysis to determine how, if at all, SI is used as a means of connecting theology to public policy. Given the difficult and complex social problems in the world, spirituality may be a means of addressing the social ills at the human, group, and institutional/systems levels. The following chapter provides an in-depth explanation of SI and its connection to the AAPC and also includes a detailed literature review of the relationship between religious institutions and levels of governments. Chapter 2 outlines the conceptual framework of SI and presents a review of existing literature using three themes: the connections of religious institutions to public policy engagement, faith-based institutions as service providers and policy advocates, and public participation in policy debates.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The U.S. political system is structured as a representative form of government. The executive and legislative branches of the system are accountable to the citizens who elect members to represent their concerns and needs at all levels of government. Those who are elected, in theory, advocate for those whom they were elected to serve. The American political system is framed to address a myriad of public needs including housing, education, and defense. To maximize the public's resources and trust, the government engages partners to meet the demanding needs of the citizenry. Faith-based institutions are among the list of partners and have become a significant entity to assist the government in effecting change (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013; Campbell, 2011; Daly, 2013). Although these types of partnerships support all levels of governments, I explored the role that faith-based institutions play in supporting the public sector to meet its objectives of safeguarding basic human needs. Various initiatives executed by faith-based institutions demonstrate a connection between faith and public policy (Barnes & Nwosu, 2014; Borner, 2013; Keller, 2011). Spiritual intelligence (SI) can be considered a conduit that also connects these two elements (Liechty, 2013; Watkinson, 2015).

Anbugeetha (2015) defined SI as “the science of human energy management that clarifies and guides the structure of awareness” (p. 25). The concept of SI is rooted in the understanding that people's level of spirituality drives their self-awareness and impact on others (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). SI constructs depend on feelings rather than logic and rationality. The conscious state of self-expansion is driven by three elements: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, and transcendental awareness (King &

DeCicco, 2009). SI is designed to bring a person into a deeper sense of inner consciousness, which shifts the person's thinking and actions to be driven to meet others' needs (Yadav & Punia, 2016). Amram (2007) purported that SI stimulates the search for the sacred as a means of guiding a person's life path. The ultimate resolve of SI is to have an individual become one with their spirituality, which Fry (2008) contended is a lifelong process.

SI has become a focal point across many sectors as a means of connecting emotional intelligence to spirituality. Fry (2008) asserted that three levels of being drives a person's development: the rational/logical, the emotional, and the spiritual. Mastery of these areas leads to a life of love and service to others. The awareness of others' needs is a hallmark of embracing SI (Yadav & Punia, 2016). The significance of SI begins to emerge when the needs of others take precedence over a personal desire. Caring for another outside of a familial or personal relationship in a meaningful and profound sense demonstrates how SI works to support and grow human systems (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2015). SI may be best observed when everyday experiences are sanctified, spiritual principles are used to solve both simple and complex problems, and moral behaviors such as forgiveness, empathy, and gratitude become social norms (Shabnam & Tung, 2013).

SI shapes a person's perception of self and develops a sense of responsibility to act on concern for others (King, Mara, & DeCicco, 2012). At the epicenter of SI is the premise that each person has a moral responsibility to care for and support their fellow man in tangible ways (Singh & Sinha, 2013). The spirit teaches a person the meaning of

humanity through the personal connection (Akhtar, bin Arshad, Mahmood, & Ahmed, 2015). SI connects spirituality to being sensitive to the fostering the quality of life for both self and others (Singh & Sinha, 2013). Concepts such as belongingness, cohesiveness, and helping are derivatives of spirituality, elements that contribute to building and shaping communities and human systems (Kalyanasundaram & Balasubramanian, 2014; King et al., 2012; Singh, Swarup, & Singh, 2015).

I explored how the principles of SI equate to direct public policy engagement as a result of the theological teachings of the African American Pentecostal Church (AAPC). Theorists connect SI to both intellectual and emotional intelligence (Flores et al., 2013). The AAPC is theologically framed on a doctrine aligned with SI. The AAPC holds that its believers are endowed with the spirit of God as a means of supernaturally empowering them to replicate the life of Jesus Christ on the earth. This church explicitly embraces that each person is expected to experience life through the lens and context of SI (Warrington, 2011).

Communities across the U.S. have come to rely on faith-based institutions to speak on behalf of those who have no voice yet have challenging social needs (Grzymala-Busse, 2016). Many denominations including Catholicism, reformed movements, and evangelical Christians have used their spiritual prowess to advocate for social change through public policy engagement (Dyer, 2014; Mihut, 2011; Scheitle & Hahn, 2011; Schreiber, 2011). Several examples provide a context for faith-based community involvement in advocacy and public policy. Dunn (2011) shared that the conservative evangelical Christian movement in Colorado Springs attempted to influence local

legislation around education, medical marijuana, and gay rights. Mihut (2011) added that the universal church, specifically the conservative evangelicals, is a major stakeholder in shaping public policies. Faith-based institutions have engaged, both in supporting and opposing roles, in public issues such as immigration and HIV/AIDS (Dyer, 2014; Smyers, 2011).

Although some reformations have directly engaged in public policy work, the AAPC does not have a history of legislative work. Instead, it has used an indirect approach to influence the political system; there is a possibility that this could be SI. SI is a concept that suggests individuals are taught to follow their internal moral compass as a means of personal engagement with themselves and others (Hussain, 2012; Zohar, 2000). SI holds that through actions individuals possess the ability to effect change in the community, which is both broadly and unintentionally defined.

The 12 principles of SI theory are as follows: self-awareness, spontaneity, being vision and value led, holism, compassion, celebration of diversity, field independence, humility, tendency to ask fundamental *why* questions, ability to reframe, positive use of adversity, and sense of vocation (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Table 1 provides a brief description of each element. These factors create a sense of spiritual balance whereby the individual is not regulated by religious institutions but rather by a personal relationship with an internal spiritual force. Several recent works provide a context for how SI has been used by individuals to impact not only the political system but also vital sectors including health care, education, and nonprofit engagement (Harrison, Murray, & Cornforth, 2016; Kaur et al., 2013; Seitz, 2014). SI also has been applied as a means of

addressing social justice issues, social work systems, and for-profit enterprises (Anwar & Osman-Gani, 2016; Bynum, 2016; Malik & Tariq, 2016; Todd, 2012). The findings of the literature review reveal SI is used in a myriad of ways to influence and inform systems change.

Table 1

Descriptions of SI Principles

SI principle	Description
Self-awareness	Having a personal understanding of one's values and its impact on self-motivation
Spontaneity	Being aware of the present and able to respond and adjust accordingly
Being vision- and value led	Engaging from and living by consistent principles
Holism	Making connections between and among relationships and personal systems in order to foster a sense of belonging and purpose
Compassion	Possessing the ability to be consistently empathetic
Celebration of diversity	Appreciating the differences from others and using those qualities to personally grow and develop
Field independence	Being driven and led by personal convictions in one's actions
Humility	Seeing oneself as a member of larger team who contributes to the success of the group
Tendency to ask fundamental "Why?" questions	Questioning life to gain a better understanding
Ability to reframe	Separating from problems to perceiving an issue from a macro level
Positive use of adversity	Using setbacks and pain as a means of learning and growing
Sense of vocation	Feeling the need to places others needs before one's self

Note. From Amram, 2007; Anwar & Osman-Gani, 2016; Hussain, 2015; King et al., 2012; Wigglesworth, 2014; Zohar & Marshall, 2000.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of AAPC leaders regarding the use of SI to impact and change communities. The role of the AAPC is consistent with other faith-based institutions: to provide spiritual guidance and to be a voice of reason in matters that affect the human condition (Butler, 2014; Samuels, 2011; Wenk, 2002). This chapter presents a theoretical framework of SI and findings from the literature that provide an understanding of how the concept has been applied in research. Additionally, this chapter includes three themes that emerged from the literature and its connection to SI: relationship of religion to public policy, faith-based institutions as providers and advocates, and public participation in policy debates.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was supported by Walden University's online library database system. The search began with a multidisciplinary approach using the Academic Search Complete and the ProQuest Central search portals. Additional inquiries were conducted through the university's dissertation search engine. All searches were time bound to works peer reviewed between January 2007 and September 2019.

Several combinations of search terms were applied. Initially, each of the following terms was searched alone: *spiritual intelligence*, *public policy*, *community engagement*, *community*, *public affairs*, *spiritual quotient*, *moral concern*, *theological actions*, and *public theology engagement*. In subsequent inquiries I combined and cross-referenced the terms as a means of determining the connections between these words in the literature. The ProQuest Central database yielded 10,376 articles, with 3,065 published in the last 3 years. The Academic Search Complete search yielded 2,498 pieces

of writing. The inquiry for recent dissertations revealed 808 recent works by Walden University graduates; however, very few manuscripts were written on spiritual intelligence.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Propositions

SI is the conceptual framework in which this research was grounded. A relatively new phenomenon, SI takes its context from previous works of intelligence, including intellectual and emotional structures, which suggests that each person is hard wired with internal psychodynamics that determines and regulates one's behaviors (Nita, 2014; Wigglesworth, 2014; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Theories of human intelligence are deeply rooted in the notion that human beings are multi-dimensional and have many innate networks for processing the complexities of life (Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1995). The concept of spiritual intelligence was applied as a means of understanding how individual members of a church utilize principles of spirituality as a means of public policy engagement.

Zohar and Marshall's (2000) theory purports that SI, as other intelligences, is innate and when understood and revealed to an individual, can shape the behavior of engagement. The achievement and application of SI in one's life requires self-awareness, personal growth, and the application of self (Wigglesworth, 2014; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). SI cannot be invoked unless a person is fully aware of their sense of spirituality and how it is developed. Spirituality is not defined by morals, rules, and practices, but rather by one's spiritual intelligence—an internal moral compass that regulates behaviors

and choices (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is the personal, intrinsic indicator shaping one's understanding of "right" versus "wrong" and can be used to explain personal engagement of behaviors and norms (Flores et al., 2013; Nita, 2012).

The study of SI is grounded in a clear distinction between religion and spirituality. Rousseau (2014) defined spirituality as the mechanism by which meaning, value, and purpose are derived and, as such, outcomes, behaviors, and beliefs are formed. Churches and religious orders by design define and dictate social constructs for their members. Usually, those norms and practices draw upon religious and spiritual principles from a specific reformation. Religion plays a prominent role in shaping how individuals personally respond to various aspects of life (Holt, Schukz, Williams, Clark, Wang, & Southward, 2012). In the absence of SI intuition, one's religious conviction may be considered as the barometer by which engagement occurs.

The principles of SI seek to focus on the vertical relationship between a person and God rather than a relationship among people and a religious system (Flores et al., 2013). In a religious order, behaviors are dictated by the system, and followers are not expected to create their rules of engagement with outside networks, i.e., politics, education, environment, etc. Hussain (2014) suggests that two beliefs ground the concept of spiritual intelligence – a God-consciousness and a sincere motivation to serve and to love God. From these two ideas, Hussain (2014) offers that a person begins the seven-step journey toward actualizing SI. Spirituality is a quest for understanding the use of self in complex systems and the sense of responsibility that "self" has to move systems forward (Liechty, 2013; Todd & Rufa, 2013).

As an example, political engagement, both corporately and personally, is a social construct that has been influenced by religious institutions. Religious institutions are perceived as the social organizations that provide the moral compass in society (Clemenger, 2003; Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013). While morality and public policies may clash and not directly align, the faith community has used its voice to be the consciousness of equality and bring to light those issues that divide rather than unify (Martin, 2015; Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013). The complete separation of Church and State is a principle upon which this country prides itself, however, over time, the two entities have relied on each other to advance its specific needs.

Spiritual intelligence explains individual behavior, and while the “Church” is not a person, it is comprised of people that collectively become a unit (Kaur, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2013). Dunn (2011) pointed out that a group of conservative Christians used principles of their faith to influence public policies in education, medical marijuana, and gay rights. A group of nurses depended upon spiritual intelligence as it provides care to critically ill (Kaur, Sambasivan, & Kumar, 2013). Others have connected their religious convictions to workplace values and higher education (Flores et al., 2013; Gliebe, 2012). Grzymala-Busse (2016) conducted a quantitative study to examine how churches across the world used their influence to impact policies on education, abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem-cell technology. Her work concluded that churches were less effective in working in religious coalitions (as institutions) to influence public policy and tended to realize progression when individuals become community change agents using morality as a driving, motivational factor to effectuate change (Grzymala-Busse, 2016).

As a repository of resources, the network of churches worked to engage a myriad of partners to meet the challenging needs of low-income families, which positions the system to have a stronger collective voice in advocacy (Dinham, 2010). The learned lessons and challenges shared between and among the group serve as data and antidotal information to formulate public policy.

Previous Applications of the Theory

The application of SI to frame research studies is not uncommon, and it has been used to develop both quantitative and qualitative studies. Liechty's (2011) work connected spirituality and social work and explored how the field used principles of SI to train clinicians to manage end-of-life cases. SI concepts are shared with practitioners as a means of strengthening their engagement with clients. Practitioners were taught use of self-concepts in an effort to foster empathy when managing end of life care for elderly clients. Such practices also manifest in the religious community. Religious institutions invoke SI to distinguish principles of religion from spirituality to demonstrate the need to connect the institutional mission to social justice causes and issues (Todd & Rufa, 2013). Efforts continue to occur in the faith community to break from its traditional religious framework and incite principles of SI to connect the church to the needs of the community (Dunn, 2012).

In addition to social work and religion, the field of education also has applied SI to research frameworks. Some institutions of higher education have begun to revamp curriculum to include an emphasis on SI principles (Gliebe, 2012; Kaur et al., 2013; Seitz, 2014). Specifically, some nursing and social work programs link academic courses

to spiritual principles to prepare better and train their students to confront the realities of the profession. The SI application is also being used in the middle- and high-school levels; teaching youth and adolescents the tenets of spirituality and its potential impact on their lives (Albursan et al., 2016; Bynum, 2016).

SI also has begun to resonate with for-profit enterprises and entities. Yadav, Kohli, and Kumar (2016) studied the impact of SI in ethics and negotiating when engaging in business decision-making. Malik and Tariq (2016) concluded that applying SI principles in the workplace improves the quality of work and the increases the productivity among business teams. The application of SI and its impact are recognized as tools that have a positive impact in environments where people work as teams (Anwar, 2016; Harrison, 2016).

Rationale for the Choice of Theory

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of AAPC leaders use of SI to impact and change their communities. The conceptual framing of SI is based on the use of self (Flores et al., 2013). One of the guiding and foundational tenets of SI is its attempt to explain personal behavior and not a group dynamic. While this study used the AAPC as a case study as the unit of analysis, the individual behavior was important to understand and measure. Similar applications of SI have been used when studying individuals within a group (Bhar, 2016). SI has been used to explain the association between behavioral patterns to moral concerns and issues (Jack et al., 2016), which also is an important aspect of this study. The application of SI established the context of how

parishioners formulate and convert religious teachings into practical actions within their communities (Papouras, 2016).

Further, the choice of SI as a conceptual framework helped to ground this work in connecting this church's theology to its service to the community (Nel, 2016). The AAPC, just as other religious reformations, holds itself accountable to do work that impacts the community (Dinham, 2010). Absent of coordinated church-wide efforts as examples of that work, the engagement of parishioners at the micro-levels becomes critical to understand how SI provides a context for comprehending the church's theology around service to the community in both a conceptual and practical sense.

Relationship of Theory to Research Topic

The aim of this work was to understand personal behavior that is the direct result of biblical teachings and how those lessons convert to practical application in the community. SI is associated with self-awareness, empathy, and social intelligence – all factors that affect behavior (Gliebe, 2012). SI can be described as the intersection of religion and spirituality and based on influences such as culture and understanding of self, the application of the framework will provide a context for explaining personal engagement in the community or the lack thereof (Nita, 2014). Faith-based institutions hold the responsibility of strengthening communities and how that work occurs can be understood through the lens of spirituality (Dinham, 2010; Schaffalitzky de Muckadell, 2014).

Members of the AAPC are Christians, and they take their model of human behavior from the Scriptures. SI is grounded in a theological framing that expects

followers of Christ to be concerned about their “neighbors” (Papouras, 2016). Spiritual capital in the African-American community has manifested in many ways throughout its existence including the civil rights era and more recently social justice issues (Holt et al., 2012; Todd, 2012). The manner in which that concern manifest is at the core of this study and, the application of SI connected theory and practice.

Literature Review

Three major themes emerged from the literature search – faith and public policy, faith-based institutions as advocates, and the public participation in public policy debates. These themes help to frame a deeper understanding of the traditional stance which the “Church” and its universal members have taken in formulating, executing, and changing public policy. Using its moral and religious compasses, religious institutions and those who prescribe to its teaching have invoked the tenets of faith to engage in social justice and human rights issues.

Faith and Public Policy

The sense of duty to a community has been a thread that has run through many religious institutions for years. Faith-based institutions have historically exemplified a passion for the downtrodden, the poor, and the destitute (Holt et al., 2012). Religious institutions have a history of advocating and providing for those who have little or no means to speak for themselves. Specifically, in the African-American community, the emergence of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was framed in response to the social injustices surrounding a deep racial and economic divide. Richard Allen, a pioneering minister of the 1780s, founded Beth-El African American Methodist Church

to address the spiritual economic, and educational needs of freed blacks through a religious framework (Brice & Hardy, 2015). One of its by-products was the Efland Home for Girls, which sought to “save Negro womanhood and to surround girls with the spirit of Jesus whose memorable words were ‘Go in peace and sin no more.’ (Brice & Hardy, 2015, p. 275)”. The African Methodist Episcopal Reformation remains a presence in the community today as one of the pillars of the African-American community.

African-American churches have been engaged with public policy frameworks from the dark days of slavery through the Civil Rights era and beyond. Butler (2014) writes that the 1970s marked a transitional period for African American Christian theology, as the central message shifted into two areas – (social justice and individual morality) and (gospel prosperity). The African-American church moved beyond a focus on racism and began teaching concepts of economic empowerment. Many, however, saw that change as abandonment from the core values of the faith, which prior was the only voice for societal issues (Barnes & Nwosu, 2014). The change in theology bifurcated the community resulting in the emergence of several factions of the mainstream denominations. Those institutions have not stood alone as other faiths including Catholicism, Judaism, and Orthodoxy reformations too have fought for social justice issues (Dinham, 2010; Grzymala-Busse, 2016; Papouras, 2016).

As the 1970s introduced economic theology to the African-American community, the 1980s galvanized the conservative evangelical Christian movement giving rise to a new political agenda for the country. The U.S. has always maintained respect for the separation of church and state, where people are free to observe and practice any religion

of their choice. The conservative evangelical Christian movement introduced a new concept to faith-based institutions. The idea of Christian religious principles became the platform by which candidates were selected to run for office and were expected to frame Christian political agendas at every level of government (Minhut, 2011). Key issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and education began to play out as political ideas fueled by the conservative perspective of the scriptures. Former Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush hailed from this movement and took full advantage of advancing conservative Christian values through their presidencies—well into the 1990s and early 2000s (Dyer, 2014).

The Obama era, which began in 2008, ushered in a new mindset of faith and politics. The change in presidential leadership engaged the citizenry with a different culture. Messages of hope and change challenged people to take a personal interest in the success of the country and not to rely upon a system to bear the full weight of the responsibility (Barnes & Nwosu, 2014). The conservative (religious-right) values that shaped American politics in the early 2000s no longer guided the highest level of the country's government, and, as such, the nation experienced an awakening of self that re-engaged people on a personal level (Mainwaring, 2015). Opposed to solely relying on systems to change policy, individuals began to see their role in shaping and impacting legislation. The sense of self in context to changing systems further developed under the Obama presidential administration and that shift in behavior is directly aligned with the principles of SI (Mainwaring, 2015).

Faith-Based Institutions as Advocates

Faith-based institutions have become partners to the government over time. The two have learned to rely on each other to advance their missions (Levin, 2013). The government provides the financial resources to care for the public's needs, and religious organizations implement programs to meet the objective of building and sustaining communities. That work can include supporting the poor, assisting recovering addicts, connecting with prison populations, and working with educational systems. The challenge of the partnership sometimes is the lack of appropriate infrastructures that faith-based institutions struggle to provide (Campbell, 2011). The complicated work of managing a government contract can be a deterrent for some religious entities and serves as a barrier to the potential partnership. The administrative oversight of grants can present significant challenges, i.e., technology, financial, human resource systems, to faith-based institutions, especially the smaller to mid-size congregations. The amount of time and effort required to meet all of the mandates for funding can be complicated for churches that are not structured to accommodate such funding. Usually, the larger, well-funded religious systems tend to receive government work given their ability to understand complex grants systems – both its reporting and economic structures (Grzymala-Busse, 2016). Smaller churches tend to coalesce around societal issues and build coalitions as one unified voice (Campbell, 2011).

An individual's faith can be a catalyst and impetus to support or refute community issues. The global music icon and a founder of U2, an Irish rock band, Bono, used his faith to advocate and appeal to Christian conservatives to rally for government

support to address the ills of HIV/AIDS in Africa (Dyer, 2014). The emergence of individuals as the champion of causes is not uncommon. Kelly (2011) explored the concept of public theology—a theory that suggests that religion does not influence private citizens’ public engagement, but rather their individual sense of spirituality and a term that defines secular work supported by spiritual principles. Believers in Christ also use their faith to defend a personal stance on issues of abortion, social welfare, homosexuality, and the environment (Watkinson, 2015). The pendulum moves in both directions on matters of faith and advocacy. While some use faith to advocate for others, another groups invoke religious beliefs as a justification of dismantling government support. Montgomery (2017) wrote that under the current presidential administration, conservative evangelical Christians, who believe they have an ally in the President, are attempting to undo federal policies (abortion, civil rights, and public education) that they believe are in direct contradiction with their Christian values.

Clemenger (2003) provided a framework of religion in the context of freedom and equality. Using three religious reformations (Anabaptist, Catholic, and Reformed), Clemenger’s work examined the role of religion as a guiding voice to inform the democratic principles of freedom and equality. Among these groups of faith-based institutions, there is a consensus that social issues are connected religious ideologies; however, the manner in which each sect embraces implementation of social principles differs (Clemenger, 2003). Including his work provides a context that explores the government/faith-based organization relationship through the lens of various theologies.

Social justice and health issues are among the key public policy areas for which a myriad of churches, including the African-American religious orders, have become acquainted. Health concerns are not isolated to the African-American community; however, people of color do suffer in significant numbers compared to other ethnicities (Levin, 2013). The recent debates around healthcare have stimulated further engagement from people of color. Those discussions have given rise to other important topics such as mass incarceration of young Black males and the church's role in crafting effective strategies to confront community issues (Moore et al., 2015). Many churches in the African-American community grapple with their voice in conversations about those whom they serve. The public policy engagement role of the African-American church is unclear. In political settings where plausible solutions to address social ills affecting the African-American community are structured, more often than not, the African-American church is not a voice invited to participate in the development of policies affecting the Black community (Barnes & Nwosu, 2014). Despite the fragmented and unclear role of the African-American church, many religious entities continue doing what it understands its function to be to the community – a beacon of spiritual help in a chaotic world (Wenk, 2002).

Faith-based institutions connect to issues for which the institutions align from a theological perspective. Religious orders tend to advocate for issues directly aligned with their faith and values. The value system of a religion impacts its area of advocacy and level of engagement in the public policy network (Braunstein, 2012). The teachings from religious sects provide a humanistic context to social concerns. During 2017, immigration

was a critical issue at the epicenter of many political debates. Christians who support the notion of liberal immigration policies use scriptures that teach its believers to treat strangers with care and concern as their moral responsibility (Danner, 2013). Those who reject the concept of immigration also use the scriptures to support their position.

Mandates of nation-state defense and protection also are concepts taught in the Christian faith, for which the counter-argument of immigration is formed (Scheitle, 2015; Smyers, 2011). The gamut of social issues for which faith-based institutions advocate range from healthcare to the environment and from mental health to poverty (Borner, 2013; Judd, 2013; Levin, 2013; Murthy, 2015). These institutions connect their theology to issues that are paramount to their mission and cause.

Public Participation in Public Policy Debates

Faith-based institutions, in general, have invested time and energy into public policy development. Beyond the work of religious reformations, individuals from all walks of life have also engaged in the policy process. Whether from a personal motivation perspective or as an offspring of their faith, ordinary citizens share a history of involvement in the public policy debate. Green et al. (2012) argued that individual commitment to the participating in governmental initiatives is connected to a person's need to reconcile their values to community opportunities. Those values shape one's culture, experience, and in some cases, religious teachings (Worthington, 2013). As one develops and identifies with causes consistent with their values, it is possible that a person may act upon those convictions and explore opportunities to express those philosophies through the lens of public policy initiatives and activities.

Dietrich and List (2013) explained that the theory of rational choice informs and guides a person's thought process in terms personal preferences juxtaposed against motivation to change. The sense of obligation to participate in public policy initiatives fuels a personal connection to a cause. People connect to community issues that are consistent with their values. Once that correlation occurs, individual expressions of engagement are converted into tangible outcomes (Green et al., 2012; Trouset et al., 2015; Welch & Clark, 2015). Spiritual teachings help parishioners to align their personal convictions to causes that reconcile their religious interests (Martin, 2014).

The universal church seeks to call people into spiritual accountability for their moral actions (Clemenger, 2003). The principles of most religious orders teach their believers to have a grave concern for humanity. Several examples exist of individual participation in public policy initiatives that were spawned from an understanding of community needs through the lens of spirituality and religion. Trouset et al. (2015) studied the public response to the placement of a nuclear facility in their community. Applying their spiritual and cultural understanding of the environment, U.S. citizens became active in shaping policies that affected and impacted their community around the placement of a nuclear facility. Other research reveals that individuals have connected to a wide range of policies to shape and inform the development and execution of strategies. Such areas include higher education arts, participatory community budgeting, public transportation planning, and eliminating federal spending (Keeney, 2013; Lerner, 2011; McAndrews & Marcus, 2015; Shapiro & Murphy, 2013). People throughout the U.S. are connecting their faith to public policy initiatives.

Two factors seem to determine one's personal involvement with public engagement – one's cultural belief system and one's existing level of political activity. Individual immersion in public policy initiatives is usually framed around key elements – decision making; representation; participation; opportunity to integrate views; information; transparency and “balance” of a process; early involvement; and structure (Stephens & Berner, 2011). The 2016 shift in presidential political power has galvanized a large segment of the American populous to engage in the public policy process. The changes in the U.S. political landscape and the public's response to those dynamics will serve as a learning opportunity for scholars to study this phenomenon.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review is a core section of a dissertation study and serves as the foundational framework for the research. SI is the principle concept that framed this study. The idea of SI is based on a psychodynamic perspective that each person has an innate ability to engage their lives from a spiritual context (Anbugeetha, 2015). Those who subscribe to the tenets of SI engage in community and public affairs matters through a myriad of strategies. The literature revealed three major themes that are some of the byproducts of SI – faith and public policy, faith-based institutions as advocates, and public's participation in public policy debates. At the macro-level, religious institutions have a record of connecting to public policy issues that are directly aligned with its mission (Trousset, Gupta, Jenkins-Smith, Silva, & Harron, 2015). From civil rights to immigration and from the environment to health care, faith-based institutions have made their mark on history by speaking on behalf of those who have lost their voices (Butler,

2014; Danner, 2013; Ha, 2015). The role of religious orders as advocates tends to be the natural progression of this type of involvement in public policy. The institution of the church provides a critical role in shaping and developing legislation at all levels of government (Vosloo, 2016). A moral consciousness is an element of public engagement that faith-based institutions perceive to be its role in society. As advocates, religious institutions provide a context of morality to the public policy arena (Green et al., 2012; Watkinson, 2015). Individuals are encouraged and free to connect with and support public causes that align with their religious values. The literature is clear that some faith-based institutions have become partners to the government to advance public policies; however, what remains unclear is the extent to which the application of spiritual principles equates to direct personal involvement. It is clear that religious orders teach its believers to be concerned about others' well-being. The missing element of this discussion is how those ideologies materialize as actual works in the broader community.

This study will advance the knowledge of SI in a unique context. No other religious order completely subscribes to SI in that same manner in which the AAPC does. Chapter 3 will outline the case study methodology approach that was applied to investigate the research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of AAPC leaders regarding the use of SI to impact and change communities. The fundamentals of SI are elements that describe how individuals embrace spirituality as a means of navigating life. Twelve principles frame SI: self-awareness, spontaneity, being vision and value led, holism, compassion, a celebration of diversity, field independence, humility, tendency to ask fundamental *why* questions, ability to reframe, positive use of adversity, and sense of vocation (Zohar, 2000). Each attribute contributes to the collective whole of the principle. This chapter addresses the methodological framework used to answer the research questions. Sections include an explanation of the research design, the role of the researcher, the case study approach, the interview questions, the data analysis plan, the trustworthiness of the data, the ethical ramifications of the study.

Research Design and Rationale

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do leaders within the AAPC perceive that they use the principles of spiritual intelligence as a framework to engage their members in public policy initiatives in their communities?
2. What barriers prohibit leadership within the AAPC from engaging in direct public policy initiatives?

These questions were designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of spirituality and its impact in effecting change in a community. Spirituality is the concept that I sought to explore in the context of how it is used in a practical sense to impact communities

through public policy connections. Zohar and Marshall (2000) offered that spirituality is an innate ability given to each human being that shapes, drives, and motivates self-awareness and behavior with others. The AAPC theological framework reflects the principles of SI, and this particular church teaches the ideals of spirituality to its parishioners. This study was conducted to better understand the connection between theory and practice of this church.

The research question drives the selection of the study design and its methodology. The qualitative methodology was applied to this research inquiry. There are various ways in which qualitative research can be framed, and the design should be selected based on the nature of the research question (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research addresses human behavior as a means of clarifying a condition rather than testing a hypothesis (Creswell, 2013). The study was not framed to predict whether believers of the African American Pentecostals would or would not engage in community efforts but rather was developed to explore how community engagement occurs and the context in which those activities are structured. Given the nature of the research questions, the qualitative case study approach was best aligned with the intent of the study. The qualitative design is grounded in the interpretivist approach to research (Astalin, 2013; Patton, 2015). The inquiry for this study did not begin with a hypothesis but was structured to allow the responses to shape and inform conclusions based on themes that emerge from the research (see Patton, 2015).

I used the case study methodology to answer the research questions. A case study is designed to allow the researcher to study a specific unit of analysis as a means of fully

understanding various aspects of the group's characteristics, including language, norms, and meaning to specific culture elements (Astalin, 2013; Creswell, 2013). The case study methodology is used to explore a phenomenon using one or more cases as focal points from which to learn (Yin, 2014). Unlike other qualitative designs, a case study approach involves systematic analysis of characteristics of a typical or atypical unit to unveil themes, patterns, and behaviors to understand and explain a myriad of actions (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) described case study research as a means of developing an in-depth description and analysis of a particular case.

The AAPC has a unique culture shaped by biblical and social convictions and religious patterns. The case study approach provided the research design to answer the research questions. The AAPC was the unit of analysis, and faith leaders in the reformation were interviewed as a means of collecting data. I explored, analyzed, and interpreted the data to describe the group's understanding of its civic contributions through SI.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher may take one of the four roles: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer, or complete participant. These roles are selected according to the levels of engagement a researcher seeks to have with the research experience (Patton, 2015). The researcher's role influences the research outcomes and type of methodology applied in the study (Astalin, 2013; Creswell, 2013; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). My goal was to understand the application of spirituality in the context of public engagement. As such, my role aligned with that of an observer as participant. The

design was not framed for me to engage with the AAPC faith leaders in the sense of living their experience. Though I identify with this group, I limited my interaction and assumed a neutral role to understand its functionality and how the reformation uses spirituality to support the health and care of the community. The role of the observer as participant is to intentionally pay attention to words, behaviors, and actions as a means of gathering data (Patton, 2015). Beyond listening to and engaging with the participant in an interview, the observer as participant is taking notes of the environment, body language, and other nonverbal communication (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). I engaged with the participants with limited interaction and did not acquiesce to a natural inclination of group connection. A skilled researcher is self-aware of this dynamic and builds mechanisms that support the primary role function (Yin, 2013).

Twelve participants were interviewed for this study. I targeted bishops whom I did not personally know and had not worked with in any capacity. In addition, I had never supervised any of the leaders and characterized each as peers rather than superiors or subordinates. I eliminated any power dynamics that could have influenced participants' responses to the interview questions. I did not offer any incentives for participation in the study. Each person who consented to be interviewed was provided with an in-depth explanation of the study and was asked to volunteer without compensation or any other commitments financial or otherwise. Transcripts of each of the sessions were shared with each participant to ensure that the details of the interview sessions did not misrepresent participants' thoughts. Participants had the opportunity to

make changes to the transcripts before the data were analyzed. Standard institutional review board protocols and guidelines were followed when conducting interviews.

Methodology

The Joint College of Afro-American Pentecostal Bishops (The College) is an international consortium of bishops who have been consecrated as senior leaders of the reformation. The members of The College attend a yearly congress to explore the church's theology and to confer on issues that affect and impact the AAPC. The AAPC is led by bishops who bear the responsibility of developing theological frameworks for members of the faith and ordaining pastors to tend to the spiritual needs of church members. The influence of the AAPC rests with bishops; hence, it was from this body that participants were selected for interviews.

The AAPC has congregations spread throughout the continental U.S., the Caribbean Islands, and Africa. This study was limited to churches in the U.S.. The congregations vary by size, socioeconomic status, degrees of educational attainment, and geographic location (urban, suburban, and rural). The bishops selected to participate reflected the varying characteristics contained within the reformation. The composition of The College accurately reflected the demographics of this reformation and was used to draw a sample to answer the research questions (see Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Yin (2014) offered that a sample frame for a case study is structured to yield meaningful, rich data. If the sample is too small, the data are shallow and will not be adequate to answer the research question (Patton, 2015). Conversely, if the sample is too large, a significant amount of time will be spent with transcription and data analysis. A

researcher sets a sample size that is manageable and provides the opportunity to delve deep into the research question. Initially, I determined that 14 interviews would provide a diverse pool of thoughts on the subject matter and would be an appropriate size to manage a research project of this size and scope. Saturation was reached after 12 interviews. The sample was drawn from a group of 120 bishops of The College. A formal letter of invitation and consent was sent explaining the extent and nature of the research project. Bishops who responded to the letter of invitation received a phone call from me to confirm their participation. After letters of consent were received, interviews were scheduled to accommodate the bishop's schedule. Interviews were conducted through the video conferencing platform ZOOM. All interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy in transcription. Drafts of the transcripts were sent to the participants for their review before data analysis. After the participants gave their consent to the written content of the interview, the data were coded for analysis. Participants' identity remained confidential throughout the data collection and analysis. Each person's name was redacted from the interview protocols and was replaced with a generic designation (e.g., Interviewee 7).

Instrumentation

Participants were recruited through an invitation to participate in the study through a recruitment letter (Appendix A). Confirmed subjects were required to complete a consent form prior to the start of data collection. A sample of the interview questions is provided below, and the full interview protocol, which was derived from the 12 elements of SI, is presented in Appendix B. The questions asked in the interview protocol were constructed as a result of gaps in literature and as a means of answering the research

questions. Follow-up interviews were not necessary. The interview protocol included questions such as the following:

- In what ways do you believe spirituality guides one's community engagement connections? And, further, should spirituality influence that connection?
- What spiritual forces challenge the church from participating in direct public policy engagement? Are there other forces that also impact the church from its involvement with public policy initiatives? What strategies would you offer to confront and eradicate those barriers?
- Strategic direction for the next generation of leaders of the faith is imminent. What advice would you offer on how to engage the church with the community?

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The purposeful sampling approach was used to build the sampling pool of participants. Purposeful sampling is used when a researcher seeks to engage a unique group of participants to address the research question, and the selection of specific participants is based on a detailed criterion (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). To explore the research questions, this sample initially included 14 African-American Pentecostal Bishops who serve the church in the continental U.S.. Twelve bishops were interviewed; and each of their responses were analyzed. All of the bishops invited to participate had served in the church in this capacity for at least five years to ensure a level of experience in the office. Once a person is consecrated as a bishop, it normally takes five years to become fully acquainted with the responsibilities of the office. After a five-year period,

the bishop usually has a thorough, working understanding of the office and challenges thereof. The bishop is the highest level of the governmental office in the AAPC, and one of the primary functions of the office is to define the spiritual tenets of the faith. This group of leaders is a critical segment of the AAPC and has an essential role in framing the theology and direction of the church.

Though I am a member of The College, this project was not a collaborative effort between us. The College was not considered to be a partner, and the research is my independent project. The recruitment period lasted three weeks to expedite the process of solidifying the sample pool. Once the list was developed, an invitation was emailed to potential participants. The process ended once 14 participants were identified. Those participants that agreed to participate were contacted to schedule a time for the initial interview.

The interviews were conducted through a video-conferencing platform. The researcher asked the questions of the participants and took notes during the sessions. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed with 24-hours of the interview. The first iteration of the transcript included both the researcher's written notes and the recorded responses. Each participant reviewed the transcription of the interview to ensure the accuracy of their responses.

The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Once the participant reviewed and approved the final transcript, a thank you e-mail was sent expressing gratitude for their time and support. Those participants that requested a copy of the final, approved dissertation will receive the link to the completed work at the appropriate time.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is at the epicenter of a qualitative research project, and there are several tools available to analyze qualitative data. NVivo, a widely-used software package, is commonly used among researchers to house and interpret qualitative design and was used as the primary data management tool for this study (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Case study research methodology leads the researcher to see patterns and themes in the data (Creswell, 2013). The data gathered from participants of a study essentially are the elements that lead the researcher to make final conclusions (Patton, 2015). Data analysis includes four critical strategies – grounding the study in a theoretical framework; engaging the data from multiple perspectives; devising a case narrative; and exploring several explanations of data outcomes (Yin, 2014). The researcher must be committed to spending quality time to understand emerging themes from the data. Qualitative analysis usually provides several plausible explanations to the research question; leading the researcher in many directions to explore and ultimately draw a conclusion (Goldberg & Allen, 2015; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016; Yazan, 2015). The approach to analyze case study data is qualitative data analysis, which is an iterative process, and categories to which data are initially assigned may change as the process unfolds (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Data were analyzed using the following steps: establish provisional themes based on research questions; conduct first-round interviews; transcribe interview notes; code data; display data using checklist matrix; identify patterns and contrasts; transcribe interview notes; re-code data; display data using checklist matrix; draw conclusions.

The first analysis was designed to segment the data into frameworks, concepts, and themes, also called nodes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Those nodes became the framework for analyzing the data. To begin the analysis, the 12 SI principles framed the data analysis (Table 2). Three themes, which emerged from the literature review, were used as provisional categories to support the coding of the data: spirituality, community engagement, and barriers (Table 3). Responses from the participants were placed the appropriate categories to organize the data. Additional themes emerged after the first analysis and were added to further refine how the data is coded.

Table 2

SI Principles – Coding and Interview Questions Corresponding Correlation

SI Principle	Description	Corresponding Interview Question
Self-Awareness	Having a personal understanding of one's values and its impact on self-motivation	Question 4
Spontaneity	Being aware of the present and able to respond and adjust accordingly	Question 7a
Being vision- and value led	Engaging from and living by consistent principles	Question 5

(table continues)

SI Principles	Description	Corresponding Interview Questions
Holism	Making connections between and among relationships and personal systems in order to foster a sense of belonging and purpose	Question 9 Question 11
Compassion	Possessing the ability to be consistently empathetic	Question 3
Celebration of Diversity	Appreciating the differences from others and using those qualities to personally grow and develop	Question 13
Field Independence	Being driven and led by personal convictions in one's actions	Question 12
Humility	Seeing oneself as a member of larger team who contributes to the success of the group	Question 8
Tendency to ask fundamental "Why?" questions	Questioning life to gain a better understanding	Question 6
Ability to reframe	Separating from problems to perceiving an issue from a macro-level	Question 7c Question 10
Positive use of adversity	Using setbacks and pain as a means of learning and growing	Question 7b
Sense of vocation	Feeling the need to places others needs before one's self	Question 3

Table 3

Second Iteration of Coding

Theme	Definition	Citations
Spirituality	Concepts that point to one's personal relationship with a higher being is innate and is shaped and developed over time; different from religion in that the focus is on individual connection to a supreme force rather than a religious institution.	Albursan et al., 2016 Jack et al., 2016
Community engagement	Personal or corporate involvement (i.e., volunteering, advocating, protesting) with social issues; sharing a sense of being a steward of the community in which one resides or works.	Anwar & Osman-Gani, 2016 Borner, 2013
Barriers	Theological mandates that prevent individuals from participating in civic initiatives; social issues that are in direct contradiction to personal morals and values.	Grzymala-Busse, 2016 Pinn, 2013

The third iteration of data exploration further categorized the data into three additional layers: values, attitudes, and beliefs (Table 4). As qualitative inquiry explores concepts and phenomena, it is important to code data according to a framework that identifies the influence of certain ideologies and behaviors (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). A researcher attempts to draw out patterns weaved into the participants' responses. These

themes are data points, which lead the researcher closer to answering the researcher questions.

Table 4

Third Iteration of Coding

Theme	Definition	Citation
Values	Actions and deeds held in the highest of regard; opportunities considered of the utmost importance.	Todd & Rufa, 2013 Warrington, 2011
Attitudes	Shared religious convictions among a group of people; thoughts accepted as truth based on faith.	Flores et al., 2014 Keller, 2011 Samuels, 2011
Beliefs	Views and perceptions shaped by past experiences; feelings and emotions that describe connections to people and social causes.	Papouras, 2016 Wenk, 2002

NVivo qualitative analysis software was used to house and organize the information; however, it was my responsibility to analyze the data. To assist with that process, the data were formatted using a checklist matrix which provided a systematic way to track the multiple dynamics of a variable (Miles et al., 2014). The organized method systematized the data in such a way that patterns could be identified, and comparisons and contrasts among and between respondents' answers became visible. Yin (2013) offers that data analysis in case study methodology unfolds as the research process moves forward. The software is a tool that assisted with organizing the process.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The research design must draw upon measures of validity and reliability. These two factors are critical to establishing a sense of credibility for the results of a project. Several strategies can be employed to mitigate incorrect results, including triangulation, peer review, and audit trails (McGloin, 2008; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2014). Validity cannot be overlooked as it is the mechanism by which a researcher ensures the data and the methodology are congruent and yield the best possible results (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). Further, reliability is the framework upon which results are considered accurate and allow the researcher to draw appropriate conclusions (Yin, 2014). Credibility is one factor in establishing validity, and it speaks to the notion that the findings are congruent with the current reality of the subject matter.

Several steps were included in this research to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Understanding culture is one critical aspect of establishing internal validity. To have an awareness of and appreciation for language, terms, and customs is essential to a research process (Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2004). My experience in the AAPC was both an asset and a challenge as it positioned me to navigate through terminology and meanings of words and phrases. Cultures tend to have an identity in which language and behaviors are unique. As such, my learning curve with the culture and environment of the AAPC was a non-issue. The understanding of the inner workings of this system lends itself to a level of credibility. Participants did not perceive me as an outsider attempting to learn their culture. The challenge of my position was that I explored a culture with which I

have been connected for 25 years and needed to identify biases and build in safeguards to ensure my perceptions and thoughts did not infiltrate this work.

Some aspects of triangulation grounded this work. The criteria for those who were asked to participate in this study included AAPC Bishops currently serving the church in a wide-range of areas including, but not limited to, pastoral coverings, church protocol, and church governmental affairs. To further establish a sense of credibility, I focused on recruiting leaders that have significant experience with either teaching or implementing AAPC theology but with whom I did not personally share a connection. The personal relationship between a researcher and a participant may create a dynamic that erodes the credibility of the research (Patton, 2015). However, in this case, there were enough bishops in the AAPC whom I did not know and could select to interview. Removing the personal element from relationship helped to address some measure of credibility. I selected Bishops that I have not personally known or worked with in the past.

Participants were asked to review their transcripts to establish trust and to ensure the accuracy of the information. Including the participants in the journey reduces the voice and thoughts of the researcher and keeps the focus on the respondents' views (McGloin, 2008; Yin, 2014). The perceptions and reflections of the participants are the factors that drive validity. Providing opportunities for the voices of the participants to consistently be heard throughout the process occurred. To add another dimension of triangulation, I engaged an external expert (a former academic colleague in qualitative methods in reviewing my coded data without any of the participants' information). Investigator triangulation is an element that invokes experts from a field to review themes

and data as a means of supporting the primary researcher (Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2014). Sharing the “data in-process” with other experts adds a level of scrutiny and credibility to the research process. It is my intention to use this element of the process to capture questions for further studies and investigations.

Attention also was given to the transferability of this work. To achieve this goal, an interview protocol included a settings description, a profile of the participant, a step-by-step interview protocol, and a log sheet to record the focus and notes of each interaction with the participant. The files of these notes remain confidential and will only be shared with the participant. Separate credentials will be maintained to detail the interview process, which are identified as the audit trail documents. Those records will be submitted with the final copy of the dissertation, if necessary, and will not expose the names or identifying information of the participants.

For my personal development and support, I also began a journal of self-reflection for this process. This journal helped me to document my thoughts, feelings, and anxieties about the research project. My hope is that my words helped me to identify my biases and personal thoughts. By facing my words, my intention was to remove my views from the research process and allow those reflections to be contained in a safe place and not in the research project.

Ethical Procedures

As qualitative research directly engages the researcher with human subjects, ethical protocols were required for this research. Interaction with human subjects is a way to obtain data for research; however, the risks associated with progress should never

inflict or cause harm (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). To that end, I completed a Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) application to gain permission to engage in the research elements of this project. Potential participants were not contacted until IRB approval was granted. All persons invited to participate in this research were fully briefed on the focus and goal of this work and were permitted to discontinue their involvement at any time and for any reason without any penalty. None of the participants dropped out of the study.

All data are considered confidential. The names and any identifiable information were redacted from the participant's identity to maintain their confidentiality. The notes and protocols from the interviews are saved on a flash drive and remain in the researcher's possession. The researcher bears the sole responsibility for maintaining the data and will keep the data for seven years beyond the date of completion of the dissertation process. After that time, all documents, notes, flash drives, and transcriptions will be destroyed.

Summary

The qualitative, case study methodology approach guided the exploration of how the principles of SI are used if at all, to engage in public policy initiatives. The AAPC is the unit of analysis given its theological framework in comparison to the elements of SI. The case study approach provides the opportunity to gather rich, deep data to explore thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs from leaders of this church. Ten participants comprise the sampling frame, and ethical protocols were used to safeguard their confidentiality. Chapter 4 will present the research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

This study was approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (#11-18-0551675) and was conducted to explore how the principles of SI are used in the AAPC at the macro level for community engagement and change. At the epicenter of the AAPC's theological framework is its teaching that every believer is endowed with a spiritual connection that enables each person to discern and to act upon the needs of others. The AAPC, like other religious sects, commits to addressing the challenges associated with the human condition. This study focused on how this church uses SI to carry out its mission of care and change in the community.

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do leaders within the AAPC perceive that they use the principles of spiritual intelligence as a framework to engage their members in public policy initiatives in their communities?
2. What barriers prohibit leadership within the AAPC from engaging in direct public policy initiatives?

The outcomes of the study may be used to inform how future AAPC leaders execute their civic and community engagement work, including advocating to policymakers for the needs of those whom they serve and building mutually beneficial relationships with elected officials in an effort to bridge the gap between the church and state. Chapter 4 provides the details of the data collection and analysis, including a description of the sample and the research findings based on the responses of the participants.

Setting

The interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability. Each participant selected a day and time convenient for their schedule. The interviews were conducted virtually using the ZOOM platform. I initiated the call from a private home office. The audio exchange for each of the interviews was recorded. I and the participant were able to see each other; however, the video interaction was not recorded. Each participant selected the location for their interview. The participants' locations ranged from private church offices to dens at their homes.

Demographics

Twelve African American Pentecostal bishops participated in the study. There are several ranks within this order of the church. Each bishop is considered a governor of the church; however, there are different assignments within this office. Each bishop self-identified their role with the AAPC. Six of the participants identified as presiding prelates, the highest-ranking level to which a bishop is appointed. Presiding prelates are bishops of reformations that lead other bishops and give spiritual direction to an entire reformation. Three of the participants classified as diocesan bishops. This rank of prelates oversees a region or territory of at least five churches. One individual claimed the auxiliary bishop status, a role that has administrative oversight of a particular department or function (i.e., youth, education, finance). The remaining two bishops labeled themselves as bishops (i.e., governors within the AAPC without a particular assignment but with all of the authority of the office). Each participant had been a bishop for at least 5 years with some having served for over three decades.

Beyond these categories, participants' role functions were categorized using three areas: administrative, training and development, and church supervision. These classifications emerged as the data were analyzed. The administrative category includes responsibilities such as framing church doctrine and policies, developing church protocols, and defining the direction of the church. The second category includes functions such as devising and implementing leadership development and the catechism of bishops. Church supervision involves direct engagement with local churches. Of these three categories, five bishops had administrative responsibilities, four focused on training and development, and one had church supervision as the primary assignment. The geographic range for the group of participants included the entire continental U.S..

Data Collection

The sampling frame included 120 male and female African American Pentecostal bishops. The information was gathered from searching publically available Internet information including the bishop's name, e-mail address, and church/personal website for each bishop. Electronic invitations were sent to each of the potential participants at four different points in time beginning in December 2018. The recruitment process lasted three weeks. 82 potential participants provided no response, and 10 individuals declined to be interviewed. Fourteen e-invitations were returned as a result on incorrect e-mail addresses. A total of fourteen male participants agreed to participate. No female participants accepted the invitation to engage in my study.

Those who agreed to be interviewed were sent consent forms for their signature. Once the consent form was signed and e-mailed back to me, the interview was scheduled

based on the participant's availability. Confirmations were sent at the time of the scheduling as well as the day before the interview. The ZOOM virtual platform was used to conduct the interviews. The participants and I were able to see each other. The audio portion of the interaction was recorded, but the video segment was not. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The time varied based on the participant's responses to the interview questions. Each participant was asked the questions as listed in the interview protocol.

The initial plan was to conduct 14 interviews with AAPC bishops. After conducting 10 interviews, I believed that I had reached saturation. I completed two additional interviews to determine if my thoughts were valid. The data from those two interviews repeated the same themes and words offered by the first 10 participants. I therefore coded and analyzed a total of 12 interviews for my study. The final two interviews were not scheduled. Those participants were e-mailed and thanked for their willingness to participate. There were no unusual circumstances in the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Each of the participants responded to a total of 13 questions and received the transcription within 24 hours of the interview. The participants reviewed the transcript and provided their final input. The first three questions addressed demographic information, and the remaining questions were based on SI principles (see Table 5). The SI-specific questions were analyzed in three phases:

1. Phase 1: What do the data tell me about the specific SI principle?

2. Phase 2: What does the specific SI principle tell me about spirituality, community engagement, and barriers?
3. Phase 3: What relationships do I see between spirituality, community engagement, and barriers to values, attitudes, and beliefs? (What do the data reveal/address about the research questions?)

NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software platform, was used to format the data into specific codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data analysis. In the preliminary data analysis phase, the definitions of the SI-specific principles were used as the categories for nodes in NVivo.

Questions 1 through 3 were designed to gather demographic data of the participants. Questions 4 through 13 were framed to reflect the 12 SI principles. From the initial analysis, three themes emerged: the degree of preparation for ministry, the intersectionality between church and community, and building and sustaining community relationships. The degree of preparation for ministry included responses that connected to academic and theological trainings as well as in-house educational opportunities that provided a teaching base for community engagement from a spiritual perspective. The second theme of intersectionality included responses that connected spiritual acts and deeds to community service. The final theme of partnerships included the elements that build and sustain relationships in the community that effect change.

Table 5

SI Principles – Coding and Interview Questions Corresponding Correlation

SI Principle	Description	Frequency Coded (f)
Self-Awareness	Having a personal understanding of one's values and its impact on self-motivation	59
Spontaneity	Being aware of the present and able to respond and adjust accordingly	105
Being vision and value led	Engaging from and living by consistent principles	91
Holism	Making connections between and among relationships and personal systems to foster a sense of belonging and purpose	83
Compassion	Possessing the ability to be consistently empathetic	149
Celebration of diversity	Appreciating the differences from others and using those qualities to personally grow and develop	71
Field independence	Being driven and led by personal convictions in one's actions	126
Humility	Seeing oneself as a member of a larger team who contributes to the success of the group	40
Tendency to ask fundamental <i>why</i> questions	Questioning life to gain a better understanding	56
Ability to reframe	Separating from problems to perceiving an issue from a macro-level	47
Positive use of adversity	Using setbacks and pain as a means of learning and growing	152
Sense of vocation	Feeling the need to place others needs before one's self	207

Evidence of Trustworthiness

There are four components of trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These elements help to ground the research findings in an unbiased, authentic context. To ensure credibility, I had Walden University's Institutional Review Board approved this study prior to data collection. Further, I employed two methods of data analysis, hand coding and the use of the NVivo software, to ensure that data were examined twice. Each participant had at least 5 years of experience in the field and was provided the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview.

The protocol for the study was followed according to the plan presented in Chapter 3 to ensure transferability. Each element of the study, including the recruitment process, interview protocol, and data analysis, was consistently applied to each participant. The participants were exposed to the research process identically. A step-by-step process was executed to safeguard the dependability of the study. For full disclosure to the participants, each respondent was made aware that I am a bishop in the AAPC. By addressing this issue, I attempted to address and minimize any bias that I may have brought to this phase of the research process.

Each interview was recorded and reviewed three times. A handwritten transcript for each interview was completed for each session as well. The final transcript for each interview was sent to the participant for their input and approval to ensure that the contents of the transcripts were accurate and reflected the responses of the participants.

Results

The first level of data analysis sought to determine the connection of each SI principle to community engagement if any. There are 12 SI principles, and each was analyzed by applying two questions to the responses of the participants – what does the data reveal about how the participants define the principle, and how do those responses connect to spirituality, community engagement, and barriers that challenge the AAPC from public policy work. Table 5 list the frequency for which each SI principle emerged in the data. The following section outlines the results of the first-level analysis.

SI Principle: Sense of Vocation

There was a clear consensus derived from the participants' responses that their sense of vocation is correlated to their understanding of Christianity. Placing the needs of others is paramount to believers of the faith. Participant 12 shared,

People and their needs are the priorities that both inform and guide our actions in the community. The concerns, needs, and issues of people must land on us, and we are bound to concern ourselves with what challenges them. Our duty as Christians, and more specifically, as Pentecostal believers, is to ensure we feel others burden and then work to meet those needs.

The participants believe that the Word of God is the basis by which the AAPC should draw its sense of vocation. The teachings of Christ in the New Testament scripture provides a context that believers follow. It is their understanding that the second commandment that Jesus raises holds believers to a deep sense of placing others needs over their own. The writings of Mark (12:30-31, King James Version) record,

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Participant #6 perception raised these thoughts,

My influences and thoughts are driven by the biblical mandate to be socially aware, socially conscious, and socially active. I see a clear connectivity of social consciousness, social awareness, and political awareness. It is essential that members of the AAPC are always sensitive to these dynamics that are present in our psyche. In Jesus' interaction with those who brought the woman caught in adultery to him, He engaged them and utilized the very law that they were trying to trap him as the means to bring about transformation. We, too, must be aware of conversations are opportunities to invoke spiritual principles that help us to advocate for those who are marginalized and disenfranchised.

The sensitivity to others' needs is expected as believers are taught to love others as themselves. As such, the sense of vocation should guide one's actions as those behaviors can be seen as a direct reflection of how one cares for themselves.

SI Principle: Compassion

The participants hold that believers' ability to exude compassion also comes from scriptural teachings. The mandate of the Christian faith requires its followers to engage with others from a place of genuine care and concern. One of the participants used the

work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an example for others to follow. Participant 2 stated,

What influences me, first, historically is looking back over the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or any of our African American pastors who were also involved socially and politically in their local communities – to see how it important it is for the church to be the leader or the catalyst for change and improvements in our communities.

He further added, Matthew (15:32, King James Version) states,

Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

This sense of compassion of seeing the needs of others whether individually or as a community is a spiritual trait that the respondents see as a responsibility of members of the AAPC.

Seeing the needs of others, according to Participant 7, is a spiritual responsibility. He asserted that “I see a very clear accent in the ministry of Jesus in the Old Testament prophetic tradition that focuses on God’s care for the poor, for suffering – those whom the world despises and looks over.” He further stated,

And, the Holy Spirit is the authority for prophetic ministry and prophetic work. The Spirit authorizes, empowers prophetic ministry for deliverance of the whole person from the powers and principalities, from the power of Satan, and from foes, dominions, and principalities that Satan, the evil one has taken a seat.

Facets of oppression, regardless of its type, beg for a spiritual response, which may manifest in a very tangible way. Using the previous example of Jesus demonstrating compassion upon the crowd, the answer to the spiritually-discerned issue of hunger was providing sustenance, not an intangible response to the need. Compassion, according to the respondents, should move one to act in a manner that indeed addresses the issue and problem. Spirituality should be used to help the believer discern how best to engage a solution and be used as the energy source to execute the strategy.

SI Principle: Self-Awareness

The participants hold that one's values are shaped by the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that helps the believer to define what matters most to the heart of God, which is ultimately what members of the AAPC seek to be in alignment with and humbly submitted. As Participant #8 stated, "I see a crucial intersection between holiness, spiritual empowerment, and prophetic and social consciousness. I see that as the heart beat and the center of the Pentecostal movement, which includes Black churches." Reaching full alignment with God not only informs and guides one's values, but it also catalyzes self-motivation. The intersectionality of holiness, spiritual empowerment, and prophetic and social consciousness become for some the source of motivation to serve others. These spiritual elements seem to be essential in both shaping values and providing energy to engage in addressing needs in the community.

SI Principle: Being Vision Led and Value Led

Each of the participants cited the life of Jesus Christ as an example to follow as a model of consistency. Their responses centered around the life that Jesus led – one of

great concern for the needs of others, even in His death process. Regardless of one's socio-economic background, gender, or religious persuasion, Christ consistently demonstrated a love for people that, according to some of the participants, came from a place of spirituality. Participant 12 shared,

spirituality is the center of why we do what we do, and our spirituality should always transcend the dimensions of spirit into the human condition. We should be very much sensitive to our environment through discerning beyond looking at what Walter Brueggemann would say is the prophetic imagination. You have to have spirituality to imagine an alternative reality to the human condition that is present before us.

Participant #7 raised the consistent nature of caring and serving others seems to be connected to “a spiritual anchor that keeps us centered in the work of humanity.” The gospel message of Jesus Christ is the consistent thread that “enables us to handle it [life] from a different perspective.” The driving factor of consistency is to ensure that others needs are always met, despite one's issues. Consistency can be best understood through Participant 6 who shared, “To be honest with you, I don't look for others to have any spirituality that they notice or recognize for me to engage.”

SI Principle: Tendency to Ask the “Why” Questions

The idea of asking questions, specifically of a spiritual nature, is a powerful tool to help people to better understand differences between them. Those differences can either serve as a barrier to building relationships or a catalyst for connection. One of the historic adages that remains present in the U.S. is the notion of the separation of Church

and State. The idea that the development and execution of laws and the domain of government are not under the rule of a particular church is the essence of this separation. Invariably, there is a symbiotic relationship that exists between the two institutions. The AAPC, as with every other church, is under the theocratic rule of God, while the national government is controlled by elected officials. Participant 2 shared,

Being in the world means we, like sinners, face the same challenges and experience the same crises. But being of the world, our reaction and response to those challenges and crisis should be drastically different than those non-believers. We have a hope that they don't have. We possess a faith and a "dunamis" (power) that they do not possess. That is where the difference comes in, but it should not alienate or separate us from the world's activities and responsibilities. Saints need healthcare; desire raises on their jobs, will benefit from the recent criminal justice reform bill that was just passed by the Senate yesterday – prayerfully will be signed by the President today or tomorrow. Saints benefit from immigration laws. We cannot say that we are not in this world or engaged in worldly activities or faced with worldly challenges just because we are saved or Pentecostal.

The space of asking "why?" questions opens up a dialogue for which the AAPC could come to understand the nature of differences between those who are connected to the church and those who are not. It is important to engage in those conversations because as Participant #6 shared,

We are the ambassadors, the representatives of the sons of God and we must emphatically exercise the love of God, but also teach and train, equip and prepare people for life to be able to be successful. So, we cannot absolve ourselves because we say that we are the church. If anything, we should be at the forefront of that change and transformation in the lives of people.

Asking questions and talking with those who do not share the same religious ideology of this church is a missing element in the current reality of the AAPC.

SI Principle: Spontaneity

Three laws govern the AAPC – ceremonial, civil, and moral. Ceremonial law frame how believers engage in their personal and corporate relationships with God. Civil laws are those rules that believers must adhere to as citizens of their communities. The scriptures outline that Christians are responsible for obeying civil laws as a part of their character. Moral laws come directly from God and cannot be compromised. As one participant raised, the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman is an example of a biblical mandate that cannot be changed. The tension of spontaneity expands when the principles of the faith are challenged by what appears to be a conflict of Godly morality. In some instances, the present circumstances are unaligned with the moral standard that the AAPC is required to uphold. Spirituality is regarded as the equalizer in those cases when conflict is apparent.

SI Principle: Positive Use of Adversity

There are three areas where the AAPC has converted adversity into positive growth – education, business acumen, and racism. In its earlier years, the AAPC did not

promote and embrace higher education. Its members tended to work menial jobs and usually did not pursue education beyond the high-school experience. The basis of the culture stems from the ideology that the believers from Participant #10's perspective "are in the world, but not the world and that God would provide for their needs." Further, he shared,

In education, not necessarily meaning because you are Pentecostal you are uneducated because there are certainly a lot of educated Pentecostals, but that is not the assumption of many. So that becomes a force that impedes some from engagement or at least from the other side where there is not taking seriously of the impact of a Pentecostal thinker could have on public policy.

That thinking was converted at the peak of the Civil Rights Movement when issues of racial equality became a national conversation and social epidemic. The forefathers of the faith did not promote education, but as times changed, the Spirit guided the church into a new direction.

SI Principle: Ability to Reframe

As times have changed, the AAPC has not adapted to the ever-changing needs of the community. The AAPC, for the most part, remains an institution that maintains an internal focus on its polity and protocol. The majority of the participants noted that the demands of the community require the AAPC to revisit its mission and purpose and then take the necessary steps to realign the church to meet external needs better. One of the primary reasons participants cited the current disconnect between the church and the community is the language barrier of political speak and church lingo. Navigating

through the communication network of the public arena may pose an uneasiness for church members who may not be familiar with the political jargon. The lack of understanding the language may exclude members of the AAPC from settings and conversations that directly impact the communities which they serve. The credibility of their voices seems to be missing an authoritative element in community and political conversations.

Though there is a lack of presence in public discourse and dialogue, there is not a lack of desire and will to have a seat at the table. Participant 2 stated, Education and exposure are strategies to address and eradicate those barriers. We must educate our congregations on the importance of being knowledgeable about [the] law and of government leadership (from local to federal) and how it affects our daily natural lives. There has to be a balance in our educational approach. We have leaned so hard to the spiritual that we ignored the necessity of understanding the natural as it applies to our daily lives.

Participant #8 added,

There has to be more conversation and dialogue. Whether we bring politicians into a greater sense of accountability in regards to council persons coming in and having Town Watch Meetings that help stir the appetite for information and inspiration by which we strategically set-up a plan to attack these particular issues.

The reframing of community issues from a spiritual context may be a critical strategy to bring the AAPC along into the broader conversation of community engagement.

SI Principle: Humility

The AAPC, like other religious denominations, perceives itself as a spiritual entity that has a responsibility to care for the needs of the community. Its most significant contribution, according to the participants, is spreading of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. That message of love, hope, and eternal life, they believe, is the most significant role the AAPC plays in the greater community. The themes of Jesus' gospel give rise to equality and inclusivity – communities where every person matters and is valued.

Participant 11 suggested,

We have to go back to the original plan and concept of God, and that is we have to be inclusive. We cannot separate and isolate ourselves from those which we are trying to reach. So if we are going to reach people, we have to become touchable, we have to become reachable, and we have to connect with our community for them to know that we are there. We have to have a defined plan and vision of who we are that includes our community so that they can become a part of [us].

The AAPC does not want to be an island, but rather an entity that connects with the greater community. The motivating energy for the church's connection to the community seems to be the mandate of love, as explained by Christ. Participant #12 best explained that mandate.

Love people. Ministry is about serving people. People come in an array of personalities, places, cultures, customs, but the common denominator is we are all human beings. If you love people, then you will accommodate people in their particulars. In the context of Pentecostalism from where we have come from and

how [we] have interpreted Pentecostalism, that word accommodation is not always good. I think if we are going to be interdependent, everybody needs an accommodation, an adjustment of what you think one ought to be. If you truly are mature in love, it takes nothing away from you to serve people as love gets them to where they should be.

SI Principle: Holism

The AAPC has a significant role to play in connecting government and community. One of the fundamental purposes of the church is to unearth the root causes of societal issues and elevate those problems to those who are most appropriately poised to implement strategies to bring resolve and equity. The AAPC believes it uses spiritual discernment to identify systematic issues, but admittedly have not always used its position in the community to bridge the gap. Further, the AAPC has not been able to identify where it fits in as an agent of change. The church grapples with where to make the most meaningful difference beyond identifying the need. While some churches foster relationships that facilitate the needs of the community, others have limited connections to civil and corporate enterprises. Participant #4 asserted, “If we do not talk to the public sector to understand what is going on, then it is our fault for not being involved so that we, in turn, engage the people that can bring about change.” And, Participant #7 added, “The church needs to drive and support things that directly impact human suffering and direct relief of human bondage – that is preaching the gospel of deliverance and compassion, but also doing the work.”

The lack of voice in the public square also stems from a divided church. Often, disagreements about the interpretation of theological frameworks spawn separations that fragment the AAPC. As an example, Participant #11 pointed out,

We agree on 97%, but we fight over the 3% for which we disagree. We have to put down our differences. We need not let name tags, labels, reformations, or titles identify us. We need to be characterized as believers. There are so many offenses in the church that have caused all these divisions where we have so many reformations.

Issues where the AAPC could unite, such as homelessness, the environment, and the criminal justice system often go unaddressed due to the overshadowing of issues like same-sex marriages that vehemently divide the church. Holism, in this sense, invariably splits the church as opposed to fostering a sense of belonging and purpose among the AAPC and other entities.

SI Principle: Field Independence

The AAPC's convictions stem from its long lineage of teachings from what is known as the Apostolic Fathers, learned and unlearned men who framed the faith from as early as 1900. The tenants of the AAPC formed during a period in America's history when acts of segregation drove many aspects of societal conversations and actions. The scripture text of John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* – is one of the principles by which believers of the AAPC engage in their lives. The notion of loving as God loves - to the extent of giving to others for their survival – is a conviction

shared among the AAPC. However, that conviction of giving to others have tended to remain “within the African-American community” given the racial and social constructs this country once embraced. The values and beliefs of the faith came by men who were uneducated and heavily relied upon the Spirit of God to share the heart and mind of God concerning spiritual matters. These men, in some cases, could not read nor allowed to study religion in seminaries formally. Hence, the politics and social protocol of the day played a significant role in shaping the value system of the AAPC. As time has evolved, the values of the AAPC have not significantly changed in that racial and social constructs still are very present in the fabric of U.S. politics and community consciousness.

SI Principle: Celebration of Diversity

Acquiring secular and sacred education, by both its leaders and parishioners, have significantly impacted the lens of diversity within the AAPC. Some educated believers have come to embrace the power of education and its ability to pose questions that challenge and change perceptions. Participant #10 remarked “the African-American Pentecostal church has a cultural, ideological problem, not a spiritual dilemma of how we think, live, and behave.” The sense of diversity which seems to be prevalent in the AAPC is the reconciliation of being black, American, and Pentecostal. The connection of these three factors significantly plays a role in how the church embraces its own identity while attempting to connect with other religious institutions in political and community conversations. As Participant #11 shared,

If we could get rid of these cultural barriers, these ideologies, these taboos, these superstitions, then we would be pretty much on the same plateau. Fear has

immobilized us; ignorance has killed us. If we open our eyes to who we are, it goes beyond our culture, race, and ethnicity.

The second level of analysis examined the data through the lens of a probing question – what do the SI principles collectively tell me about spirituality, community engagement, and barriers? I used the definitions of those terms as outlined in Chapter 3 to help facilitate the analysis (Table 6). Three themes emerged from the analysis: the degree of preparation; the intersectionality of the Church and the community; and building and sustaining community relationships.

Table 6

Second Level of Coding – Data Analysis

Theme	Definition	Citations
Spirituality	Concepts that point to one's personal relationship with a higher being is innate and is shaped and developed over time; different from religion in that the focus is on individual connection to a supreme force rather than a religious institution.	Albursan et al., 2016 Jack et al., 2016
Community engagement	Personal or corporate involvement (i.e., volunteering, advocating, protesting) with social issues; sharing a sense of being a steward of the community in which one resides or works.	Anwar & Osman-Gani, 2016 Borner, 2013

(table continues)

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Citation</u>
Barriers	Theological mandates that prevent individuals from participating in civic initiatives; social issues that are in direct contradiction to personal morals and values.	Grzymala-Busse, 2016 Pinn, 2013

Theme 1: Degree of Preparation

The degree of one's spirituality can deepen over time and with some level of preparation, whether academic or sacred. The SI Principles are believed to inhabit every living being. Zohar (2000) suggests that the more connected one is to one's authentic self, the more intense and present becomes one's spirituality. Participants revealed that the connection to the church alone is not adequate to unveil spirituality. The Word of God is held as the foundational portal into one's spiritual self. While participants hold the scriptures as the basis for morality and personal responsibility, there is an understanding that the written text is open to interpretation and no one authority is the absolute voice of "right" or "wrong". The sense of spirituality supersedes man's understanding of authentic truth. Participant #1 elaborated "The Word of God is always living; it always fits the times. But if we do not know which scriptures are appropriate for the times, we would be lost."

The degree of preparation is, therefore, essential in the life of the believer. The spiritual tenants of the Word of God both set and guide the AAPC believers moral compass. If believers are to be expected to connect with the community and engage on

various levels, then spiritual preparation is essential to their development. Participant #11 shared,

In the church, you have constants and variables. Constants are absolutes, but variables are methods. Methods of many, but principles are few. Principles never change, but methods do. We have to find different methods and ways and means to reach people. And, teach people that (our new generation) cannot put new wine in old bottles.

The methodology refers to the issues and causes in which the members of the AAPC engage with the community. Hence, if a believer is led to work as an advocate for the homeless as a part of their spiritual responsibility, that person must be prepared to navigate through both the mental and tangible barriers. It is not sufficient to be spiritually connected to a community-engagement initiative, but one also should be equipped to succeed through proper grounding. Participant #7 summarized this concept best. He added,

I think that question for the AAPC is who is doing the thinking? Who is doing the theology? Is it being done by the leadership? Or, is the theology being lifted from some other force in-house? Tabernacles? Convocations? Who is doing the theology? It is utterly important that theologians be raised from within who know how to do the work of theology for the people we serve.

Theme 2: Intersectionality of the Church and the Community

The scriptures support that believers bear a responsibility to be concerned for others in tangible ways. Matthews' gospel (25:35-36, King James version) records *For I*

was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Jesus' teaching makes it clear that believers have a significant role to play in the care for the community. Spirituality raises the social consciousness for believers in AAPC. Participant 12 offered,

As an African-American Pentecostal who I am, I believe that the spirit leads us to discern the times and the conditions of the people. Throughout scripture, we see that it was the Spirit at the beginning hovering over. We are birthed out of a spiritual movement. When God decided to create God-self in the earth, it was the Spirit that deposited in man through the breath of God, which is a demarcation of spiritual essence. As a Pentecostal, I look at things through spiritual lenses, spiritual discernment and that is my interests into community engagement and community at-large.

The Word of God is the bridge between the church and the community for the AAPC. The scriptures do not mandate direct public policy involvement. There are not any specific scriptures that require members of the AAPC, or any other church members, to engage in the public discourse. Spirituality does, however, guide believers to have genuine care of others through the lens of morality. Jesus instructs his followers to love their neighbors as themselves. The motivating factor to help a community is love for humankind. The awakening of social consciousness raises spirituality in the sense of unconditional love. The AAPC sees the genuine care of others in a myriad of ways, i.e., serving as advocates, feeding the homeless, providing after-school tutoring, etc. There is

not one major community-engagement initiative that the AAPC supports as a whole. However, the members of the AAPC engage and connect where they feel led to serve humanity.

Theme 3: Building and Sustaining Community Relationships

The degree of preparation and intersectionality between the church and the community lead the AAPC to foster and maintain relationships that are mutually beneficial and help the church to engage with the community in ways in which impacts can be measured. Given that believers connect with a myriad of social causes, it is vital that the AAPC position itself as a mutual partner within the community. There is a diversity of passion and experience that resides among AAPC believers. As the church has not committed to a particular social cause, building and sustaining relationships is paramount to facilitate the spiritual connection to community engagement. Participant 12 said,

We have the responsibility to move into the dimension of what God has said is good. We have the responsibility to make good on God's word. That is exclusively the church's responsibility. No other community, no other leadership has that mandate. Other leaderships can be either or and be segregated, but we the responsibility because the earth is Lord's and the fullness thereof and they that dwell therein.

The spiritual mandate requires believers of the AAPC to be stewards over what God declares as "good." Unto itself, the AAPC does not possess all of the means necessary to be the caretaker of the community. What it does provide is a spiritual energy that moves

people to compassion to serve. The sense of compassion to help others is the collective product of SI. If the AAPC is serious about its commitment to humankind, the church must rely on others to help facilitate their energy and passion for doing good everywhere, for everyone.

The third level of analysis of the data examined the relationships between spirituality, community engagement, and barriers to values, attitudes, beliefs (Table 6). This segment of the analysis led me to addressing the researching questions.

Table 7

Third Level of Coding – Data Analysis

Theme	Definition	Citation
Values	Actions and deeds held in the highest of regard; opportunities considered of the utmost importance.	Todd & Rufa, 2013 Warrington, 2011
Attitudes	Shared religious convictions among a group of people; thoughts accepted as truth based on faith.	Flores et al., 2014 Keller, 2011 Samuels, 2011
Beliefs	Views and perceptions shaped by past experiences; feelings and emotions that describe connections to people and social causes.	Papouras, 2016 Wenk, 2002

Table 8

Participants' Responses to Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes – Data Analysis

Theme	Definition	Participants' responses
Values	Actions and deeds held in the highest of regard; opportunities considered of the utmost importance.	<p>Compassion to others is paramount in community engagement</p> <p>Life experiences can shape compassion for others</p> <p>Understanding the impact on policies to the “least of these” is a critical component of spiritual intelligence and connecting to action steps</p>
Attitudes	Shared religious convictions among a group of people; thoughts accepted as truth based on faith.	<p>The church is responsible for the health and welfare of the community</p> <p>Ministry should occur outside of the church</p> <p>Spirituality helps to explain differences in each of us</p> <p>The AAPC must offer more than salvation</p> <p>The church is responsible for public policy; separate from its ability to save</p> <p>The true meaning of evangelical is the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ; it is not a reformation</p> <p>The AAPC must lead spiritually, socially, economically, and educationally</p> <p>The presence of strong male figures (mentors and fathers) shape spirituality</p>

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Participants' responses</u>
Beliefs	Views and perceptions shaped by past experiences; feelings and emotions that describe connections to people and social causes.	<p>To better serve people, there must be a connection to them</p> <p>Pentecost must at the forefront of uniting communities by spiritual connection</p> <p>Our faith was shaped by what Europeans wanted us to know</p> <p>The Word of God is the long-term sustainable blue print to best engage the community with the church</p> <p>The church must exemplify God's love over issues – teach, train, equip, and prepare</p>

Summary

Research Question 1

How do leaders within the AAPC perceive that they use the principles of spiritual intelligence as a framework to engage its members in public policy initiatives in their communities?

The participants hold that the taught Word of God is the catalyst that stimulates the members of the AAPC to engage in their communities. Both at the micro- and macro levels, the principles of SI manifest differently. Teaching parishioners the responsibility for the care and concern of society aligns with the fundamental tenants of the AAPC.

Unlike other reformations where the entire system unites to support a social cause or community issue, the AAPC operates primarily through its members. There is no systematic approach of the AAPC to engage in the public discourse, but there is a spiritual presence that harnesses and drives its members to effectuate change where they see needs. The collective SI principles manifest through the commandments Jesus gave – love the Lord, your God, with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as thyself. SI aids the believer to work through their spiritual development to convert authentic love to substantive actions.

Research Question 2

What barriers prohibit leadership within the AAPC from engaging in direct public policy initiatives?

The AAPC is not one church, but rather a collective of thousands of assemblies across the U.S.. As the church does not have a centralized hub, it is a fragmented conglomeration of churches with a church. The lack of its structure is the basis for its inability to galvanize and forge a national agenda. The AAPC is without a leader who unites and sets a vision for the entire entity. By its design, it is a fluid organization without the structure by which it can organize to advance an agenda – a fundamental barrier to its overall success.

In addition to the lack of its structure, the AAPC also faces additional barriers that prohibit the church from engaging in direct public policy initiatives. The AAPC suffers from three dimensions of fear – knowledge, language, and exposure of inadequacies. The knowledge base to engage in political conversation is not an area where church leaders

are comfortable. Historically, the leaders of the AAPC do not spend time reading proposed or existing legislation. While the interest may be present, the demanding needs of the ministry outweigh understanding the political agenda of the community. The lack of knowledge directly connects to the language barrier. The verbiage of the church differs from political jargon. Thrusting leaders of the AAPC into conversations where they may feel ill-prepared poses another obstacle to public policy engagement. Not understanding political language and not having a working knowledge of the civic systems spawns a sense of inadequacy among AAPC leaders when communicating to and engaging with elected officials. These barriers present a challenge to the AAPC at the macro-level but have not necessarily impacted its members at the micro-level. These barriers have given rise to a subtle attitude of “someone else is doing it.” Without the adequate knowledge base and command of the political language, leaders have developed an inferiority complex that leads them to defer to another leader to assume a prominent role in the community and civic affairs.

I completed three levels of data analysis. First, I examined each of the 12 principles of SI based on the participants’ responses to each of the interview questions. The results indicate the leaders believe the principles of SI manifest through the community and civic actions of the members of the AAPC. Members tend to connect with community issues for which their spirituality fosters a connection. Secondly, I analyzed the data through the lens of three themes, which emerged from the literature review – spirituality, community engagement, and barriers. Findings from this degree of the analysis revealed that leaders of the AAPC felt ill-prepared to engage with civic

leaders, yet the leaders affirmed the intersectionality of the AAPC and the community. The AAPC, according to the participants, should play a role in shaping and informing public policy. The third level of analysis focused on analyzing the data through the meanings of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants held that the needs of others must be the driving force for the AAPC to engage in the public sphere. The participants believe that the AAPC should and must speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, which is a firmly held value and attitude of Christianity. While the members of the church manifest SI principles in their lives, the AAPC as a unit is too fragmented and splintered to unify as one voice to effectuate change in the public sector. Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of the findings and detail recommendations for how the AAPC can potentially address the barriers that impede their macro-level participation in public policy engagement.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

SI is a theoretical framework that is used to explain how a person's spirituality impacts concern and care for others. Twelve principles, including self-awareness and the celebration of diversity, provide a context for understanding how personal spirituality informs and guides authentic care for another. The AAPC holds spirituality at the epicenter of its theological foundation. This study addressed how the AAPC uses the SI principles, if at all, in community engagement. SI holds that spirituality guides the care for others; the AAPC frames spirituality as the hallmark of its faith. I sought to understand how these two phenomena impacted each other. I conducted this study to explore why the AAPC, unlike other mainstream reformations, did not have a voice in the public policy arena. I was curious to understand how the principles of SI were having an impact on public policy and community engagement initiatives given the connection between the principles and the theological framework of the AAPC.

Twelve African American Pentecostal bishops from across the U.S. were interviewed to share their insights regarding the church and the principles of SI. Although all 12 SI principles were explored with the participants, the findings revealed that participants held both compassion and vocation in high regard. Those two SI principles focus on empathy and placing others' needs above self. Through its teaching of New Testament scripture, the AAPC empowers its members to engage in community initiatives through the lens of authentic love for humankind. How personal engagement manifests varies from person to person because each believer is taught to rely on the spirit to guide and reveal where the believer should serve and connect.

Although members of the AAPC engage in many ways in a community, the AAPC as a single reformation is not a structured entity. The AAPC includes thousands of local assemblies and hundreds of organized fellowships but is not a single unit. The fragmentation prohibits the collective whole from coalescing around a particular community initiative. The AAPC does not have a voice in the public sector and does not have a unified approach to influencing public policy. There is no single AAPC person who speaks for or represents the collective whole of the church. Further, the lack of an organized structure gives rise to a disconnect from public discourse due to a lack of understanding of how to navigate political networks and an inability to communicate effectively within those spheres of influence. Though the AAPC is not governed by a single unit, its members are engaged and committed to community issues and causes through their spiritual intelligence.

Interpretation of the Findings

The literature indicated that the AAPC is not an organized faith-based institution that has engaged in public policy initiatives at the macro level. Included in the literature is the theme of the public's participation in public policy debates. Researchers argued that issues with which members of the public have a personal affinity tend to be areas where they connect to either support or oppose the cause. Although citizens' motivation is not necessarily spiritual, literature indicated the association to a specific issue. This study affirmed that such connections exist. Social and public causes with which members of the AAPC tend to connect, such as homelessness, teen pregnancy, and public education, come from a spiritual and emotional place. For example, a participant noted that his

millennial-aged daughter led a group of her friends to volunteer at a local Ronald McDonald house, which completely stunned him. He mentioned that she expressed her excitement to volunteer because it was a cause for which she could easily connect.

SI frames human behavior in the context of community and caring. This study revealed that the AAPC's theology directly aligns with the principles of SI. The church relies on scriptural teachings to guide and inform its members' community engagement in issues such as the environment, social justice, and public education. I sought to explore how the AAPC uses the principles of SI to connect with public policy initiatives in their communities. The findings revealed that members of the church use their spiritual intelligence to inform and guide their engagement. The basis of those connections is rooted in their understanding of Jesus's mandate concerning the love and care for the community. Believers are expected to hold the community and its needs in their hearts. The spirit of God deepens their commitment to and understanding of their role in effecting change in the world as they mature.

The second research question focused on understanding the barriers that prohibit the church from engaging directly with public policy initiatives. The findings revealed several themes. The AAPC is not a single unit and will probably never unite into a distinct entity. The church is fragmented, which explains why it has never converged to address one particular issue. The lack of structure does not empower and foster the AAPC to stand as one voice, bringing to bear a plethora of skills, talents, and financial resources. The lack of structure is neither a barrier nor an asset; it is merely the framework by which the AAPC functions. The AAPC developed from a spiritual

orientation. The fathers who began this movement in the early 1900s were primarily unlearned men who relied on spiritual intelligence to guide their actions. As different spiritual interpretations of the focus of the church emerged over time, so did factions of the African American Pentecostal sects. Unlike other religious reformations in which one leader emerged and was able to cast a vision for others to follow, the AAPC began fragmented and remains in this state today.

Given the structural reality of the AAPC, each faction operates differently and maintains the latitude to engage in public policy initiatives based on its choosing. Although each faction prioritizes community needs differently, the study findings revealed there are common barriers that have an impact on the degree to which churches share in the public discourse. Church leaders discussed several layers of apprehension that impede the connection to public policy initiatives. The lack of knowledge of laws and policies is related to their level of discomfort. The leaders are very comfortable in the spiritual environment (i.e., church discussions, bible classes) but do not share that same level of confidence in the public sphere. Though leaders feel the sense of obligation to serve the community in that capacity, they are not familiar with the language and the norms of the public sector and are therefore apprehensive about moving into settings where they feel ill prepared to make a meaningful contribution. Hence, their voices are absent at tables where public decisions impact the communities they serve.

Another challenge that leaders identified is the conflict that arises when public issues directly contradict their understanding of morality. Several problems that are considered safe for the church to address (i.e., homelessness, domestic violence, hunger)

are issues that reflect direct human suffering. More controversial issues, such as same-sex marriage, abortion rights, and LGBTQIA policies, challenge the church as some factions support these issues and others do not. The divide among AAPCs in matters of morality further exacerbate the gap between and among churches, and minimize their voice in the public space. Instead of speaking out on these issues, most leaders remain silent for fear of alienation from others within the Pentecostal community and other faith communities. Whether the AAPC supports or opposes a public policy, the lens that drives the position is one of spiritual orientation. Even though the AAPC is splintered, several reformations within the faith from time to time feel the need to weigh in on public issues. One such recent matter was same-sex marriage. The several entities within the AAPC disseminated statements within the church village either in favor of or against the union between people of the same sex. Regardless of the stance a church may or may not have taken on contentious issues, it is not likely that a community statement will emerge. The AAPC is not willing to take the risk of publicizing its perception of a spiritual stance for civic issues.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the use of SI in the AAPC. The AAPC is not a single unit, but rather a conglomeration of hundreds of churches across the country. I interviewed 12 African American Pentecostal Bishops, which represents only a small segment of a more extensive system. The responses of the participants reflected their views as spiritual leaders from each of their respective reformations and personal experiences. The data were limited to their perceptions and do not reflect a

comprehensive array of opinions that may exist in the broader context. The data are a reflection of attitudes and beliefs held from some members of the AAPC but not all.

I attempted to recruit both male and female bishops from each region of the country to obtain diverse perspectives of thinking. Although I was not looking at the potential influence that gender or geography may have on SI, I recognize that gender and region may impact the inner workings of AAPC churches. The respondents were all males and represented the Mid-Atlantic and Southern regions of the US. No data reflected are thoughts from female bishops or from those who serve in the Northeast, Midwest, or Western sections of the country. Female bishops are in the minority within the leadership ranks of the AAPC and may felt as if their voices did not matter as has been the perception for women clergy in other studies (Ferguson, 2018; Stanley, 2018).

Recommendations

SI has been embraced by many individuals across disciplines including education, nursing, and the some entities in the private sector (McGhee & Grant, 2017; Singh & Sinha, 2013; Yadav & Punia, 2016). Numerous studies have addressed both the implementation and impact of SI. Hacker and Washington (2017) conducted a study on SI's impact on the development of resilience in leaders in the private sector. Snelgar, Renard, and Shelton (2017) explored how SI can be used to prevent compassion fatigue among pastors. The current study was limited to 12 men of color in the AAPC. Given the diversity of the AAPC, it would be interesting to explore the role gender plays in SI within the framework of this church because the AAPC is predominately female.

Also, it may be intriguing to compare how SI manifests between African American and other Pentecostal churches. Given the historical context of how the AAPC emerged, some of its theological frameworks come from a place of societal marginalization. Members from non-marginalized races may embrace SI from a different perspective.

Implications

One of the principles of SI is compassion. It means possessing the ability to be consistently empathetic. I believe that this principle may be the most important of the 12. Following Jesus' teachings about the care and concern for others, He always instructed His followers to have compassion on others. The work the church does in the community must reflect empathy – a sense of a genuine understanding of the challenges of the human condition. It is my sincere hope that this study will awaken the leadership of the AAPC to understand their need to advocate for those who are the most fragile and vulnerable among us. The AAPC must be a voice of empathy that speaks to the public sector on behalf of its constituents and the least among us. There still are significant gaps in our country's economic, social, political, and educational systems between African Americans and other races. African Americans in the U.S., in 2019, are still disenfranchised. My dissertation can be the catalyst for the AAPC to organize, advocate, and engage in public policy discussions and developments at the local, state, and national levels. There is an opportunity for the AAPC to rise from obscurity and take its place in the public sphere as a voice to effectuate change for those who are still being left behind in some many areas of society. I envision the AAPC as a religious reformation that can

provide tangible, spiritual solutions to problems that continue to plague the African American community.

As the next generation of AAPC leaders emerges, I would offer that a course is taught which focuses on the church's role in the community, more specifically, a discourse on how the church can convert SI into actionable, progressive measures. From my interviews with African-American Pentecostal Bishops, it is clear that as new pastors begin their spiritual responsibility, many of them lack an understanding of the role of the church in the community. If the AAPC follows the mandate of Jesus Christ, it must see its role in being a voice and resource for the community. Unfortunately, there is no systematic training in the AAPC that helps to bring the gap between the public sector and the faith-based community. The development of curricula and training for church leaders would help to fill that gap and better prepare the church to fulfill its mandate in the world.

Further, I believe that the creation of an African-American Pentecostal Think Tank could also help to balance the scales between the AAPC and the public sector. Several of the Bishops who I interviewed challenged me to think about the next steps of this dissertation in terms of raising the church's profile in the community. Even though the AAPC is fragmented and without central leadership, I believe there is an inclination for the church to position itself in the public sphere. Such a Think Tank could be a strategic tool that allows the AAPC to think through challenging issues and offer plausible solutions that emerge from the SI framework. The recommendations would be grounded in principles of spirituality and not the denomination's philosophy. Those

spiritual solutions may very well be the answers that our communities desperately need to combat the challenges of the human condition.

Conclusions

SI is a theoretical framework that helps to explain how authentic care and concern for others manifests. The world is a complicated place with enormous challenges. The U.S. government was formed to work for and by the people. As human beings, we often look to the government to solve the severe problems of the human condition. From unemployment to the environment, the span of issues that communities grapple with daily is endless. Public policy and administration are tools that help to meet the needs of the citizenry. The AAPC, like other religious institutions, is called to serve humanity. Unlike other faith-based entities, the AAPC's theology mirrors the framework of SI. The AAPC embraces spirituality as its fundamental philosophy and driving force. The mandate given to this church to care for the needs of others comes directly from the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Through the lens of spirituality, the AAPC has the opportunity to demonstrate the supernatural power to improve the human condition. SI not only aligns with the AAPC's understanding of spirituality, but it also validates the church's uniqueness in the world. The position the AAPC holds, coupled with the public policy and administration, can be a possible combination of success to address some of the issues challenging communities across the country. The AAPC must rise to the occasion and help to alleviate the sufferings of humankind through advancing spiritual solutions, outcomes, and impacts on issues and challenges that can be addressed through public policy solutions.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

Dear Bishop:

My name is James B. Smith, and I am currently a doctoral student enrolled at Walden University. I am writing to share an opportunity for which I hope you consider. I am currently engaged in an academic study to satisfy requirements for a doctoral degree in public policy and administration. The title of the study is entitled the *Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Public Policy in the African American Pentecostal Church*. The focus of the study is to explore the perceptions of African-American Pentecostal Church leaders on the use of Spiritual Intelligence to impact and change communities.

Using a qualitative, case study methodology, participants of the study will be interviewed with a prescribed set of questions to explore the research questions. I am extending an invitation to you to participate as an interviewee. The interview, which will be conducted through a video-conferencing platform, will last between 60- and 90-minutes. I anticipate the interview phase of the study beginning in November 2018. A total of 14 Bishops will be interviewed.

The findings of the study may help to assist in preparing members of the Pentecostal clergy in their roles of spiritual leadership, i.e., connecting theological frameworks to public policy initiatives to bolster efforts from the African-American Pentecostal Church as social change agents. I solicit your consideration as a participant and would be available to answer any questions you may have that may help you arrive at a final decision.

If you are interested in taking part of this study, please e-mail me at xxxxxxxx. I will, in turn, send you an official consent form, which will require your signature and will allow me to formalize your participation in the study. I appreciate your consideration and appreciate your taking this time to read this communication.

Sincerely,

James B. Smith
Doctoral Student, Walden University
Public Policy and Administration

Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

The focus of this interview is to collect data for a qualitative, case study research project is designed to explore how the AAPC uses or does not use the principles of SI to impact and change communities. My purpose in talking with you today is to learn more about your thoughts, feelings, and experiences with the AAPC and its connection to public policy engagement.

This interview will take about 60 minutes and will include 13 questions. I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to express your desire to end the conversation. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to develop a better understanding of how you and your peers view the AAPC's use of spiritual intelligence to connect to public policy engagement.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. You will receive a draft of the interview for your review and approval. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a previous question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

1. What is your episcopal assignment and area of ministerial responsibility?

2. In what part of the country do you currently serve?
3. What influences your thoughts and actions about community engagement?
4. According to Pentecostal theology, how would you characterize a role, if any, for the church as an institution in community engagement? And, you as a leader?
5. In what ways, if at all, does spirituality guide one's community engagement connections? And, further, should spirituality influence that connection?
6. There are two themes that exist in the church relative to the separation between church and state. One suggests that the church maintain a clear distinction from the "world" and not be concerned about those who are not members of the faith. Another theme holds that the church bears a responsibility to care for and be concerned about the needs of both its members and the "lost". To which do you subscribe and why?
7. What spiritual forces challenge the church from participating in direct public policy engagement? Are there other forces that also impact the church from its involvement with public policy initiatives? What strategies would you offer to confront and eradicate those barriers?
8. Strategic direction for the next generation of leaders of the faith is imminent. What advice would you offer on how to engage the church with the community?
9. What areas of community engagement, if any, should the church be involved?
10. From your perspective, do you perceive any challenges for which the church would need to contend should the AAPC formalized its approach to public policy engagement?

11. How might the AAPC leverage its strengths to connect with the public sector to play a role, if any, in meeting the vast needs of the citizenry?
12. Is there an inherent conflict between the AAPC's theology and public policy engagement?
13. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share that you believe will better help me to understand the connection between spirituality and public policy from an African-American Pentecostal perspective?

*** If participant wishes to discontinue study, ask if they would be willing to share why:

Thank the participant for his/her participation.