Preparing Students to Lead Faith Communities in an Increasingly Multicultural World: Insights from Twenty Interviews

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Chicago, October 2023

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Soong-Chan Rah in his book, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity,* elevates the reality of what many are awakening to in Western Christianity. Despite overall population growth in North America, Christianity is often cited as in perilous decline with sizable numeric losses in predominantly white, mainline denominations. Upon deeper analysis, however, there is good reason to believe that Christianity is actually on the increase in North America, but the growth is best accounted for by the viability of immigrant churches. This creates an interesting challenge for those of us who serve faith-based institutions of higher education. As Rah writes, "…American evangelicalism remains enamored with an ecclesiology and a value system that reflect a dated and increasingly irrelevant cultural captivity and are disconnected from both a global and a local reality." (p.12). Furthermore, the racial mix of the United States is changing. Some estimates suggest that by 2045 that the US population will be majority non-white. (NOTE: This is already true of those under age 15, as well as in some states such as California.) This prompted us to formulate the question that drives this paper: "If the American church of tomorrow will inevitably become more diverse ethnically and culturally, how well prepared are our students to minister in an increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic world?"

We both teach at Asbury Theological Seminary, a leading evangelical school whose primary campus is in the small, rural town of Wilmore, Kentucky but whose global reach has been extensive. We have partnerships with institutions on most continents, and extension teaching sites in increasingly diverse settings across the country. We host visiting scholars from multiple nations and we give generous support to faculty who are regularly invited to teach overseas. With multi-level degree programs, our student body represents a diverse array of denominations, nationalities and ethnicities. Yet, with multiple delivery sites and modes, the student experience at Asbury can vary widely in the degree of ethnic and cultural diversity to which a student is exposed and formed. Further, like so many institutions of higher education, questions about diversity are often a part of new faculty hires, prompting reflection on how well our seminary represents the Kingdom of God. Though our own journeys and reflections, we became increasingly aware of the ways our mental models emerged from and assumed predominantly white churches that are in decline and anxious. If the hope for a new evangelicalism rested in a deeper engagement and mutual sharing with vibrant and growing diaspora and ethnic churches, how might we better prepare our students and ourselves to serve this diversity?

We were invited to participate in a Kern Foundation gathering of faculty that culminated in the opportunity to apply for small grants to fund year-long projects. Reading and presentations for the Kern foundation weekend highlighted in part the probability that seminary curriculums and the mental models that govern them are likely calibrated to serve traditional, predominantly

white churches that are largely in decline. By contrast, diaspora and ethnic churches are often growing and vibrant, quickly becoming the hope of a new evangelicalism. Our particular workshop at Kern advocated that institutional change emerges when leaders exercise empathy, especially listening cross-culturally to the losses and longings of those who have been entrusted into their care. We secured a small grant from Kern to interview twenty leaders of faith-based organizations who were in some way involved in leading multi-ethnic or multicultural congregations or teaching in ways related to this area. As a starting point for identifying leaders, we were mindful of Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes definition: "A multicultural congregation is one in which the membership and leadership are comprised of two or more culturally distinct groups that share power and influence over the church's governance, worship, theology and doctrine, and programming."

After identifying our twenty leaders and securing their permissions, our interview schedule was relatively simple. We simply asked leaders to share their answers to five questions:

1) What are the challenges of leading a multicultural ministry?
2) What do you believe are the specific areas of knowledge that a multicultural leader should have to allow them to minister well?
3) What do you believe are the dispositions or attitudes that one must have to effectively minister in this context?
4) What are the specific skills needed to lead a multicultural ministry? Why is each skill important?
5) What experiences should a student have which will prepare them to lead in a multicultural setting?

Often these questions served as springboards into the sharing of stories, precautionary tales, or further elaboration on best practices for forming students to serve in multi-ethnic and multicultural world. In this presentation we serve as curators of those interviews and not as creators of content.

Participant Context

Our 20 participants come from a wide variety of contexts - geographically, denominationally, and in terms of race/ethnicity – from within the United States and Canada. Locations include urban areas such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Toronto; as well as rural areas such as Logansport, Indiana. We had multiple denominational contexts, including multiple Baptist denominations, non-denominational, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, Global Methodist, and United Methodist. Finally, while about half of our participants were Caucasian, our sample included those who were Caribbean-American, African American, Hispanic (multiple countries), and Asian American. Since we were curating broad themes across interviews, we chose not to individually link specific persons to the content of what they shared unless there was a need to protect intellectual property.

Framing the conversation: Some important realities.

A number of important statements emerged from our interviews that we felt could serve as frames for the more particular points that were to follow. While we come to different conclusions or develop directives that differ with these observations, it seemed important to realize the assumptive and convictional basis from which our interviewees were operating. One of them

shared the observation that white majority communities stay white majority whenever they are being led by majority white leaders. Significant movement toward multiculturalism most typically follows only when people of color move into strategic positions of leadership. In ecclesiastical settings this diversity can sometimes come through the back door like youth ministry. It might be interesting to consider whether there are similar "back door" possibilities for higher education. Similarly, several other respondents commented that when diversifying leadership, various racial groups must have representation in leadership. Further, accommodating diversity in faith communities may require not only recognition of differences in race or ethnicity, but also in socioeconomics. However, other respondents pointed out that being multicultural doesn't always mean being multi-ethnic, nor does being mono-ethnic necessarily mean that a community is not multi-cultural.

We were unprepared to find that a couple of our respondents challenged our foundational objective of training students for "multicultural church leadership." One respondent helped us see that multicultural churches may be promoted by majority culture because they promote assimilation that can come at the diminishment of immigrant churches and the retention of their ethnic and linguistic diversity. This respondent asked, "What about Black churches – do they need to be made multi-cultural? Would we want restaurants to be made multicultural or to retain the distinctiveness of their particularity?" He pointed out a parallel of how fusion foods are growing in popularity because they retain their cultural identity. So, if when it comes to food choices the value being elevated is moving farther away from overgeneralizing (Chinese, Mediterranean, African, etc.) to greater specificity – Szechuan, Moroccan, Gochujang sauce - might this same particularity be desirable to see in churches? A second challenge to the multicultural church objective came at the point of the metrics that tend to follow whenever emphasis is given to church planting movements and/or growing churches. Thinking inevitably leans toward counting how many churches are being planted, getting more people into buildings, and finding sustainable means via the offering plate. Several respondents spoke earnestly in our interviews that the wealth gap in immigration and ethnic minority churches, coupled with changes in things like immigration policy and political realities requires the jettisoning of what a successful church looks like and the creation of new measures by which to gage success.

Finally, a veteran in multi-cultural, multiethnic church planting ministry posited conclusively that there has to be a "personal call" for this kind of ministry. To engage it simply because it is culturally relevant or because one is curious will end with "getting blown out of the water." This caused us to begin considering if we needed two or more sets of recommendations - one that focused on preparation for all students in developing greater competencies of an increasingly diverse world and a specialized training for those who may seek equipping to lead multicultural, multi-ethnic populations. We will return to this distinction in the concluding section of our paper.

With this in mind, let's look at the questions and the answers provided. While there can often be a wide range of answers to certain questions, for the purposes of this presentation we are primarily focused on addressing the most-cited common themes. Occasionally we will name an outlier response, especially if it pertains to the specific context a participant has or if we believe it to be important given our knowledge of ministry in a multicultural environment.

Q1 - What are the greatest challenges of leading a multicultural/multiethnic church?

Accommodation vs. Assimilation. Multiple participants named the issue of people willing to accommodate others as central. It's common that different racial groups will have differing perspectives on all sorts of issues from the style of worship to how leadership operates. Too often, the tendency among churches that were predominantly white, and which are slowly becoming more multiracial is that they are fine with adding all the people of color, but not fine with changing how the church operates. However, this is not accommodation, but rather assimilation, forcing people from other cultural backgrounds to adopt to the predominant one.

Multicultural churches may be promoted by the majority culture because they promote assimilation, but this can come at the diminishment of immigrant churches and the retention of their ethnic and linguistic diversity. What is needed is cultural competency in pedagogy – people who recognize the value and sacredness of ethnic and linguistic identity without losing this in a pedagogical model of ethnic diversity. Part of this cultural competency is the ability to understand marginality and liminality. While we recognize that all those who move from one culture to a different one experience liminality, too often we fail to understand that the "in-between" may be specific to the different cultures. For instance, not all immigrants and refugees deal with liminality the same way. While we might welcome internationals, do second generation migrants feel understood and recognized? It's an ongoing work to see what each culture and generation brings to the overall body.

It should be noted that one participant, an Asian-American, pushed back somewhat on the idea of just accommodating other groups, stating, "I think for me at least helping people learn to navigate the dominant culture is an important piece instead of trying to make the entire dominant culture accommodate that person, as that takes a long time and is a big ask… Giving people just enough tools and awareness that they can navigate this system and at least have a seat at the table." His approach seems to focus more on helping people who are not part of the dominant system learn the systems here so they can work within those systems to create change which more reflects the needs of the multiracial members.

Representative Leadership. One of the arenas where this is most important is in shared leadership. Having a church that is truly multiracial but only has one race of people in power is not a multicultural church by our chosen definition. Thus many participants stated they appreciated the distinction of shared leadership in Walker-Barnes' definition, believing it was important to find ways to truly accommodate others and allow the leadership to reflect who the church membership actually is. One multicultural network leader also advocates for having multiple leaders simply because the complexities of navigating racial landscapes call for balancing multiple perspectives.

Of course, the problem oftentimes is that we have adopted certain styles of leadership, even in our denominational structures, that make it problematic for people from other racial/cultural groups to be seen as leaders. The way a church's governance and decision-making are set up can consciously or unconsciously favor those who are well educated, who think in strategic linear ways, who can work in a hierarchical structure and are able to speak directly. For many cultures, these Western traits run counter to their cultural roots of how to lead. So, in order for these people to have a seat at the table requires a sustained process of helping them acculturate to the

systems they may have to navigate. A leader may have to learn to not present their ideas first and begin by asking what others think should happen.

Leaders need to further understand how power structures, privilege and social inequalities shape human experience and realize how these factors impact the way people come into faith and the way they express their faith. Different cultures interact in different ways. A leader in one context, for example, expressed a need to distinguish between European/Aristocratic values of high control and low emotional access with cultures he regarded as more "flowing, emotionally driven, and chaotic." Another leader realized that there was no way to become one, multi-cultural congregation until the minority group felt like they would have enough votes to arrive at equality in decision-making.

Therefore, we need to understand the governing ideas that shape how the various cultures and ethnicities in a congregation view leadership. For instance, in some cultures speaking directly to someone in leadership is frowned upon. In other cultures, a woman would never address a male leader. Movement toward equality may require structuring ways that those accustomed to remaining silent or who feel they have less to share are given space to share their thoughts. As one participant reminded us, "We need to not only share power, but work to actively empower those races/cultures that don't readily step out to assume power, or who think they don't have anything to offer."

Of course, all this focus on shared leadership only makes a difference if we really listen and then seek to integrate the various perspectives. As one participated noted, "Too often we invite ethnic minorities to contribute their thoughts on an issue with little intent to act on it." In other words, while we invite participation, it's a false participation since the dominant group will act in their own best interests.

Multiple Cultures. It's also important that we recognize there are multiple cultures at work beyond just race and ethnicity. Several participants reflected on the importance of socioeconomic differences and the way the church needs to be actively focused on ministering in that arena. One church described their church as "You know it's a God thing when you have a businessperson who works for a Fortune 500 company sitting next to a homeless person and both are worshipping the same God. Just as importantly, it's what happens after the service. Not only does that businessperson actively work to find ways to meet the needs of the homeless person, but the homeless person is able to offer new perspectives to the businessperson. That's when you know that they are learning to bridge the socioeconomic culture."

Q2 – What do you believe are the specific areas of knowledge that a multicultural leader should have to allow them to minister well?

Specifically, we sought to distinguish which challenges could be taught in an academic classroom, and which could only be "taught" via experience.

Theological Grounding. Multiple leaders pointed to the importance of theological grounding for multi-cultural ministry, distinguishing this from political, personal or popular motivation for taking on these roles. As one leader expressed, being able to articulate a theological basis for

diversity as a missional imperative provided a defense against accusations that the church was "jumping on the cultural woke bandwagon." A challenging question made by one of our leaders was 'has anyone left their politics for the church or do we only leave church for our politics?" Several felt that traditional theological training was not wrong in the formulation of their core requirements, but that the core was yet "incomplete" in its capacity to equip one to lead these kinds of congregations. This prompts the question of what is "the more" that might be critical in shifting or adding to a traditional, orthodox approach?

One leader, responding to our focus on multi-cultural *churches* stated that the starting point should be pneumatology rather than ecclesiology, or better, that our ecclesiology should be considered in light of pneumatology. As previously mentioned, whereas ecclesiology inclines us to focus on building spaces, small groups, committees, and similar metrics; starting with God's Spirit being poured out on all flesh inclines us to count how many connections we might be making in our neighborhood. In this regard studying network theory, community organizing, and how networks functions within small communities could be regarded as every bit as important as learning Greek. Without this, he felt, we divorce cognition from embodied theology. Another came to the realization leading a multicultural church that the basic theology he was taught in seminary didn't fully grasp how deeply envisioned diversity is in the historical theology of the church and in Pauline theology. Needed in seminary training was a *multicultural hermeneutic* that would allow one to decenter self so ideas about church, community, ecclesiology, Kingdom of God and missiology were not driven by monolithic concepts, but that might allow a student to dismantle what churches have always done. How would an African American grandmother or an Asian Pacific male or a single teenage mom read a particular passage of Scripture? A multicultural hermeneutic could parallel how often Biblical characters and missionaries from history are moving from one place to another crossing boundaries with the gospel. Such a vision is mission critical considering the number of displaced people in the world today.

As another pastor reflected - being a child of mega-church influencers through young adulthood and seminary, he had developed an obsession with "trying to grow a bigger church in our community," without realizing the insanity this brings when multicultural, multi-ethnic churches almost have to adopt different metrics for viability. Rather than numerical growth, pastors like this pointed to foci that would direct learning in different ways: developing inclusive partnerships, polycentric leadership, multi-cultural governance, mission from everywhere to everywhere, etc. These too will become clearer as we move through this article.

Intercultural Intelligence. Almost all of our leaders pointed to the importance of intercultural intelligence as being key, and one of them commented that most of us are overly confident in our own estimation of having this competence. The following questions were posed by one of our interviewees to challenge our own perceptions of how interculturally we are operating - "Think about the last ten books you've read, the last ten podcasts you've listened to, the last ten people you've had in your home. If they all look and sound the same, coming from the same perspective, then all you're doing is cementing your own perspective, instead of broadening it." Another respondent asked, "Who do you open up to?"

Interestingly, after naming intercultural intelligence as foundational, a vast array of ingredients tied to intercultural intelligence were named as important. For example,

- Cultures may differ in the way they order doctrinal content and humanitarian aid – i.e. which takes precedence feeding the hungry or teaching the Bible? Similarly, differences may occur in how a culture prioritizes or sequences the processes of believing, belonging and behaving?
- When describing the needed competence of "cultural intelligence" several of our respondents moved immediately to specifiy issues in their particular context:
    - The way different cultures greet each other – with a handshake or a bow. Does one look an authority figure in the eye or divert one's gaze?
    - The important correlation of food with culture, and how nuances may exist within ethnic groups – e.g. Cuban rice versus Dominican rice versus Puerto Rican Rice, or the way similar layers of diversity exists within African and Asian communities.
    - Table etiquette – e.g. does one pick up their bowl or eat from it while it sits on the table; where might one place their chopsticks (in Taiwan Christians don't leave their chopsticks in a bowl because they are said to look like incense sticks meant to protect from ghosts)
    - Cultural preferences over punctuality and whether value is given to efficiency or to relationships – Who or what determines when a meeting should start?
    - Festival days and whether they can be celebrated? (Does one commemorate Tiananmen square in an Asian congregation?)
    - Resistance over being separated into age-level groupings for worship or Christian education because culturally they wanted to worship together within their family.

Models of Ministry. Those who had broad exposure to various multi-cultural communities also noted how nuanced characteristics of those communities might be and how those nuances influenced the governing vision and model for ministry. Hence, an essential part of understanding a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic church may depend on understanding how it reflects one or more of the following models:

- Mother-daughter ministry model where first generation immigrants launch a church in their native tongue and retain native customs but to sustain subsequent generations a rupture launch occurs to birth an English congregation.
- Multi-siloed congregation where different ethnicities occasionally join for worship but exist primarily as independent groupings.
- Complexity exists in some congregations because cultural diversity is created not by ethnicity/nationality but by where one has migrated from, what language is spoken and what socio-economic status each group tends to represent. In these settings, when and if a church births a new congregation may be determined by when there is critical mass within a sub-population.
- Multicultural populations may also vary widely in their eagerness/reluctance to assimilate. For example, if one comes from a people group without an independent national identity, they may be eager to retain linguistic identity and avoid assimilation. A faith community may represent the freest place to share/experience this heritage.
- Generational differences may shape the story and identity of diversity within a multicultural faith community. First generation immigrants often want to hold onto language, culture, and superstitions that may become heightened after leaving their home country. Depending on the cause of their exodus, these may elevate hope of someday

returning. Subsequent generations increasingly know less and less of their home country and generally by the third generation have little desire to "return" or adopt customs now foreign to them.

The implications these nuances have for education are subtle but consequential. Does the educational experience communicate that one must reject or suppress their ethnicity? Can a model of multicultural expression value the sacredness and uniqueness of each ethnic and linguistic identity or is it lost in a promoted "Biblical" model of multiculturalism? (As one of our own seminary graduates observed "we do well to welcome internationals, but do second generation migrants feel understood and recognized?"). As a foundational pedagogical principle, one subject told us "Unity does not equal uniformity, but deeper love for uniqueness."

Theology of Culture. An additional focus for a knowledge base that several of our respondents pointed to was developing a theology of culture. This too has many nuances and could mushroom into a large area, but foundational convictions that could be elaborated on include:

- All cultures bear the image of God and contain elements of general revelation. Thus, one must be able to see the beauty of God in all denominations, but also recognize that all cultures are also sinful (e.g. bent toward imperialism).
- All Christian revelation is infinitely translatable – every culture can be recipient of the gospel ("contextual translatability of the gospel"), but every culture is also partial, and none have a monopoly on God's revelation.
- Intercultural ministry filtered through the theology of Cross may compel "voluntary cultural sacrifice" for the sake of mission – (cf. Ian Scott on deny self, take up cross for sake of culture).

Trauma-Informed Training. Another salient focus suggested by a couple of our respondents was that anyone who hopes to do multi-cultural ministry needs trauma-informed training. "There's no one living in the United States that is a person of color that has not experienced trauma on some level." Given the growing body of literature on this topic, especially how neuroscience recognizes that racialized trauma can impact not only the person who directly experienced the trauma, but also family members for generations after the incident, it is important for students to understand this and its implications for ministry. "Only then can they elevate others, not as a token based on race or culture, but simply for who they are as a sister/brother in Christ."

Ethnography

Finally, several of our respondents pointed to the importance of gaining ethnographic knowledge and skill through field methods – i.e. developing the capacity to notice difference or similarity, exploration of new spaces, collect data through participant observation. Often these were named in association with key foci in anthropology – social construction; identity and racial identity; family and kinship; transnationalism; appreciating/discerning celebrations, traditions, suspicions.

The persuasion of many of our leaders was that becoming skilled in ethnography can't be fully learned from reading a book, it requires immersion in an unfamiliar environment. One leader recounted that whenever race and ethnic identity is challenged, he finds an old sage to grant understanding of the deeper issues ("sturdy wisdom") at work. When the George Floyd murder

happened, for example, he didn't go looking to books for answers. He found the oldest black man with whom he had a natural relationship and sat with him every other week for several hours to talk about the dynamics at work. When developing ethnographic skills, it may be possible to "arm" students with a set of driving questions, give them time to observe, and then come back and process that in community with other people. Several expressions of immersion experiences whereby ethnographic skill may be developed are contained in the last section of this article on experiences.

The purpose of ethnographic knowledge seemed largely aimed at increasing appreciation and the honoring of cultural dynamics. Yet, several of our leaders were careful to relativize cultural sensitivity in light of greater kingdom realities. Hence, they would add qualifying statements that the skill needed is "discernment on how to respect culture without promoting it just because its culture." Or, the church uses terms "transcends culture, above culture, transforming culture, but Jesus calls people to Himself even when that means violating cultural norms." Hence, these leaders were keenly aware that to be a follower of Jesus (who touched the dead, called woman into His service, etc.) may not always be appealing to cultural dreams of education or owning a house. They recognized that culture could become a sacred cow, and also acknowledged that quite often what is contended with as a theological/spiritual argument (i.e. you're not sanctified or spiritual enough) would be better understood as cultural difference.

3) What do you believe are the dispositions or attitudes that a student must have to effectively minister in this context?

Listening. Earlier, under knowledge, we listed learning how to think ethnographically. This practice was one that overlapped in multiple areas of our questions. Some participants saw ethnography more as a disposition to attain. (And as we'll see later, some saw it specifically as a skill to be mastered.) In short, the assumptive disposition undergirding ethnography as a disposition is the capacity to listen and listen again, always with a posture to understand. This was identified in some way across almost all of our interviews, often with caveats that sometimes we listen only to shoot down what is said and decide that this is the better way; and sometimes one has to listen beyond just the words being spoken. "…when English is a second language for an individual, they will tell you that they're often still thinking in their first language. So even if they can express themselves in English, it requires listening skills to really try to understand their heart beyond just their words because they may be saying the right word but are having difficulty reflecting their heart, because I don't speak their first language." Another leader stated that listening must involve really hearing the emotion behind a statement, reading body language, understanding tone, without which it is easy to assume everything is ok. In intercultural settings one has to develop the capacity to hear what's not being said.

Curiosity. A corollary to listening is cultivating a disposition of curiosity. Grounding this theologically, one leader pointed to an interpretation of Moses at the burning bush suggesting that the name for God as "I AM" could be translated as "something is happening." Hence, curiosity – i.e. asking "What is God doing in the world?" becomes the way forward in setting missional priority for a faith community. In educational settings, curiosity may be fostered by cultivating willingness to enter intercultural spaces without snap judgments. Instead, observing and asking questions about what is happening? Who is interacting with whom and how? What is

noticeable in your five senses being in this space? What peaks your curiosity in this engagement? Fostering curiosity as a disposition may also be enhanced by encouraging students to believe that there is something to be learned by sitting under the leadership or teaching of those who don't look like them.

Other dispositions. Very similar comments flowed from corollary dispositions that were named by our leaders such as: a) *humility* that moves beyond simply being a benefactor to others. Needed is humility that finds expression in a willingness to not know all the answers or see my way as being best; b) *adaptability and flexibility* - a willingness to be wrong and to be corrected. This might be described as "submitting to people of color"; c) patience – because when things are being interpreted, you have to wait; c) *vulnerability and comfort with our own inadequacy* that allows the fruit of the Spirit to grow community and transformation. One leader regarded this posture as requiring a movement/trust in the Spirit of God to move upon hearts to decenter self and heighten critical self-awareness; d) *mutuality* so that what is sought is not best for one person or group, but a collaborative, collective whole that seeks blessing for the whole; e) *empathy* and understanding towards the feelings of others; f) *Love*, often expressed through patience. "The greatest attitude is not language skills but love…We are a church who is pursuing diversity because we want to love our community."

If a student sees themselves as taking on a leadership position in a multicultural, multi-ethnic faith community, additional dispositions may be crucial. A leader of a multicultural network stated plainly "You can't pastor a multi-cultural church until you are living a multi-ethnic life." Others spoke of disposition in light of navigating nuance when political events required a response. What's needed in disposition is "not compromise, but wisdom…I don't believe in speaking truth to power, but bending the ear of power to the truth you speak." This leader's strategy was recognizing that he would never reach the ten percent at either end of a political spectrum but that there might be ways of moving the eighty percent in the middle toward greater unity.

Culture Making/Community Fostering. Once a student gains ethnographic knowledge and skill, a few of our leaders described the importance of culture making and community fostering. We have already alluded to some of the complexities this may entail in intercultural settings. Tensions in multicultural congregations, for example, are often not resolved but more realistically "lived within." Being able to understand and distinguish between liminality and marginality may be critical in culture-making. When in the midst of these treacherous waters, the disposition called for is one of adaptive, non-anxious and discerning leadership. Where unity is fostered through the Holy Spirit when differences are heightened, we then create an evangelistic witness to the world.

The beautiful thing about cultural intelligence is that the more you practice it the more of a value it becomes for you.

4) What are the specific skills needed to lead a multicultural ministry? Why is each skill important?

Leadership. Almost all of the participants named leadership skills as being essential. There were lots of nuances about what those leadership skills should look like. One respondent distinguished between several styles of leadership he believed were essential in leading multicultural faith communities: interpretive, advocative and catalytic. *Interpretive leadership* entails helping people hear each other and raising awareness of differences. This skill is learned by teaching leaders how to ask certain kinds of questions – e.g. "what do you mean by that?" or "Tell me a story about that." *Advocative leadership* entails deepening awareness of how power dynamics determine influence and making sure that everyone is seeing the value of what others are bringing to the table. Important here is the skill to protect everyone's voice, helping people see that their own experiences are important, learning in a given context how to solicit ideas especially when people are accustomed to deference to a leader, and cultivating a way to point out where God is at work in a community. *Catalytic leadership* entails cultivating the capacity for experimentation and encouraging a community to get really good at falling/failing/honoring failed experimentation?

One of our respondents named intentionality as the key leadership skill – intentionality about declaring diversity as vision and value in the life of the Church. "This results in intentionality about the representation on the stage and the pictures on the walls and the songs that are song and the languages that things are translated into, the makeup of boards and leadership teams, where they post jobs to hire people…. All of these either help or hinder a church in becoming a truly multicultural church." Intentionality also becomes important in evaluation asking "what is and is not working?" and how was this perceived from each representative racial/cultural group. This serves to ensure that faith community is seeking the common good of all groups. Another located this kind of leadership as centered in the pulpit from which one could exercise the skill to "identify and proclaim" a Biblical model. Another advocated for naming racism as sin and calling out behaviors that are offensive. One respondent also named storytelling as "so important," - being able to listen and hold each other's stories.

Conflict Resolution. Anytime you're doing ministry, you will face differences of opinion that can result in conflict. Now multiply that by each different cultural group in the ministry. Each culture may have its own ways of either addressing or ignoring conflict when it emerges. This requires having the skill to discern all those cultural expressions, and then discerning a path forward that everyone can buy into.

Listening. This was named earlier as a disposition, but some respondents saw it more as a skill to be developed. In particular, they focused on the two areas: the importance of listening for *cultural nuances* and the ability to *really understand and learn*. Can we listen with a posture to understand and learn what's being said and to hear what's going on around us? Several participants noted that we tend to see people as a homogenous group (e.g. "Well, I know what this Hispanic thinks, so that must be what every Hispanic thinks.") Instead, we need to see and hear each individual and not assume we already know their story. Are we willing to sincerely believe that there is something to learn, that there is value in sitting under the leadership or teaching of those that don't look like me?

One pastor told the following story: "I remember one time talking to a leader that decided to put flags as a celebration of the nations on a Sunday morning. They thought the flags were

representative of their congregation, but they forgot one person's nation, and that person was deeply disappointed. Well, it'd be easy to write them off and say, 'Give us credit you know we're being intentional.' But to really be able to understand their heart and recognize how that made them feel, as if their country wasn't as important as the others, that's critical." This could only happen because the Caucasian pastor was willing to recognize the genuine pain of the church member of color and could submit himself to the teaching of that church member.

Another aspect of listening is recognizing that some minority groups may not believe they have any gifts to offer the larger community since that's been the dominant cultural motif. Instead, by listening to the gifts they have, we can help them to listen to the needs of the community and discover how they can contribute. Educational assignments that permit minority students to share about and value their family or heritage when they have previously tried to suppress their racial or ethnic identity for the purposes of acculturating may be transformational.

The hope then of some pedagogical practices is to begin a pathway toward leaders of multicultural faith communities developing a "second-instinct" of moving quickly from one culture to another as lived experience of being in two or more worlds all the time.

5) What experiences should a student have which will prepare them to lead in a multicultural setting?

In the final portion of our interviews, we posed the question of what experiences might be helpful for our students to have in preparing to serve an increasingly multicultural and multi-ethnic world. This question garnered the widest number of responses and may represent the most pragmatic section of out interviews. "Education and experience have to go hand-in-hand," quipped one of our leaders, without which one can internalize a trope of white saviorism rather than of co-laboring. Several leaders commented that immersion experiences alone can serve to reinforce stereotypes and "othering" – the evaluation of others based on their circumstances ("why don't they just get a job or save their money better?"). These leaders recognized that students moved beyond stereotypes only when time was spent really getting to know the other and to hear their stories. One of our respondents observed that racial polarization in America often engenders one of two comments; either "I am embarrassed to be an American," or "THEY just need to become real Americans." Indicative of a lack of exposure, this leader believed the polarization could only be overcome with firsthand experience of other cultures and/or to those in a different socio-economic class. Another observed that such exposure is needed not just for Anglos, but for all, as some internationals have also only been in congregations of their same ethnicity. We would also hasten to add an observation made by one of our subjects that intercultural experience may be fostered best not simply through immersion experiences in places outside the classroom but when classrooms themselves become more diverse. Campuses may have targeted programs that serve a particular ethnic group but these are often segmented away from the rest of the student body.

Impact on Seminaries and Undergrad Religion Programs

The primary thrust of our study was to not only hear from those doing multicultural ministry what they believed to be the knowledge base, attitudes and disposition, skills and experiences needed to lead in a multicultural environment, but then to ask, "How can we as seminary

professors best prepare students to acquire this knowledge, attitudes/dispositions, skills and experiences? Perhaps just as importantly, can any degree in theology, bible, Christian education, youth ministry or other type of religious studies degree really do all that is needed to prepare students for this type of leadership?

We choose to believe that while we (the seminary) may not be able to do everything that our thought leaders have stated is important, we do believe we can do a number of them. Furthermore, we recognize that it is important for the academy to always be in conversation and partnership with the local church in order to provide students "both/and"—that is, the knowledge/skills the seminary can provide alongside the dispositions/experiences a local church or ministry can help them develop.

When it comes to developing skills that enable effectiveness in multicultural settings, it may be that in educational settings we need to take the view that a student should be learning skills that are a decade and a half ahead of the curve on what will be needed. In other words, can we help them acquire the skills now that they may not even recognize they'll need until they are out doing ministry? Like the congregations they serve, leaders can be "culturally tone deaf" to important demographic changes happening in their community and the needs of people they represent. Once leaders become sensitive to these changes the needed skill is to become pastoral AND hopeful AND prophetic – helping congregational members interact with people in the church's community setting.

In order to organize ideas from our subjects in the most accessible way, we have categorized them according to different roles when might play in fostering multicultural competence:

For educators:

- Recognize the importance of having a diverse faculty. Several of our leaders stated that their experience in seminary, while good, could have been so much better if they had seen professors who looked like them, talked like them, and understood their lived experiences. Unfortunately, for some, that was not the case. "One professor told me that my culture's adoption of liberation theology was heretical. He never really took the time to understand why we saw liberation theology as central to our story as people of color." Several participants stated something along the lines of it being hard to learn how to lead a multicultural ministry when all their training was done with white leadership who themselves have never actually led a multicultural ministry.
- Ensure your course texts represent a variety of cultures and perspectives. Take an inventory of your course texts. How many are written by people who look like you? How many represent diversity in gender, race, and culture? When all the texts are written by the same gender and race, there is a kind of cultural echo chamber where they are all coming from the same perspective.
- Help students understand and map their own culture. Have them write personal stories of their family's immigration, church background and experiences. Include questions like "Were you asked to value your parent's culture? How were you taught to honor ancestors?" For minority students, encourage this to serve as one avenue of valuing their ethnicity and culture and voice. This may require opening the eyes of some as Caucasians/Americans may claim "they have no culture!"

- Require students to conduct a mini-ethnographic study by making at least four visits to a culturally diverse church, taking field notes and conducting interviews. Encourage students to process the culture of the church and not become overly focused on the theology.
- Reinforce any lecture with an exercise students engage in that helps them wrestle with unconscious bias. This may begin as simply as asking a set of question and seeing if students can answer the opposite way that they ordinarily would. If students resists or diminish the impact of individual visits to congregations, try organizing class field trips where engagement can happen and be processed together
- Provide case studies that explore diversity and cultural difference. Particularly helpful might be stories of multicultural faith communities that normalize non-linear patterns of growth.
- Make an assignment that requires students to use public transport to take them to a part of your city that feels like they are in a different part of the world, where they don't always understand what is going on around hem and have to imagine what lived experience is like in that setting. Interestingly, one educator who regularly creates these kind of experiences observed that while one immersion experience may create bias, multiple immersion experiences may be essential before one dismantles ideological dichotomies between us and them.
- Have students spend a week trying to navigate through the social support systems of a particular setting to learn how frustrating and daunting it can be.
- Experiences need to go beyond just visiting ethnic churches. Encourage students to work with non-profits (such as correctional facilities, immigrant services, etc.) or neighborhood groups or to attend cultural events. Have students engage with elected officials over issues that could better the community, especially for non-majority groups. Some of the best intercultural exposure may come in having a work role within another culture.
- Give every student some kind of addictions exposure by working at a Detox or rehab center, or if nothing else, attend 12 step meetings to become exposed to the whole culture of alcohol, drug, sexual addictions and codependency.
- Clinical Pastoral Education was mentioned by several folks as being invaluable, creating disequilibrium about how they viewed people and then having space to process.
- The faculty of an institution most often encounter other cultures when they have been invited to preach and speak. Encourage them instead to show up at immigrant churches when they are not preaching carrying the message "I came to hear you preach," thus giving voice to ethnic identity.
- When it is difficult to create opportunities for students to find immersion experiences, it may become strategic to involve front-line leaders of diverse settings to become part of the curriculum. Several of our students, reminiscing on their own training, expressed the need to have more exposure to practitioners in their educational journeys.
- One leader invited his son to plan their multicultural trip so they wouldn't go only to the father's favorite places and so he could communicate that he was still learning
- Always be careful not to tokenize the other, they can smell it from a mile away. "If you're just trying to prove your bona fides to the other, you've already lost."
- Create non-credit bearing workshops or a training center whereby students can earn certification or a badge in cultural engagement.

- Encourage a vetting process for syllabi that would evaluate gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity apropos to each particular subject. Press for this by insisting that such is of high theological priority and value. Some have witnessed that when everyone is doing so it lessens the voice of those who may show opposition.
- In addition to diversifying textbooks, consider how chapel experiences can center people of color and their forms of worship. Assign sermons preached by people of color that exposes them to a different line of thinking. (For instance, how can we help white students hear a sermon by a black or brown preacher and hear it as a form of liberation theology from that cultural/racial perspective and not heresy?)
- Hire a diversity officer and promote their role as ensuring that diversity lives in all or our places and not just in token places and/or times.
- By some accounts, traditional, educational delivery systems built on asynchronous classroom meeting times cannot create provide adequate methods of training multicultural pastors. One of our network leaders proposed instead that such training be exported and "fractional" contracts be negotiated, much like a "skunk works" program. With this kind of model students could spend a semester or longer embedded in a viable multi-cultural, multiethnic congregation while taking classes online or via a hybrid format.

For Leaders of multi-cultural communities

- In Houston, following inspiration from television documentaries that sought to exegete a city, a group of multi-cultural faith community leaders who had never previously met committed to pilgrim together for a year. One Saturday each month they spent ten hours asking each leader to "show us your neighborhood." They met parents in homes, ate meals in ethnic restaurants, asked immigrants how it felt to be talked about as "murderers and drug dealers?" and tried to see the city through the lens of migration. By humanizing those they are often separated from, they hope to overcome some of the historic division in their city.
- Create conferences where instead of exegeting a passage about Paul being the "prisoner of Christ," have actual prisoners as keynotes so you hear what the experience of being a prisoner is like.
- Have first generation immigrants or the most mature elders with English language skills share their experiences in congregational settings.
- When putting together worship, use liturgical rituals that honor first generation language and meanings but then communicate these meanings to younger generations,
- Building diversity may begin more easily with youth and children who are already accustomed to living in a melting pot and have commonalities with others their age making crossing boundaries easier. There may also be pathways through 2nd and 3rd generation kids overcoming the barrier of language and tradition.
- One leader found that in order to help the more silent people on his board that were typically minorities, they had to let them know what was going to be talked about well in advance and encourage them to write out their thoughts beforehand that could then be shared because it was unlikely that they would open up otherwise, especially if any argumentation began to occur.

- Movement toward equality may require structuring ways that those accustomed to remaining silent or who feel they have less to share are given space to share their thoughts.
- Embed student's in people's lives beyond just Sunday mornings because the way someone expresses themselves among friends may be different from the way they express themselves in church.
- Instead of engaging students in Sunday Morning Bible study, commit four weeks to walking through the neighborhoods around the church (the more diverse the better) and praying.

Conclusion

Through this study, it is apparent to us that we in higher education have some significant challenges to address if we are to prepare our students to engage in multicultural ministry. It will take time and attentiveness to ensure we are like the men of Isacchar, who understand the times and know what we need to do to ensure students are prepared to engage this world in which we live. It certainly won't be easy, and if we're honest, will cost educational institutions. But as one leader stated, "It is an investment that will cost. It will cost you time. It will cost you money. It could even cost you sleep. Because we are not building widgets. We are dealing with people. And it's dynamic and it's messy. But I think it is the will of the Lord. And it's very difficult. Many times we think about how easy it would be to just be homogeneous. But that's not what we are called to be."

May we all desire to be the type of professors who can give of our best in helping students learn to navigate the multicultural world in which we live as they seek to embody the Kingdom of God.