

AN ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG PASTORS FOR EFFECTIVE  
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

BY

YAFFET GABAYEHU

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DR. KENNETH A. CHERNEY, ADVISOR

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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## ABSTRACT

A review of current Lutheran literature demonstrates that limited material is available regarding cross-cultural leadership methods the pastor considers in his cross-cultural ministry setting. Additionally, a traditional Wisconsin Lutheran Evangelical Synod (WELS) pastor may lack experience in the area of cultural diversity. WELS pastors can go out into the ministry field without much — if any — ministry experience among a culture other than their own. Pastors without much cross-cultural experience may go into such areas of ministry with full intention to effectively lead persons of another culture and share the ministry with them. Unfortunately, it's not always that simple. Nevertheless, while leading in a cross-cultural environment presents plenty of challenges to the leader, it can also be a rich experience. Therefore, this project set out to discover a uniquely Lutheran cross-cultural approach to leadership for pastors of all different cultures. This was done by examining whether or not cultural insiders lead differently than cultural outsiders through the perspective of four WELS members who have been blessed to have both a pastor of their same culture and a pastor of a different culture. Through an examination of relevant literature, appropriate Scriptures, and the responses of specific members, this project establishes some principles for cross-cultural leadership, and it demonstrates how several pastor's leadership styles are perceived by both cultural insiders and cultural outsiders.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural Christian congregations look to pastors for leadership, direction, and spiritual care. As leaders, pastors initiate ideas, form plans, and move people to follow them. Therefore, a great deal of pastoral leadership hinges on the pastor's relationship with his people. He seeks to exercise compassionate authority through emotional and spiritual wisdom. Consequently, he makes every effort to understand and accept people as they are and not necessarily as he would like them to be.<sup>1</sup>

As communities in the United States continue to quickly show more cultural and ethnic diversity,<sup>2</sup> cross-cultural pastoral leadership will become more and more important. Additionally, racial and ethnic tensions will undoubtedly continue to divide the political, cultural, and religious landscape in the United States. Thus, the pastor serving in a cross-cultural<sup>3</sup> setting now faces the challenge of determining an appropriate method of communicating and building relationships

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1. David S. Dockery, *Christian Leadership Essentials: A Handbook for Managing Christian Organizations* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 2.

2. The Pew Research Center indicates that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that in 2019, Americans who identify as a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic White made up 40% of the country's population, and their combined share is predicted to increase to over 50% by 2044. "Americans are more positive about the long-term rise in U.S. racial and ethnic diversity than in 2016," *Pew Research Center*, September 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/01/americans-are-more-positive-about-the-long-term-rise-in-u-s-racial-and-ethnic-diversity-than-in-2016/>.

3. Sherwood Lingenfelter defines cross-cultural leadership as "leading two or more cultural traditions that provoke a clash of worldviews." Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 20.

with communities of people from backgrounds unlike his own. However, if presented with the proper resources, he has an opportunity to learn how to effectively serve as a leader in both his congregation and his now increasingly multicultural community.

This paper is motivated by the desire to find this resource. Due to the broad nature of culture,<sup>4</sup> this paper will focus on the two cultures that continue to rise rapidly in the United States, namely, Hispanic<sup>5</sup> and African American.<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this study, the author has chosen to define culture as he understands the term, namely, that culture is the intersection between race, religion, and geographical location influenced by shared values and beliefs. Therefore, this paper will highlight the insider<sup>7</sup> perspective of members who identify with the two cultures previously mentioned in order to discover any information that might serve as an appropriate tool for the pastor serving in a cross-cultural setting.

This paper will begin with a review of the relevant scholarly literature, most of which is found in the field of Christian leadership, cross-cultural leadership, and anthropology. Next, a brief and general theological perspective along with potential cross-cultural barriers to the Christian leader's efforts in engaging with a culture different than his own will be given. Then, the research method and the interview participants will be introduced. The final section will consist of major themes among the interviews and discussion of the research findings.

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4. Patty Lane defines culture as "a system of meanings and values that shape one's behavior." Patty Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 47.

5. Hispanic may be used interchangeably with "Latino." A person of Spanish-speaking descent.

6. A person born in the United States who recognizes their racial and ethnic roots stem from Africa but may not fully identify with the African cultural heritage.

7. Due to the anthropological nature of this project, I will use the terms "insider" and "outsider" to refer to the specific perspectives indicated by the viewpoint of both the participants studied in this research project and their perspective of pastors considered to be outsiders in regard to their culture.

## Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this thesis can be summarized into these three categories: Christian leadership, cross-cultural leadership, and anthropology. Regarding Christian leadership, the majority of literature, in general, broadens the scope of leadership to those either serving as lay leaders or pastors within the church. The leader in this context is often referred to as a man chosen by God with unique strengths and weaknesses that allow him to serve God's people.<sup>8</sup> According to Jonathan Hein, Christian leadership includes both careful listening and careful reasoning. He also notes that these specific qualities of leaders can be expressed through various aspects of four categories of Christian leadership, namely, spiritual, relational, operational, and replicational leadership.<sup>9</sup> While this information is certainly valuable for Christian leaders serving in any setting, its emphasis is not necessarily cross-cultural leadership. Furthermore, in general, within the large volume of recent material on Christian leadership very little is cross-cultural in its focus. Therefore, it can be challenging to find information concerning the methods the cross-cultural Christian leader might consider implementing or the unique styles of leadership found among those Christian leaders of different cultural backgrounds.

Sherwood Lingenfelter, anthropologist and former vice president at Fuller Theological Seminary, takes on this task of providing Christian leaders with the tools needed to lead in a cross-cultural setting in his book, *Leading Cross-Culturally*. Lingenfelter expresses cross-

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8. Mark Zarling, "Leaders in the Lord! What Makes a 'Lutheran' Leader?" (WLS Essay File, 1998): 9, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/277>.

9. Jonathan R. Hein, "The Shepherd-Leader At Work: Moving Forward, The Need For Careful Listening & Careful Reasoning" (WLS Essay File, 2018): 28, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/4405>.

cultural leadership as inspiring people who come from different cultural traditions to participate with the leader “in building a community of trust and then to follow the leader and be empowered by him to achieve a compelling vision of faith.”<sup>10</sup> Lingenfelter then continues this discussion on cross-cultural leadership by expressing both the challenges the leader will face and appropriate steps the leader can take to successfully tackle such challenges. He delivers his cross-cultural approach to leadership primarily through case studies involving actual leadership successes and failures. A common theme he frequently highlights is the need to learn from the cultural differences present in the leader’s specific ministry setting. Lingenfelter elaborates on this by noting four specific observations a leader might consider in his cross-cultural ministry setting.

The first of his observations is by far the most pertinent to this project. Lingenfelter identifies the simple yet often overlooked reality that different cultures have different preferences. He illustrates this through several case studies throughout his book that reflect these differences among specific cultural groups. For example, he reveals that when Western and African partners from fourteen different countries were brought together in Cameroon to work on providing Scriptures and literacy for African churches, they defaulted to their prior cultural values and practices in their attempt to accomplish this goal. Both groups agreed that they were unable to work together effectively, and after the workshop, which was intended to assist them in discovering new core values to achieve a unified leadership approach, they continued to hold to the values and practices they had brought with them when they came.<sup>11</sup> Lingenfelter notes that “they were unable to negotiate effectively either their cultural differences or their spiritual

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10. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 21.

11. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 47.



commitments in order to engage together in kingdom work.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, as he explores and studies these dissimilarities between cultures he emphasizes the need to acknowledge that “one of the most subtle and destructive temptations for leaders is arrogance.”<sup>13</sup>

Lingenfelter’s effort to help his readers recognize that their leadership style is not the best style just because it is their style is key. Additionally, his use of case studies among different cultures and their styles of leadership is especially relevant to the research considered for this study. He reinforces this first observation by contributing three more that equip leaders with the proper components of effective leadership, namely, building trust within a community,<sup>14</sup> pursuing power-giving leadership rather than power-seeking,<sup>15</sup> and being responsible to one’s followers rather than responsible for them.<sup>16</sup> But, within his detailed and extensive research concerning cross-culturally leadership, Lingenfelter’s findings do not specifically address the perspective of the follower regarding whether or not there is a difference between cultural insider and outsider leadership styles.

Other scholars have also added a substantial amount of valuable guidance concerning leadership in general. Bernie Bass, a world-class scholar remembered for his passion and intellect in the area of leadership, contributed an extensive amount of research to a noteworthy

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12. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 47.

13. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 23.

14. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 58.

15. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 111.

16. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 133.

concept for leadership in his book titled, *Transformational Leadership*.<sup>17</sup> Bass indicates that the transformational leader stimulates and inspires followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity.<sup>18</sup> The transformational leader develops into a leader by responding to individual follower's needs, by empowering them, and by aligning the objectives and shared vision of the community. Transactional leaders, on the other hand, are those who lead through social exchange. They discuss with their followers what is required and specify the conditions and rewards followers will receive if they fulfill those requirements.<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, transformational leadership has become a popular approach to leadership. As organizations in all fields see a rapid growth in both diversity of culture and age within their respective groups, transformational leadership offers an appealing methodology to motivate and inspire followers of all kinds. The components of this leadership style consist of, but are not limited to, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.<sup>20</sup> Among these four components Bass identifies as key for transformational leadership, inspirational motivation and individualized consideration capture the direction of this project well. Bass also recognizes that both inspirational motivation and individualized

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17. In 1978 James MacGregor Burns conceptualized leadership as either transactional or transformational. Bernard Bass, author of *Transformational Leadership, Second Edition*, deepens this concept through new findings and empirical research that brings the word of leadership to life.

18. Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed) (Mahwah: Psychology Press, 2005), 4.

19. Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed) (Mahwah: Psychology Press, 2005), 4.

20. Bass, Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5.

consideration are elements that especially allow the transformational leader to effectively lead people in a multicultural setting. He explains it in this way:

Effective leaders of multicultural groups are inspirational in that they envisage and support diversity at all levels in their organization. They use symbols and traditions to attest to the value of diversity. Moreover, their individualized consideration is built on their knowledge of multicultural issues, the adaptability of the language they use to communicate to their diverse followers, and their focus on respect for cultural differences. They encourage criticism from their followers. They are ethically and morally committed to fairness. They openly advocate the elimination of ageism, ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism. They mentor, coach, and empower their diverse followers and provide them with opportunities to make use of their unique competencies.<sup>21</sup>

While Bass does provide helpful information concerning leadership, his transformational leadership approach does not offer an in-depth survey of cross-cultural leadership and the difference among those who lead in these settings. However, he does indicate that because Western countries tend to have more individualistic cultural values versus collectivistic cultural values, serving as a leader in Western countries may present some challenges due to a disconnect of shared views and clear identities.<sup>22</sup> Overall, he offers a well-balanced approach to leadership and many tools that would help any pastor looking for unique ways to enhance his leadership skills in any setting.

Andy Molinsky, professor of organizational behavior at Brandeis University's International Business School and author of *Global Dexterity*, addresses the need for cultural adaptation among leaders in the global world today. In his book, Molinsky identifies there is a serious gap in what has been written and communicated about cross-cultural management, so he takes on the task of helping people learn to act outside their cultural comfort zone. He does this

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21. Bass, Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 95.

22. Bass, Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 91.

by educating his readers on specific cultural differences among several groups of people and guiding his readers to take that knowledge and put it into action in real situations. He offers leaders of any organization the tools needed to adapt their behavior to a culture different than their own, while simultaneously staying authentic and grounded in their own natural style.

At first glance, Molinsky's book appears to be to a great resource for this project and the key to determining differences in leadership styles among a wide variety of cultures. Molinsky even details noteworthy differences in a wide variety of situations. He explains that a person from the United States working in Germany may find it challenging to communicate negative feedback to colleagues much more assertively and directly than he or she ever would in the United States.<sup>23</sup> He points out that a person from China working in the United States may struggle disclosing more personal information about themselves when making small talk with some they don't know than they ever would in China.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, he identifies that a person from Japan working in France may struggle to speak their mind more assertively in a meeting than they ever would have done in Japan.<sup>25</sup>

In his conclusion, Molinsky provides his readers with five key takeaways he believes are essential in guiding people who want to develop their own global dexterity and successfully adapt to new cultures. To give a sense of the concepts Molinsky lays out for leaders in his book see the graph below which contrasts generally accepted opinions to what he presumes is reality.<sup>26</sup>

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23. Andy Molinsky, *Global Dexterity: How to Adapt Your Behavior Across Cultures without Losing Yourself in the Process* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), Kindle edition, 80.

24. Molinsky, *Global Dexterity*, 80.

25. Molinsky, *Global Dexterity*, 86.

26 Molinsky, *Global Dexterity*, 210.

## Five key takeaways

Conventional wisdom	Reality
The key to successful cultural adaptation is learning about how another culture is different from yours.	The key to successful cultural adaptation is learning how to change your behavior to account for these differences.
You can't easily break your own cultural tendencies.	Your own cultural tendencies are more malleable than you imagine.
You don't have much, if any, leeway in another culture to behave as you want to behave.	You have far more leeway than you think to choose the way you'll behave in another culture.
Culture is a soft, squishy concept that is hard to define or assess.	You can clearly diagnose cultural style in six easy-to-understand and distinguishable dimensions.
You have to suppress your "true" nature when adapting to a foreign culture to be effective.	You can be yourself and be effective.

Molinsky, through extensive research, case studies, and relevant information, offers his readers valuable tools to effectively lead people of a different cultural background than their own. He provides useful insights regarding differences among cultural groups, and he gives well communicated information on the different struggles people will face in cross-cultural management and how to overcome them. Nevertheless, Molinsky's insights do not specifically address the research question asked for this project. He identifies cultural differences among leaders of distinctive backgrounds, but he addresses it from a different angle. Rather than focusing on the unique cultural differences of management styles in the United States, he speaks to differences a manager or leader might encounter while serving in a foreign setting, geographically speaking.

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In her book *Crossing Cultures*, Patty Lane sheds light on the challenge to the cross-cultural church in the United States. She explains that while God's truths do not change, culture shapes the expression and communication of God's people, so an urban Christian, for example, will need to think about the best way to present the gospel.<sup>27</sup> A common theme she highlights throughout her book is the need to examine the "lenses" of culture.<sup>28</sup> Each culture has its own distinct values and unique way of seeing life, so the lenses Lane refers to allow a person to have a framework through which he or she can understand and build a healthy cross-cultural relationship. Lane is very much convinced that everyone has a culture whether that be on a personal level or on a larger scale as seen in a classroom full of students. She claims that the United States Christian community has not taken the lead to endorse the acceptance and celebration of these several different cultures. Patty explains:

Churches, rather than being outspoken on issues of racial justice and equality, have typically been silent or even worse, supportive of segregation. This has not improved as immigrants to the United States have become more noticeable. Why would this be so, when Christians have led the way in humanitarian efforts around the world? Have we been blinded by our culture to the challenge set before us as followers of Christ and celebrators of his creation?<sup>29</sup>

Lane's passion for cultural awareness and understanding within the church is driven by her own faith. The context of her book is Christian which moves her to encourage the Christian community within the United States to lead society in the development of successful, healthy cross-cultural relationships. Therefore, she openly speaks out against anything that might serve as an obstacle to this development.

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27. Patty Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 136.

28. Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures*, 47.

29. Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures*, 42.

Lane's primary purpose in addressing cross-cultural relationships is practical. She looks specifically at the customs of multicultural environments found in the United States and guides her readers to acknowledge differences among cultures. She then seeks to equip them with the tools needed to effectively develop better relationships and ultimately cross into another culture. However, Lane offers very limited information concerning the leadership styles of different cultures. Although she indicates that US cultures have different views on the distribution of power compared to some minority cultures,<sup>30</sup> Lane also tends to focus more on the difference between cultural groups as a whole rather than studying individual cultural insiders and outsiders and their leadership styles from the follower's perspective.

A review of Lutheran literature reveals that there are many insights to be gained from Lutheran theologians regarding pastoral leadership. In *The Shepherd Under Christ*, authored by Profs. Armin Schuetze and Irwin Habeck, leadership is defined as "the work a person does to enable people to work most effectively together."<sup>31</sup> While it may be true that some men have natural leadership abilities and engaging personalities that may invite cooperation within the church, this does not immediately disqualify men without natural leadership abilities from serving in the church. Schuetze and Habeck note that if the pastor's leadership remains dependent on his personality, the congregation may remain dependent on him and never successfully grow into a mature body of believers that has the ability to function without him.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, pastoral leadership must not depend on the pastor's natural ability to lead.

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30. Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures*, 82.

31. Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ: A Textbook for Pastoral Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1981), 324.

32. Schuetze, Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, 324.

Furthermore, a pastor without this natural ability ought to seek to develop those qualities in order to effectively serve his church.

Schuetze and Habeck also identify some qualifications that can affect the type of pastoral leadership he may be able to provide. The pastor should cultivate a spirit of service, love for people, self-discipline, open objectivity, and a spirit of urgency that does not, however, lead to impatience.<sup>33</sup> In his book, *Doctor of Souls*, Professor John Schuetze explains that the pastor not only encourages his followers as a leader but also through all vocations in his life.<sup>34</sup> He ends this section on leadership by emboldening the pastor as a leader to encourage his members to use their own vocations to live godly lives and proclaim the gospel.

More recently, the WELS held a National Conference on Lutheran Leadership that sought to encourage all congregational leaders to take responsibility and to apply God's unchanging Word to a culture that is radically different than even just one generation ago.<sup>35</sup> The website indicates that because cultural challenges within churches are not identical in every place, Lutheran leadership is necessary.

According to the estimated increase of diversity previously stated above, it's clear that the pastor could potentially stand before a sea of faces different than his own. As faces continue to change it's important for the pastor to be aware that a cultural gap may also increase. Pastor Snowden G. Sims suggests that this addition of new faces is a natural change that should occur as the gospel of salvation reaches the hearts and lives of all people on this earth. But as more

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33. Schuetze, Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, 331.

34. John D. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017), 33–34.

35. <https://lutheranleadership.com/about/>.



cultures are involved challenges will also arise. Still, Pastor Sims indicates that although these tensions will certainly reveal themselves, “they can be lessened by learning to understand and appreciate other ethnic groups.”<sup>36</sup>

Finally, Pastor Richard Krause’s exegetical study of 1 Cor 9:19–23 titled “All Things to All Men: Where is The Limit?” offers several resourceful insights regarding the cross-cultural exchange that occurs between the pastor and those of a different culture than his own. Pastor Krause posed two important question within the study in an attempt encourage pastors to consider their own mission methodologies: 1) “Where is the limit as we seek to become all things to all men in order to save some?”<sup>37</sup> and 2) “How much accommodation can we withstand and still remain as confessional Lutherans?”<sup>38</sup>

Pastor Krause begins by first pointing out that the Apostle Paul had the difficult task of working in two distinct cultures. The first was made up of Jewish Christians who obeyed the Mosaic law, notably, circumcision, dietary laws, and the sabbath. The second was made up of Gentile Christians who came from a culture that did not observe these laws.<sup>39</sup> Although Paul certainly faced challenges of some sort in his ministry to these distinct cultures, he continued to serve them through the proclamation of the gospel in an attempt to unite them as one community

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36. Snowden G. Sims, “Changing Faces: Multi-Cultural Ministry” (WLS Essay File, 1993): 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/3777>.

37. Richard Krause, “All Things to All Men: Where Is the Limit? An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23” (WLS Essay File, 1995): 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/2704>.

38. Krause, “All Things to All Men,” 15.

39. Krause, “All Things to All Men,” 1.

of believers. Pastor Krause notes that the gospel Paul proclaimed to these people was not a social gospel nor a liberation gospel, but the message of Christ crucified and risen.<sup>40</sup>

Paul preached the basic yet powerful message of the gospel to all he met during his ministry, but that doesn't imply that his presentation of the message lacked originality or individualized consideration. Krause explains that in different situations he used a manner which was relevant to that place and time.<sup>41</sup> Paul's approach and flexibility in adapting himself and his message to people of different cultural backgrounds is evident from his three missions in Lystra, Antioch, and Athens. But the key here is that his message did not change. The way he presented it to the people may have been unique and specific to their time and place, but the foundation of his message remained the same, that is, Christ crucified and risen.

Krause emphasizes that Paul had a clear missiological strategy. He went to the great cities of his day, because that's where the Jews were, and he met people where they were at.<sup>42</sup> Are we doing the same? As he points to Paul, who adapted to different situations in order to win people for Christ, Krause advises that pastors evaluate what they are and aren't doing to win more people for Christ and unite together a community of believers. Furthermore, he suggests that pastors consider whether or not opportunities for outreach are being missed because of a dedication to traditional places and approaches. So, he ends this study by answering the questions previously stated in what appears to be a two-fold response: 1) "We live in a complex

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40. Krause, "All Things to All Men," 5.

41. Krause, "All Things to All Men," 5.

42. Krause, "All Things to All Men," 14.

world filled with social, ethical, and moral issues,” and 2) “Our mandate is to take his gospel to all nations. This command is not optional.”<sup>43</sup>

The question, then, remains: Are there in fact confessional Lutheran leaders considered to be cultural insiders who use different methods, techniques, and approaches consistent with God’s Word to effectively lead their congregation? In religious sociology and in the WELS there has been a great deal written on cross-cultural ministry. However, there is little focus on the differences between pastors considered to be cultural insiders and outsiders with respect to the cultural background of their members and whether or not they lead their people differently. A response to this question will undoubtedly be complicated because it not only requires members to evaluate their pastors but also encourages members to withhold any biases as they offer their perspectives.

### **The Research Question**

The following research question guides this study: Do cultural insiders lead differently than cultural outsiders? If so, how do they lead and what have been the results? This question arises from my own God-given experiences as a pastor in training. On a personal level, I discovered that in a cross-cultural setting a cultural outsider struggles to become the bold leader his peers and flock expect and need him to be. Therefore, this project is driven by the desire to find an answer to the research question. This research question is not only being asked as an educational necessity, but from a personally deep place. This project provides an opportunity to find a uniquely Lutheran cross-cultural approach to leadership for both insiders and outsiders.

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43. Krause, “All Things to All Men,” 15.

### **The Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is very simple. The goal is to first discover whether or not cultural insiders lead differently than cultural outsiders. Secondly, if they do, this project enables a study of their approach, an evaluation of their results, and an opportunity to determine what insights can be gained from their technique. Finally, this research provides the means to address a great spiritual need. During a time when the nation is in uproar over social-injustice, inequality, and simply a misunderstanding of cultural sensitivity, the pastor has an opportunity to bring the gospel powerfully as a leader within his church and community to a world filled with such a wide variety of beautiful cultures.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Cross-Cultural Leadership**

Cross cultural leadership settings have challenged God’s people for thousands of years. The way they interact with their neighbors, especially with neighbors of different cultural backgrounds, testifies to the comfort and support they have through Jesus Christ as well as their determination to follow their Savior’s example. A changing world means cross-cultural leaders will have to adapt, but the message they proclaim, and its hearers have and will always remain the same. The following chapter looks at one particular passage of this unchanging word that not only demonstrates that this message is for all people, but also that supports and encourages cross-cultural pastoral leadership.

### **Theological Perspective**

Before his departure, Jesus made his disciples aware of what their future mission was going to be. He commissions them with a clear purpose: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19–20 NIV).

The Great Commission meant that the disciples would share the good news of life through faith in Christ for all nations. They would go out and interact with people meeting them at their time and place to teach them everything Christ had commanded them. Lastly, the

disciples would be comforted by the reassurance Jesus gives. He promises them that he will be with at all times as they carried out his command.

Jesus' words in the Great Commission often have been used as the rationale by which churches and individuals promote cross-cultural ministry work. While this command from Jesus may serve as an appropriate text to encourage God's universal priesthood to elevate the importance of a cross-cultural ministry, God's people also do well to remember the most important portion of this command, that is, that the good news is for all nations. "All nations" is not limited to cross-cultural ministry work but includes the proclamation of God's word to everyone. This command from Jesus calls both his disciples then and his disciples today to share the gospel message through word and sacrament with Jews, Gentiles, children, the elderly, and people from all different cultures and walks of life.

Nevertheless, it goes without saying that this command was also a cross-cultural imperative. That the good news was for all nations meant that the disciples would be led to interact with people who were not like themselves as they traveled throughout the world. This task of reaching all nation certainly included cross-cultural mission work and also meant that communication would be necessary in order to teach all people about the Bible and about their Savior who won for them the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, making disciples of all nations would also stipulate cross-cultural communication.

Finally, the motivation to reach out to all nations with this message is love. The love that God has for all people that moves his disciples to win others for Christ. That same love now lives in the heart of Christians today through the grace of God who through his Spirit gives his people purpose. The calling Jesus gave his disciples years ago moves the Christian today to proclaim the

gospel to everyone, including those who are culturally different to them. However, it must not be assumed that this task of cross-cultural mission work will be easy.

Similar to the disciples, Christians today will certainly face opposition from those who reject the good news of Christ. Moreover, the Christian may go out into the ministry field with full intention to powerfully lead cultures different than their own with this message of grace, and yet discover that it's not that simple. It is true that Jesus promises to be with his disciples who carry out the Great Commission today, but it is also true that cross-cultural mission work presents several challenges. This does not suggest that Jesus' promise to be with the Christian in all their efforts was false; rather it emphasizes their responsibility to examine these challenges remembering that they are not alone in this difficult task.

### **Cross-Cultural Barriers**

Engaging a person from a culture other than one's own will always require patience. In an effort to help Christian leaders understand how they can make sense of contextual difficulties Sherwood Lingenfelter made the claim that "culture is both a palace and a prison."<sup>44</sup> Culture is a palace when everyone in the room thinks the same way leaving an individual confident and comfortable with their shared views and values. On the other hand, culture is a prison when no one in the same room thinks the same. Those feelings of comfort and confidence are now exchanged for timidness and discomfort. The individual no longer understands what is happening and is trapped in his own inability to effectively communicate and lead a people with different backgrounds and values than his own.

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44. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 59.

Acknowledging cultural barriers may not free leaders of the struggles they will confront within their ministries, but it could open the door to a better understanding on how to approach the task of serving them with the gospel. The first of many significant barriers that lead to cultural misunderstandings is language. While effective cross-cultural communication involves much more than language alone, difference in language unquestionably increases the gap of misunderstanding between cultures and can create social distances. The English-speaking African American pastor called to serve a Spanish-speaking Hispanic congregation suddenly feels like a stranger in a new world. He is stripped of his primary means of interacting with the people and left unable to communicate with his people well. Like a child, he struggles to say even the simplest things and constantly makes mistakes. He is not only unable to share his intelligence, experiences, and education with them, but he also may not be capable of bringing the gospel to their spiritual needs. Ultimately, he lacks the capability to effectively lead his congregation.

Psychological barriers may also contribute to cultural misunderstandings that arise as the pastor strives to lead his people. In order to successfully shepherd his flock, he must recognize that his style of communication and leadership may affect his ability to serve the people well. That being said, in an effort to adapt to the culture of his people he may decide to loosen or change his own styles. But it is not easy for him to go against his natural preferences or tendencies.

The Caucasian pastor called to serve a predominately African American church may feel unauthentic or uncomfortable as he tries to adapt his style in a new cultural setting. As he considers differences in non-verbal communication, that is, facial expressions, gestures, seating arrangements, personal distance, and sense of time, he may feel disingenuous performing behaviors that differ from his own values and cultural background. Also, as he reflects on



differences in the decision-making styles as well as disclosure of knowledge and emotion with his members, he may feel incompetent or unable to acquire the skills to successfully address his people in a manner unique to their culture.

Andy Molinsky claims that this is all a part of the conundrum of developing global dexterity. He indicates that in order “to be successful in a cross-cultural setting you have to adapt, but in the process of adapting, you can feel like you are losing yourself.”<sup>45</sup> While it may be true that this adaptation process could eventually assist the Caucasian pastor in effectively leading his African American church, the grueling process is still a challenge and can lead to psychological barriers that lead him to doubt his ability to carry out his role.

Finally, monocultural mindsets can lead to ethnocentric barriers in cross-cultural leadership. Ethnocentrism is “the tendency of people to judge other cultures by the values and assumptions of their own culture.”<sup>46</sup> Ethnocentrism essentially occurs wherever cultural differences are found. While it may seem like ethnocentrism is merely the product of cultural confusion at the cognitive level, ethnocentrism stems from the emotional response people have when they confront other cultures for the first time.<sup>47</sup> The issue with ethnocentrism is that people look at their own culture as superior and on that of others as inferior. It is important to note that the reverse can also happen. People can look at another culture and automatically think that everything about that culture is superior. In both cases, “my culture” is the standard by which others are judged as good or bad which may lead to deep-seated emotions, attitudes, and beliefs that seek to change

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45. Molinsky, *Global Dexterity*, 25.

46. Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 38.

47. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 38.

the culture. This response has to do with attitudes and emotions, not intellectual misunderstanding.

Ethnocentrism is a two-way street. When it creeps its way into the church both the leader and his followers are held accountable. As the followers judge their leader's cultural customs, values, and background as crude, he may feel the same about theirs. This then moves both sides to respond with deep feelings of approval or disapproval. This ethnocentric attitude is dangerous and inhumane because it leaves the door open to any prejudices, stereotypes, and biases one culture has toward the other.

A predominately Caucasian congregation served by an African American pastor may exhibit ethnocentric attitudes. As Lenny Duncan, author of *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US*, writes to his Evangelical Lutheran Church America synod he expresses his concern for what appears to be ethnocentric attitudes that he suggests have surfaced within his own synod. He writes:

White supremacy doesn't need active racists to function... You don't have to counterprotest against Black Lives Matter. You don't have to fly a Blue Lives Matter flag. You just have to be bemused or confused when you see the scenes of the QuikTrip going up in flames in Ferguson, Missouri, played on an endless loop on CNN. The blue wall of silence is really the blue wall of violence. Passivity is the new engine of systemic racism. You just have to believe that this is the way things are.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the book, Duncan continues to emphasize these ethnocentric attitudes that have caused divisions in the church. He points out to the dangers of these attitudes and expresses his desire to see the church overcome such thoughts and feelings and communicate its determination to put an end to any prejudices and stereotypes it may have. In this instance, one can certainly see the how even the passivity of a leader's followers can give the impression that they are

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48. Lenny Duncan, *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 15–16.

judging the cultural background of their leaders. Although Duncan doesn't put much of an emphasis on the tendency for the African American pastor to reciprocate these same ethnocentric attitudes, one does well to remember that ethnocentrism is a two-way street. The African American Pastor may also express an ethnocentric mindset as a result of feeling judged.

The sad reality is everything human beings say, do, or think no matter the culture is saturated with sin. When we are confronted by another culture our own is called into question. Our defense is to avoid the issue by concluding that our culture is better and other people are inferior. Yet, anthropologists do speak of a solution to this problem. The solution to ethnocentrism is "to try to understand another culture in terms of its own values and assumptions and its members as fellow humans."<sup>49</sup>

There is no denying that there will be cross-cultural barriers the pastor will have to face as he seeks to lead people from a culture other than his own. It is a challenging position to serve as a leader in a cross-cultural setting, but it can also be a rich experience. The pastor has the opportunity to not only examine these cross-cultural barriers as he seeks to effectively lead his people, but also to see and learn more about the beautiful culture he's been blessed to serve.

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49. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 39.

## CHAPTER THREE

In considering the various methods for doing the research required for this project, it was obvious that any observational or experiential data was hard to find, especially in religious studies. In order to gain that kind of data the researcher would have to “get into people’s heads” to find out what they’re thinking. This would involve asking participants to describe their thoughts and feelings. By this means, one can learn much about the culture of the participant and gain insights from their perspective. But even if the participants are open and candid, there still remains a much deeper problem.

As we’ve already seen, cultures differ not in values and backgrounds, but also in their way of thinking. Therefore, in order to effectively gather this kind of research participants would need to set aside their biases as they convey their responses. Additionally, the researcher would need to have some history in interacting with the cultures being studied because more often than not the participants may be unaware of particular differences therefore leaving them unable to describe these differences for the observer.

### **Research Method**

Nevertheless, a qualitative study fits this project well. It gives the observer the opportunity to listen and learn from the real experiences of participants who can offer insight and wisdom regarding the topic. Though case studies mentioned in the literature review of this project have observed differences between two cultural groups, a majority of these studies, in general, tend to identify these differences found in cross-cultural leadership without acknowledging the

perspective from which they are gleaned. So, this study will focus on the perspective of the followers as they communicate any differences they have noticed in the leadership styles of their pastors.

Four participants who have been served by two or more pastors of cultural backgrounds both similar and different to their own were chosen for this study. The cultural backgrounds of the participants consisted of Caucasian or Anglo culture,<sup>50</sup> as well as two cultures that continue to rise rapidly in the United States, namely, Hispanic, African American. Each participant attends a different WELS congregation that currently has a cross-cultural ministry. These churches are scattered throughout the United States.

Interviews with the participants were conducted following a list of prepared questions.<sup>51</sup> All the participants were asked for consent to audio and video record the interview and were assured that they would remain anonymous. All the interviews lasted between 40-60 min, which was more than enough time for the participants to communicate their ideas and thoughts.

As qualitative research, this study conducted interviews of a group of individuals assumed to be generally representatives of their cultures. While care was taken to assure that the interviewees came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, it is possible that a different or larger sample could yield different results and conclusions. Furthermore, it is important to address the fact that this group of individuals was asked prepared questions that may or may not have given the impression that they were negatively critiquing their pastors' cross-cultural leadership skills. While this could have rightly led to emotionally influenced responses intended to respect and

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50. A white or non-Hispanic white person who identifies with Anglo cultural heritage.

51. The interview questions are printed in the appendix.

support their leaders, the participants still gave honest answers that reflected their appreciation for their pastors.

Finally, a brief review of the emic and etic model was done to form the questions prepared for the interviews and better understand both the strengths and limitations of this research project. When looking at any culture, one's own, or someone else's, it is possible to have two different perspectives. The emic and etic model encourages researchers to carry out good cross-cultural research through careful observation of different cultures.

### **The Emic and Etic Model**

By the end of the 1980's the emic and etic concepts became a widespread conceptual tool used in several different academic disciplines. Linguist Kenneth L. Pike was the person who first coined the terms "emic" and "etic," and who first used them in print in 1954.<sup>52</sup> Today the terms are used by most anthropologists and the distinction has proven valuable as they seek to understand and interpret other cultures. The two terms are used to differentiate between two types of concepts.

The term emic refers to the insider's perspective of one's own culture.<sup>53</sup> Anthropologists use an emic model to see the world as the people they study see it.<sup>54</sup> However, the researcher now faces the challenge of finding ways to get inside people's heads to find out what they are thinking. Anthropologist Marvin Harries suggested that the best way to get inside people's heads

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52. [https://scholars.sil.org/thomas\\_n\\_headland/controversies/emic\\_eti/introduction](https://scholars.sil.org/thomas_n_headland/controversies/emic_eti/introduction).

53. Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 94.

54. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 52,

is to talk with them, asking questions about what they think and feel.<sup>55</sup> Through these questions, researchers can learn much about a culture, keeping in mind that people will tell only what they want to reveal or what they want the observer to think. Still, asking the right question is key in an emic analysis because the researcher can only discover the ideas that the people share.

On the other hand, the term etic refers to the outsider's perspective, not tied to any one culture.<sup>56</sup> The etic model seeks to observe people and predict human behavior and learn how to live and function properly in another culture.<sup>57</sup> So, unlike the emic model that seeks to see the world as the insider sees it, the etic model is framed in terms of the outsider's own concepts and assumptions of another culture. Although the etic model may seem like it provides limited information from the outsider's perspective, it can serve as an excellent method to help the researcher understand and communicate with people in another culture. Additionally, the etic perspective is extremely valuable in helping people understand their own culture. Often times the hardest culture people have a difficult time understanding is their own simply because they might be unaware of their own biases and believe that any rational person sees the world as they do. Though it also has its own challenges, the etic model is a great approach to compare differences between two cultures so that the researcher can move from one to the other comfortably.

Thus, emic and etic understandings of a culture complement each other well in a cross-cultural study. While emic understanding is needed to understand how people see the world and learn their values, etic understanding is needed to compare one culture with others to examine

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55. Marvin Harris, "History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5, (1976): 336, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.05.100176.001553>.

56. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 96.

57. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 50.

difference and proactively avoid barriers. Both the insider's and outsider's perspective have much to offer.

In learning another culture yet still holding on to the values of one's own, a person soon becomes aware that there is more than one way to look at culture. First, the individual learns to see their own culture, the culture they've been surrounded by for a majority of their life, from the inside. However, when the individual encounters another culture, they quickly realize that they are looking at it as outsiders. That individual has now experienced a cross-cultural setting.

### **Defining Cultural Insiders and Outsiders**

Cross-cultural settings are made up of cultural insiders and outsiders. These insiders and outsiders each have their own distinct lenses through which they see, think, and understand life. A Hispanic congregation in the United States, for example, has a much different concept of time than their North American Caucasian pastor. Even though church is regularly scheduled to start at noon each Sunday, the Hispanic members may not show up until 12:15p.m. The Caucasian pastor, who has for years lived in an area of the world where punctuality is important, assumes it is only right that he begins worship at noon. But, the Hispanic congregation, who generally has been raised in a culture that appears to take a more relaxed approach to time, actually has a view of "time" that tends to focus more on the event as a whole and the relationships present. So, what's happening here? Are the Hispanic members just being rude when it comes to "Hispanic time?" From the pastor's perspective it can certainly seem that way.

This very basic illustration demonstrates that in studying a cross-cultural setting the researcher finds both cultural insiders (Hispanic members) and cultural outsiders (the Anglo pastor). The most obvious advantage of being a cultural insider includes an assumed "pre-



knowledge” to certain tendencies established in one’s own culture. Yet, at the same time, an obvious disadvantage includes the difficulty a cultural insider encounters when trying to step out of these established tendencies. An understanding of cultural insiders and outsiders in conjunction with the emic and etic models helps to conduct a good cross-cultural study and to explain why the participants considered for this project were chosen.

## **Research Participants**

### **Meet Participant A**

Participant A is a Latino woman in her mid 50’s who grew up Catholic by name. In her mid 40’s she and her husband at the time became WELS members. Her first pastor was Caucasian, and her current pastor is Latino. She shared that while she has noticed a difference between the way her pastors have led the church, the differences are very small. When asked if she would consider the culture of her pastors to be a reason for these differences she responded: “I think so. I think it’s something that I don’t want to realize or state, but I do think that’s really true.”

### **Major Themes from Participant A**

In sharing her first memories of attending a Lutheran church, Participant A expressed that the church was very welcoming. She felt that her Caucasian pastor gave her special attention as he interacted with her on her first day and he also made an effort to make sure she would come the next Sunday, and she has been a member ever since.

Although she identified herself with Latino culture, Participant A explained that in looking for a new church family she didn’t want to attend a church where a Latino pastor served as leader. Because she had been hurt by a Latino pastor in the past, she left the church and felt

very lost. For that reason, when she arrived at her new Lutheran church, she appreciated that her new pastor was Anglo and connected with him on many levels culturally because she had already lived in the United States for several years.

When her Caucasian pastor took a call to serve another congregation and a Latino pastor had taken a call to now serve Participant A as her leader, she had reservations. Her past experiences had led her to fear that having another Latino leader could lead to similar challenges she faced in the past. Nevertheless, she indicated that she has now come to appreciate having a Latino pastor as her leader who emphasizes the importance of the Word of God as truth within the church and the members' lives.

When asked what difference, if any, she noticed in style of leadership between her previous and current pastor, Participant A responding by saying:

[The Caucasian pastor] was disciplined, very disciplined. He was both compassionate and strict. He had a way of leading us that we knew we couldn't play games with him! I liked his strict and structured way of preaching. When he left, I missed him dearly, and [the new Hispanic pastor] was too lax for me. That was another thing I did not like about this Latino pastor at the time. He was just too lax for me. He had a huge forgiving heart and I noticed he didn't treat matters as sternly when I thought it needed to be. I realize now that he was just trying to connect, establish trust, and get as many ears open as possible. At first, I wasn't happy with that because I needed strictness and structure. He was way too relaxed, so I missed the [the Caucasian pastor]. I think the main difference is that they led the congregation in two different styles, one structured and the other flexible.

After years of getting to know her new Latino pastor, Participant A said that she had begun to see past those differences and really appreciate both him and his family. She said that she began to connect really well with the pastor's wife who is also Latino and felt like she could talk to her about almost anything. When asked if there have been any particular experiences that led her to appreciate the culture of her Latino pastor she replied:

Yes. It started to happen when his family was getting divided in his [foreign] country. We made a connection because he finally understood what the [specific Latin American country] culture deals with when they come to this country. When we come here, we face

real dangers. We come feeling we have no rights to getting treated equally, so we take the crap that's handed to us. So, when I learned about the stuff going on in his country, I pained for him and his family. When I spoke to him about these issues, he told me that he finally understood what this kind of suffering looks for people Hispanics who struggle coming to and living in this country. We made strong connections through these challenges. Also, being able to hear about his life story really helps with these connections and makes an impact on us because we can relate in a way and it's encouraging.

Finally, Participant A had several tips and encouraging words for a new pastor called to lead a culture different than his own. She identified the most important thing as feeling out your group and getting to know your people as a whole group. She encouraged the new pastor to learn the attitudes and behaviors of his people and to proclaim two important truths, namely, the forgiveness of sins and life through Christ. She also explains that it is important for the new pastor to learn more about the other culture he is called to lead. For the new pastor called to serve the Latino community, a culture different than his own, she states:

Get to know the culture. What are the origins of the culture? You know? What did they go through? As Hispanics we don't really grow up in the church and if we grow up in the church it's usually the Catholic Church and the Catholic Church has a way of conveying this message that you need to like to continue to punish yourself and that you're never going to be good enough to go to heaven. We feel we don't deserve number one, to be equal in the church, and number two, to be equal in the world in this country, especially, and to be equal enough to those who are going to heaven. We don't feel we have rights and so keep those in mind as you get assigned to a cross-cultural congregation. It doesn't matter what culture you're from or what color you are, keep these things in mind as you give them God's word and you will gain their trust.

### Meet Participant B

Participant B is a Caucasian man in his late 60's who has been a member of a Lutheran Church since 1968 and serves as congregational president in his church. For many years he's been led by Caucasian pastors and now his current pastor is African American. Although he shared that he hasn't noticed many differences between the leadership styles of his Caucasian pastors and his

current African American pastor, he did note that having an African American pastor has been so good for the congregation. He said that it has had a great impact on their congregation located in the inner city.

### Major Themes from Participant B

When asked what difference, if any, he has noticed in style of leadership between his previous pastors and his current pastor, Participant B replied:

The previous long-term [Caucasian] pastor who brought us into WELS, he was a lot more authoritarian. He did not tolerate any deviation from the way he saw things. There were some issues over who got confirmed, who didn't, and I'll be honest there were times I felt like I needed, and I wanted to leave the congregation, but I felt like I had to stay because I really respected the ministry of the school and I wanted to kind of shield it from him as best I could. On the other hand, yeah, I really enjoy having [our African American pastor] here because he can see a little more broadly on the issues involved and he tried to lead and show us where we might be able to change a bit. I think over the years a lot of people have really grown to respect him.

As Participant B reflected on the impact of having an African American pastor serving as a leader in his congregation, he pointed out that it has been good to see it from a different side because the church had always had WELS pastors who came primarily out of white Anglo backgrounds. He suggested that it was time for their inner-city church to be led by someone who could see and relate to the community's needs and communicate the gospel to it understandably. He stressed the need for his church to become totally diverse. He even said that there have been parents who have chosen to send their children to their Lutheran Elementary School because of the diversity seen in both the church and school. He also noted that the leadership style of his African American pastor has tremendously helped members grow and change as well. Lastly, as he reflected on the characteristics he appreciates most about his African American pastor, he pointed out that his pastor's willingness to listen and learn has been extremely valuable.

Finally, Participant B's advice to a new pastor called to lead a culture different than his own was gospel-centered. He underlined the need to show respect to the other culture, while at the same still proclaiming the Word. He encouraged the new pastor to never change the truth and purity of Scripture, but to instead proclaim to the people both law and gospel. He also explained that the new pastor may need to adapt, to learn to appreciate diversity, and to be reminded that God is with him.

### Meet Participant C

Participant C is a Latino woman in her late 40's who grew up Catholic by name. She began attending her Lutheran church after signing up for a session of English as a second language (ESL) classes through the church. Before this she was looking for a church that she could attend that would spiritually nurture her son through the truths of Scripture. She found that church and has been member ever since. Participant C has had the blessing of being served by both Caucasian English-speaking pastors as well as a Latino pastor. She shared that she has noticed a difference in the way the Caucasian pastors and the Latino pastor led the congregation, but she also identifies that these differences are influenced by both culture and personality.

### Major Themes from Participant C

When asked what differences, if any, she has noticed in style of leadership between her current Caucasian pastor and her previous Latino pastor, Participant C responded by first indicating that her Caucasian pastor is a man of integrity. She points out that it is obvious that God and His Word govern his life which is important to her. She also indicates that he is the kind of pastor who fights for his church and the love he has for its people and ministry is great. She describes

him as tactical and analytical as a leader which, while at times can make it difficult to follow his train of thought, also allows her to think of things in a new way.

In describing her former Latino pastor, she noted that his leadership style was more charismatic. She indicated that because he was of the same culture, he and the Latino members clicked immediately and his “Let’s do this!” mentality was very much valued by many. She said that in preaching and teaching he was simple and conversational which was very helpful because many of the Latino members have a very basic education both academically and scripturally. She also noted that he was gifted musically so he introduced new Latino music that Latino members really enjoyed. Concerning sermons and Bible studies she pointed out that language at times was a bit easier with him because he was able to get his points across well.

Finally, Participant C encourages the new pastor called to lead a culture other than his own to remember that culture may have an influence on the way he leads the church, but it is not the most important part. She reminds the pastor to focus on the Word of God and urges him to be driven to share the wisdom and knowledge of salvation found in Scripture with his people. She reassures him that although he may face challenges his people will be understanding and will not judge him. So, once again she encourages him to touch the lives of his people with the gospel as he learns how best to serve them as a leader.

#### Meet Participant D

Participant D is an African-American woman in her late 30’s who has been a member a Lutheran church since her grade school years when she attended a Lutheran Elementary School (LES). She’s married and has two children who now also attend an LES. For several years now, Participant D has been blessed to follow the leadership and spiritual guidance of her current

Caucasian pastor, but she's also had the wonderful blessing of being served by an African American pastor as well. As Participant D shares her insights and observations of being led by two pastors of different cultures, she bears in mind that her African American husband's experiences and observations are also of great value, and significantly influence her response to the questions being asked. Finally, she stated she appreciates her current pastor and everything he's done for her and her family, and she noted how amazing it would be to one day have an African American pastor called to serve alongside him in their diverse community.

#### Major Themes from Participant D

As Participant D shares her first memories of attending a Lutheran church, she expresses how valuable the Christian education she received when she was a young girl has been for her in her adult life. She acknowledges that by the grace of God her faith is as strong as it is today because of the teachers and pastor he placed in her life. She adds that as she grew older the leadership of her African American pastor led her to recognize the importance of having a family of Christian brothers and sisters thus deepening her love for her own faith.

When asked what her feelings were about the culture of her former African American pastor, Participant D replied:

It was really nice to have a pastor who looked like me, who grew up where I grew up, and who could relate to some of the same experiences I went through in life. Pastor was really like a second dad to me. He was like my role model and I felt like when he would preach and teach God's Word to me it felt personal, like he knew how important it would be for me to treasure my faith later in life because I could tell he already knew what sorts of struggles and temptations the black, African American community was up against every day.

When asked what differences, if any, she has noticed in style of leadership between her current Caucasian pastor and her previous African American pastor, Participant D responded by

indicating that as far as leadership was concerned, she could not really see many differences. However, she did share that each pastor had a different personality that she believed influenced the way they led the congregation in their preaching, teaching, and church meetings. She noted that if there were any distinctive differences in their leadership styles it would be that her Caucasian pastor is motivated and her former African American pastor was confident. She stated that these differences do not set one pastor above the other, but simply recognize that each pastor is unique and led their congregation in special ways.

When asked at what times she finds herself especially conscious of the fact that her leader is of a different culture as her, Participant D replied:

I've noticed it for a while because of the way my husband feels about it. My husband was baptized in the Lutheran church and even took classes, but right now with everything going on he just doesn't feel like he can really connect with [Caucasian] pastor. He loves the church and even agrees with me that a Lutheran education is the best thing we can give our kids, but he just doesn't feel like he can have a conversation with pastor, especially about the horrible things that are happening today to black men and women.

Finally, when asked what advice she would give to a new pastor called to serve a culture other than his own, Participant D said, "Love your people." She encouraged the new pastor to treasure God's Word and to remember that God's people need it. She reassured him that even though there will be challenges and it may feel like he is trying to squeeze himself into a family where he feels he does not fit in, that he should be motivated and confident: motivated to share the Word with people who need it now more than ever, and confident knowing that God and the members of the church will love and support him as he shares that Word.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Impact of Major Themes on This Project**

The data collected from the participants for this project significantly assisted in gaining a better insight and understanding of the three cultures represented in the study. However, at the same time, the participants chosen for this study do not speak for all Hispanic, Caucasian, and African American cultures. They are, however, real people with real experiences and their perspectives are key to learning more about the values of their own culture. Therefore, this study provided an opportunity to observe other cultures from a different perspective and allowed the researcher to simply listen and learn.

Though each participant clearly indicated that they had noticed differences between the leadership styles of their pastors, the data collected also made it clear that these differences in leadership styles were not solely dependent on the culture of the pastor. Rather, the data identified that these differences were likely to be influenced by personality types as well. Though some anthropologists have concluded that significantly different personality types do exist between different cultures,<sup>58</sup> a completely different methodology that may or may not yield conclusive data, along with a much larger number of participants would be needed in order to study the relationship between culture and personality present in this study. Nevertheless, it must be said that the participants clearly

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58. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 438.

recognized that the cultural background, values, and way of thinking along with the personality of the pastors had a significant impact on the way they viewed his cross-cultural leadership style.

The different leadership styles identified by the participants included strict, structured, flexible, technical, analytical, and charismatic. In order to grasp a better understanding of these styles recognized by the participants, as well as form an idea about their results, it may help to use the Style Approach leadership theory. The fundamental premise of this approach is to emphasize the behavior of the leader. It focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act. Therefore, one might categorize the list above into two general kinds of leadership behaviors identified through this approach, namely, “task behaviors” and “relationship behaviors.” One might suggest that strict, structured, technical, and analytical styles of leadership fall under the category of task behaviors. Task behaviors facilitate goal accomplishments: they help group members to achieve their objectives.<sup>59</sup> The remaining— i.e., the flexible and charismatic— leadership styles would then fall under relationship behaviors. Relationship behaviors help group members feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves.<sup>60</sup>

While the Emic and Etic model may have served as a good starting point to highlight cultural differences among pastors serving as leaders from the perspective of members, an entirely different study that includes both the Emic and Etic model and the Style Approach could have yielded more conclusive data to the research question: “Do cultural insiders lead differently than cultural outsiders? If so, how do they lead and what have the results been?” Nevertheless,

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59. Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), 65.

60. Northouse, *Leadership*, 65.

this project can serve as the precursor to an even deeper study of unique leadership styles among cultural insiders and outsiders.

### **Areas for Further Study**

Several other questions arose throughout this project but ultimately fell outside the focus of this study. What barriers, if any, do cultural insiders face as they lead their own culture? What might be some ways in which a pastor can appropriately blend an English and Spanish congregation well? Additionally, other areas of interest might include narrowing the study of leadership styles among pastors according to race rather than culture due to the broad nature of the term “culture.” Finally, because culture is not necessarily limited to race or ethnicity, and a study on how the new pastor adapts to the culture found in his new community and what blessings and challenges that might offer would be of great value.

## CONCLUSION

This project challenged me both cognitively and emotionally. What I thought would stand out as important qualities, methods, or styles anticipated by church members or their leaders paled in comparison to one essential element emphasized by every participant who gave encouragement to the new pastor called to lead a culture other than his own: the proclamation of God's Word. That being said, this project was a moving task that deepened my desire to continue learning how to powerfully lead God's people with Scripture in a cross-cultural setting.

The changes sweeping our world today create new problems for cross-cultural ministries, but they also bring fresh opportunities. Though it may take time for the new pastor to grow into a powerful cross-cultural leader, he's reminded of the promise Jesus' gives his disciples today, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20 NIV). May it be this promise and this word that moves him to love and lead all God's people to the best of his ability.

As he learns to speak the language and studies the culture of his people, may the love of Christ that dwells in him richly through the Word deepen his own love for the proclamation of that Word to all nations. As he examines cultural barriers and identifies the present challenges, may that love encourage him to overcome any obstacles in the way with the message of forgiveness. And finally, may he find his strength in the Holy Spirit as he seeks to serve and glorify his God in all these things.

## APPENDIX. ENGLISH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) What are your first memories of attending a Lutheran church?
  - a. If their Pastor at the time was of their same culture...
    - i. What were your feelings about the culture of your pastor?
      1. What benefits did you find in that?
      2. What challenges?
  - b. If their Pastor was of a different culture than their own...
    - i. How did you become aware that the pastor was a different culture than your own?
    - ii. What were your feelings about the culture of your pastor at the time?
      1. What benefits did you find in that?
      2. What challenges?
- 2) What difference, if any, have you noticed in style of leadership between your previous and current pastor...
  - a. From the pulpit?
  - b. In Bible study?
  - c. In private conversation/personally challenging times?
  - d. Church meetings?
- 3) Would you consider the culture of the pastor to be a reason for these differences? Why or why not?
- 4) At what times do you find yourself especially conscious of the fact that your leader is of the same/different culture as you?
  - a. What benefits do you find in that?
  - b. What challenges?
- 5) Were there any particular experiences that led you to appreciate the culture of your pastor and his style of leadership?
  - a. How have recent racial and cultural tensions affected your thinking on this?
  - b. In what circumstances would you consider the culture of your pastor to be an important element as he leads your congregation?
- 6) What characteristics of leadership do you appreciate most about your pastor?
  - a. Why do you appreciate that?
  - b. What could he say or do differently to help you feel more comfortable?
- 7) What advice would you give to a new pastor called to serve a culture other than his own?
- 8) Are there any other questions that I should have asked, but didn't?

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