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THE INFLUENCE OF GROUP IDENTITY ON THE PREACHING PATTERNS
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ABSTRACT

People view themselves not only as individuals, but also as members of a group. Furthermore, people identify themselves with multiple groups based upon areas in which they share similarities with other group members. Group Identity Theory (GIT) is a socio-psychological field of thought which seeks to understand how individuals view themselves in light of various group identities, and also how various groups interact with each other.

This study was conducted in the Philippines, in central and northern Luzon, among a group of about seventy-five Bible Methodist pastors belonging two closely-related groups of churches: the Philippine Bible Methodist Church (PBMC) and the Bible Methodist Gospel Light Church (BMGLC). The PBMC pastors identify themselves as belonging to an ethnic group known as Ilocano and the majority of the BMGLC pastors identify their ethnicity as Ifugao.

Using GIT as the theoretical lens, this study examined the preaching patterns of these pastors in order to find out what influence group identity has on them. In order to find the answer to this question, the researcher employed a qualitative, descriptive approach. This involved using personal interviews as the primary method for gathering the data. Questionnaires, personal observations, and some sermon outlines were also employed as secondary methods of obtaining data in order to supplement and triangulate the interview data.

The study produced five key findings. First of all, it reveals the salience of spiritual identity among these pastors while they are engaged in the task of preaching. This is a new category of group identity which emerged from the interview data.

Secondly, it discovers that spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and Bible reading, study, and meditation have a key role in the spiritual identity of these pastors. Thirdly, it shows that spiritual fellowship with the members of their congregation also plays an important role in the formation of their spiritual identity. Fourthly, this study indicates that the spiritual identity of these pastors transcends other key categories of identity, and thus, for them, forms a primary basis for fellowship with pastors and leaders from other religious groups. Fifthly, this study reveals that while spiritual identity transcends other categories of identity, it also overlaps with these same categories in various areas, including religious identity, thus pointing to an emerging sense of religious identity among the subjects.

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