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# Women in Ministry: How Conflicts Between God's Purpose and Church Doctrine Impact the Efficacy of Female Church Leaders

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Women in Ministry: How Conflicts Between God's Purpose and Church Doctrine Impact  
the Efficacy of Female Church Leaders

by

Nicole L. Davis

A Dissertation Presented to the  
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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This dissertation was submitted by Nicole L. Davis under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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## Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to every male father-figure, mentor, teacher, professor, coach, colleague, friend, brother-in-Christ, family member, pastor, prophet, apostle, and total stranger who has believed in me beyond my womanhood. You spoke purpose, confidence, faith, and fight into me because you saw something that showed my potential and worth as a member of humanity. Your words and acts of kindness serve as good seeds planted in the soil called, *my life*. You give me courage to dream and pursue what is in my heart—not because of my gender, but despite my gender. I have now blossomed into a beautiful tree full of ripe fruit for others to pick and enjoy: making seeds available for others to plant to fulfill their own hopes of producing fruitful trees.

I also want to especially dedicate this work to my husband and our two sons. These three men have provided me with love and prayers all along the way. Their words of encouragement and consistent support over the years gave me the strength and determination to keep going until the mission was accomplished. With such a reservoir of love, I now have more than enough strength to keep going, and going, and going, and going!

I deeply thank my Heavenly Father for every man He has allowed to touch my life, and I express my honor of them through this work.

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## Abstract

The following research was a biographical narrative that examined the lived experiences of male and female church leaders and their perspectives on the social, moral, and religious implications of female church leadership. The purpose of this research was to explore the ideologies and identities of women leaders within the faith ministry, the definitions of ministry and leadership, the role of women in church ministry, and their understanding of marketplace ministry. I employed conflict resolution theories relating to power, change, and mental modeling as the basis of analysis for evaluating the impact of church policies and practices on the utilization of female church leaders. Twelve church leaders were invited to participate in this research, comprised of six women and six men from three different church denominations. Results found that the organizational culture had a mediating impact on gender equality and effectiveness of female church leadership. In a sense, female clergymen undermined and challenged the previously well-established patriarchal power within the church, leading to disruption and interpersonal conflicts. Seven salient themes emerged from the analysis: 1) struggle for gender equality; 2) gender vs. competence; 3) male dominated church culture; 4) gender bias and discrimination; 5) kingdom culture debate; 6) women resisting women, and 7) the significance of voice. The research also introduced the strategies for overcoming the patriarchy with critical consciousness and empowering clergywomen via the REFRESH Model.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century was marked by an increase in women leadership relating to government, politics, sports, and other institutions. In 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first female presidential candidate for the office of the President of the United States. In 2018, Lorna Mahlock was named the first Black female brigadier general in the United States Marine Corps (Tatum, 2018). That same year, Stacey Cunningham became the first woman to become president of the New York Stock Exchange (Forbes, 2018), and Gina Haspel was confirmed as the first woman to be the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Becky Hammon may become the first National Basketball Association female basketball coach, which would make her the first female coach of any professional sport as to date (Staley, 2018).

Despite the rise of female leadership in various social milieus, women in many church denominations still face structural barriers that have prevented them from being successful as they pursue or maintain leadership roles within the church (Silvoso, 2002). Furthermore, although women feel that they have the freedom to pursue the highest levels of leadership and career fulfillment in the marketplace, many find secular success to be different from success as church leaders (McClain-Walters, 2015). Consequently, churches, in particular, do not accept or recognize the same skills that made women prosper in the marketplace as God-given qualifications and in some cases viewed them unsuitable for teaching and leading in church even if they feel the “call” to do so.

Though this has been an ongoing concern for women, the conversation has been gradually shifting into a critical issue of contention in the minds of many churchgoers. In



this study, I analyzed the lived experiences of both women and men who have worked and worshipped together in church. It was important to me to hear both perspectives regarding women and ministry since both had been greatly influenced by the cultural and spiritual direction of their respective churches. I explored the church experiences of women leaders who desired to serve God in ministry. The research focused on women's advances in the church and in the marketplace over the last 120 years and covered the span of three generations. I reviewed the various ways women have carved out an identity for themselves while they worked to change the definition of ministry for women.

Handy (1989) first observed that there were theological strongholds against women from attaining a leadership role within the church, causing a growing conflict with personal identity. Decades later, those sentiments were still reverberating in the pews and hallways of modern-day churches where women were prevented from pursuing religious career aspirations. The Barna Research Group (2012), for example, surveyed over 608 female churchgoers across the United States and found that 78% of women disagreed with the statement that the Bible prohibited women from holding leadership positions within the church, and 37% of those women believed that ministries would be more effective if more women were given the opportunity to lead. Past research has also found that the definition of ministry was closely connected to the confines of activities within the church and that particular denominational institutions had a say in whether a woman could be ordained to serve as a leader in a ministerial role (Barnes, 2006).

The goal of the present research was to shift away from the current stained-glass ceiling of the church—where women have long felt hindered from responding to their

calling from God—to considering possible opportunities for women outside of the church walls that may provide ministry opportunities. The greater emphasis was to discover what it meant for a woman to be in "ministry" in church verses in the marketplace as experienced and understood by both women and men, and, also what it meant to be a "leader" in church verses in the marketplace. These questions presented an inherent conflict regarding the religious practitioner's perception of God's purpose for women, the church practices regarding women who work as ministry leaders, and the status quo as it related to how women in ministry and leadership were accepted, identified, or supported.

There may be a paradigm shift occurring that enabled women to consider offering their gifts outside the church and still be fulfilled in their desire to do ministry (Hillman, n.d.). The challenge was to gain a working understanding of the traditional church teachings for each denomination being studied and properly juxtaposing what it means to be a minister or leader at church verses in the marketplace—yet accepting them both as a calling and a ministry offering to God. The concept of marketplace ministry was not a new phenomenon; however, it was introduced in this dissertation to support the researcher's exploration of ministry advances for women.

### **Problem Statement**

The acceptance of women in leadership positions has risen dramatically over recent years, but public recognition of women as leaders within the church was still a thorny topic of debate (Barna, 2017). This matter has emerged as a core issue among churchgoers at the same time that the number of women in the labor force has increased over the past decades. According to the Department of Labor (2015), the number of women in the workforce reached 47% in 2015 compared to 27% in 1948. Therefore, this

research presents an opportunity to investigate what the ministry and leadership might look like for women beyond the church building. It critically conceptualizes the notion of working in the marketplace both as rewarding and an opportunity to serve God through the focus of business/economics, media, education, arts/entertainment, government/law, or family.

Unfortunately, current literature does not address the direct exposition of what ministry and leadership might look like for women beyond the church building, but it has mostly examined the clerical leadership ability of women only as it was related to duties explicitly found within the church. Under Bible theology, while women have played a critical supporting role in the establishment of the church since the birth of Christ, women had been systematically treated in a subordinate manner resulting from church doctrines and the traditional symbolism associated with it (Nason-Clark, 1987).

This treatment of women had given rise to the growing interpersonal and church conflict amongst its members, thus also sparking identity conflicts within women about who they were in the eyes of God, and their value and contribution to the ministry work of the church. According to the literature, this intensifying conflict had caused women to re-evaluate their church involvement. This could serve to be detrimental to the expansion of the church since women make up most of the membership in churches nationwide. Church policies, whether written or normalized through cultural dictates, may need to be re-evaluated to address this long-standing issue about women.

The research problem introduced here delineates from current leadership practices experienced by women from two very important places: their work and their ministry. The question of whether a woman's work can also become her ministry will be further

explored through discovery. Research questions have been developed allowing research participants the opportunity to describe what ministry and leadership looks like through their individual unique lenses and experiences as well as their male counterparts.

### **Research Questions**

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), narrative analysis was useful for addressing the what, how, and why. The overarching central question is, “How do church leaders understand the meaning of ministry and leadership for women in the church and in the marketplace?” The research sub-questions for this study were:

- 1) What are the life stories that shape the view of women as leaders in the church?  
Outside of the church?
- 2) How does church practice regarding women in church or marketplace leadership conflict with personal views about women in church or marketplace leadership?
- 3) What are the current church policies regarding women leadership in the church?
- 4) As men serving in ministry, how do church leaders practice ministry leadership for women inside the church? In the marketplace?
- 5) What is the perspective of men as it relates to recognizing women in leadership positions in church and how might issues of resistance manifest?

### **Purpose Statement**

In alignment with research guidance offered by Creswell and Poth (2018), the purpose of this narrative study was to explore how the meanings for *ministry* and *leadership* were understood about women and experienced by both women and men church leaders, as it pertains to functionality and practice in church and the marketplace.

The research participants consisted of 12 church leaders made up of six women and six men: two women and two men leaders were selected from three different Christian church denominations: a Non-Denominational church, a Baptist church that recently converted to being a Non-Denominational Church, and an African Methodist Episcopal Church. Each church provided four adults to be interviewed. Each person was interviewed individually. Participants were asked a series of questions ranging from their lived experiences while working with other women in church and the marketplace to whether they believed women should serve as leaders within the church.

### **Context of Researcher**

As a woman, a pastor, and a marketplace influencer, I recognize my value and that of my husband's, who also co-leads with me in coaching individuals and married couples through our organization, Empower to Engage. We strengthen and equip parents and families with resources and techniques through workshops and speaking engagements discussing the importance of healthy relationships. As a professional in the government setting, I help employees and managers work more effectively together through education and training in conflict resolution, civil treatment, and human relations. To me, it is all ministry, even the work I do in my government position. However, there has only been one area where my gender has caused challenges regarding what I have been able to accomplish or what positions I have been able to attain: the church. I have experienced the impact of gender ideologies on the marginalization of women as capable leaders within the church.

Years ago, the first pastor who ordained me had struggled with the proper title to give me. He felt the title of the evangelist was more fitting for a woman. The title chosen

was not predicated on my role and responsibilities; it was only related to my gender. Just after I challenged the decision and threatened to reject the position altogether (directly resulting from his demonstrated male chauvinistic views) that he ultimately relented and ordained me as a minister.

Years later, I was asked to serve as the director of the women's ministry for a large church. Although the pastor appreciated and accepted my counsel and ideas privately (as well as counsel from other well-respected women of the church), publicly it became clear, through his words and actions, that he did not value the gifts and talents of women equally as he did for men. He was not willing to acknowledge the contributions of women, by ordaining them with clerical titles and positions above that of a minister, regardless of their knowledge of the Bible, their abilities to lead, or their great wisdom and experience in an array of disciplines. These slights towards other women and myself over the years have caused me, at times, to become disenfranchised with the church.

These personal experiences within the church have resulted in periods of my separation from the church because of feelings of disappointment and rejection. I have repeatedly experienced and observed male pastors treat female congregants and pastors with less value than their male counterparts. In all honesty, I've never understood why, when we were all made in God's image and likeness, for His glory and good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13. Nevertheless, I believe that I am now in an excellent place to become more curious about how church leaders respond to women, and I'm less judgmental regarding the challenges women face. I have concluded it was my mission to become a resource and an active contributor towards resolution to promote equality, unity, worth, and hope for the future regarding church relationships between men and

women, and, also to support women aspiring to be or who currently were in leadership positions, whether in the church or in the marketplace.

As this dissertation data was being investigated, it was not my desire to present this information as a womanist or a feminist. I have been happily married for almost three decades, and I am the proud mother of two adult sons who believe I can do absolutely anything I desire. Nonetheless, I am aware that there is a school of thought by women classified as evangelical feminists, which I am not affiliated with, yet their ideologies align with those of my own. They believe in the “equality of opportunity for women to make full use of their gifts and abilities in church, home, and society, even if that entails sharing authority with or exercising authority over men” (Groothuis, 1994, p. 118). For clarification, my interest is solely equality for women and the acceptance of women as valuable and productive members of the Church universal and the Kingdom of God, which explains the rationale for the research proposed problem statement.

Throughout the research process I used various bracketing methods. I journaled, I talked to others, and I prayed. During the interviewing process, I bracketed before, during, and after each interview. I reminded myself (mental memos) that everyone’s opinions and perceptions were valuable. I chose to see them as revealing these deeply rooted traditions and perceptions as our opportunity to work together to help advance social science research. During the development of the themes, I memoed my feelings and thoughts about the findings. I also wrote the following poem entitled “O Man, Hear the Heart of a Woman” to creatively express how this topic has touched me personally.

*O Man Hear the Heart of a Woman*

*It's hard being a woman. We did not choose to carry your seed. God fashioned us with a womb to do so. We did not choose our gifts and callings. God assigned them to us.*

*We struggle with accepting who we are; and, we would prefer not to fight with you about who we are. Many women try to take the path of least resistance: to be fine with working, going home, and enjoying their families; but, God said, "Not so."*

*Men, we need your protection, your prayers, and your pronouncement over us that we are loved and accepted. We are not your enemy. You do not have to fear our strength. The secret to our advancement, our might as the Church, and as the Body of*

*Christ is our UNITY.*

*We are in the same battle as you, we are warriors too, and God will not allow us to be denied the right to serve Him just as you do.*

### **Theoretical Framework Theories Overview**

To analyze how church leaders understand the meaning of ministry and leadership for women in the church and the marketplace, I employed the theoretical models of power, change, and mental model as the foundation of my analysis. The theoretical breakdown of the three selected theories of power, change, and mental model, helped establish a better understanding of the prevailing thinking of church leaders about women. I was able to learn how these ideologies were at the center of the church and interpersonal conflict as it related to the resistance directly connected to the promotion or non-promotion of women to church leadership. The unspoken offspring of this church conflict was personal identity conflict within women, which could lead to a lack of clarity about whether they can fulfill their calling and purpose in ministry. These concepts are in greater detail in Chapter 5.



### **Power Theory**

Power is the essence of leadership, as per Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (as cited in Katz, 2015). It is the driving force or fuel of leadership. Power is also strongly connected to one's level of influence (Keltner, 1994). Power is bestowed through the empowerment of the self and others, and thus responsibility goes along with it. I desired to understand which types of power contributed to the ongoing conflict in the churches selected for this study.

### **Change Theory**

According to William Bridges (2003), change theory may be analyzed as it relates to the process of transitioning during various phases in life. Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey outlined this as a process of transition, which occurs from immunity to change, and resistance to change is best described as what we want versus what we can do (as cited in Wildflower & Brennan, 2011). Karp (2003) argues that focusing only on positive responses can be missed opportunities to understand the presence of negative reactions such as competition, anger, and resistance. I analyzed immunity to change within the men and women research participants and the resulting conflict to the identity and personal goals of women church members. Specifically, I looked at perspectives on the roles of women and how those may or may not have changed, and the perceptions of church and marketplace ministry when considering change theory.

### **Mental Model Theory**

Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, and Kleiner (1994) offers the concept of the "ladder of inference" to understand the breakdown within teams when individual beliefs are not considered the abilities of the whole. Mentalities are encouraged and influenced by those

in charge. Halevy, Cohen, and Chou (2013), believe there is a direct correlation between personality, degree of social interaction, an one's mental model regarding conflict. According to Senge et al., there is a reflexive loop that encompasses our beliefs, which affect what data we select each time. The literature review demonstrates the level of conflict that is present within church organizations associated with entrenched perspectives on the roles of women in leadership. I used the ladder of inference to analyze perceived divisions within churches relating to their personal experiences with female church leaders and their receptivity of women in church ministry and marketplace ministry.

### **Goals of the Study and Research Significance**

This research attempted to reconsider how leadership and ministry were defined within the church. By employing a biographical narrative approach, I hoped to broaden our current understanding of how today's church members—both men and women—in leadership positions view women in leadership in the church and the marketplace. The quest was to learn whether there was a distinction between men and women, and if so, how was it impacting women. Furthermore, I aimed to determine if it was possible to bridge the divide in order to create additional opportunities for women outside the church walls.

The research significance of this study has multiple positive implications for the field of conflict resolution. First, this study augments the research literature for future researchers interested in further advancing our understanding of conflict in churches regarding the role of women in leadership from the unique perspectives of both men and women. Second, this dissertation information, along with my qualitative data, will

support future endeavors for conflict practitioners who choose to work with religious organizations. I am introducing relevant theories to address conflict in ways to transform ideologies around utilizing women in church, and for helping church leaders recognize gifts and skills through alternative avenues of ministry, such as through dedicated work in various marketplace arenas. Third, practitioners in conflict resolution can also use this study to work with church leaders so that they can address the perceived barriers to advancing women by understanding how power, change, and mental model conflict can influence the organizational system.

This research has the potential of trailblazing a course adjustment in the traditional direction of many church's leadership practices of excluding women leaders. By fostering a women-friendly-atmosphere whereby female leaders are welcomed and valued, the church may boost its attendance, which has declined over the recent years at a low 46% attendance rate (Barna Research Group, 2015). Their research also found a growing number of women who were feeling little or no emotional connection at church. And finally, for students and professors, exercises and projects can be created or completed so that educators and practitioners can provide more strategic and intentional ways of addressing identity conflict for women. This may include writing articles and essays on women identity conflicts in church, as well as interpersonal and church conflict effects of power, mental modeling, and change theories.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this research, *church* was defined as a religious organization of people who believe in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of the world (Strong, 1996). *Christian* was defined as a person or group

of people who believe in Jesus Christ and has prayed the prayer of salvation to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their souls from eternal separation from God, as outlined in the Bible, Romans 10:9. *Kingdom of God* was defined as a way of living that represents heavenly principles and standards of God here on earth (Elwell, 1996). *Call* was defined as a feeling or belief that God wants someone to complete a specific task, function or dedicated work for a period of time or as a lifetime assignment (Nason-Clark, 1987). *Ministry* was defined as work done by someone who believes that he/she was responding to what God wants them to do to help, heal, or solve a problem (Nason-Clark, 1987). *Leadership* was defined as someone in the church who has been given authority to make decisions, by the church pastor in a specific department, and was recognized as such publicly before the church congregation (Barna, 2017). *Marketplace* was defined as the everyday world of conducting business as an employee, volunteer, or entrepreneur where goods and services were sold competitively outside of the church setting (Enlow, 2009). *Church conflict* was defined as any issue relating to the operational aspects of the church upkeep or church programming where leaders or members may disagree (Halverstadt, 1992). *Interpersonal conflict* was defined as disagreements between people relating to how they communicate or interact with one another (Klenke, 2007). *Identity conflict* was defined as one's confusion pertaining to their role or purpose in a social, work or church environment (Klenke, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

Historically, women have unofficially served in ministry and have been a tremendous asset to the advancement of the Church universal. Nonetheless, there is still resistance occurring towards women who want to pursue leadership opportunities. In this

dissertation, the research focus was to investigate what were found to be the prevailing ideologies about women in leadership both in the church and in the marketplace, and what did it mean to be in ministry. This research also evaluated what ministry and leadership might look like for women beyond the church building, and critically conceptualized the notion of working in the marketplace as a rewarding ministry and service to God through a focus in business/economics, media, education, arts/entertainment, government/law, or family. The theoretical models of power, change, and mental model helped establish a better understanding of the perspectives as shared by the research participants.

The dissertation was arranged in five chapters. Chapter One covers the background and introduction to the research problem. Chapter Two provides the literature review and supporting information making the case for the topic being studied. Chapter Three outlines the biographical thematic narrative analysis methodology. Chapter Four covers the data analysis and research results. Finally, Chapter Five covers an in-depth discussion of the findings and implications of the study, outlines a list of research recommendations for the field of conflict resolution, and concludes with closing remarks.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The following section is divided into five main parts: the church, women liberation movement and social progress, women and the church, the need for this study, the significance to the field of conflict resolution, and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research. In the first section, I examined the context of the church, which included how theologians and social scientists define the church, the core tenets of the Christian faith, Catholics versus Protestants, the church as an institution, and the church as a patriarchal institution. Next, I traced the history of the feminist movement and how it impacted the development of the church. I also explored the complicated relationship between Christian feminists and the church.

In the third part, I explored the relationship between women and the church by highlighting the Doctrine and Scriptural debates on the issues of women, the Scriptural interpretation of women's position within the church and society, women's roles within the Protestant Church, the conflicting identities of women in the church and at home, the perceptions of male versus female church leaders, women as church leaders, the glass ceiling effect on female church leaders, and successful cases of historical Christian women leaders. After that, I provided instances that justified the need for this research and examined the significance of this study on the field of conflict resolution. Finally, I offered various theoretical models as the basis of this research.

It is important to note that the primary interest of this research involves the lived experience of female church leaders from the Protestant denominations. While women from Catholic Churches do share similar barriers to entry concerning leading the church,

Protestants and Catholics differ with regard to their traditions and worship practices. The role of women is also another critical distinction. For instance, only men could be consecrated with religious authority within the Catholic religion, but this is not the case for Protestant denominations (Krämer, 2019). Furthermore, while the ordination of women has been occurring since the 1800s, the acceptance of women as church leaders has been an issue of much heated debate, which has only heightened after the success of the women's liberation movements (Cody, 2006). This research aims to capture such experience from the perspective of conflict analysis and phenomenological analysis. The insights provided may assist advocates and other researchers to better understand the struggles and interpersonal conflicts of women serving as church leaders. The literature review was divided into sub-sections that highlighted the general research questions related to my focus areas.

## **The Church**

### **Defining the Church**

From the vantage point of Christian philosophy, a church is considered a place, a building, or a house that serves as a meeting location for people to come together and worship publicly (Clark, 2001). Though biblical definition varies, a basic description of the church includes a gathering of people of God, followers of Jesus Christ, or a congregation devoted to the teachings of Christ (Freedman, 2000; Strong, 1996). From a theological perspective, the meaning of the word church is *ekklesia*, which entails the whole body of the faithful. Other terms that served as metaphors to describe the church include the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the people of God, and the kingdom of

God (Elwell, 1996). Freedman (2000) provided the most precise definition when he stated:

In these assemblies, which usually took place in the homes of believers, the distinction between earthly and heavenly was blurred, and an ordered world was created and represented in word and action whereby followers of Jesus “drew near” to God. In an anticipatory sense, the believers joined the heavenly assembly in giving praise to God through Christ. (p. 254)

Social researchers, anthropologists, and philosophers have defined Christianity in numerous ways. It has been described as religious beliefs based on teachings covering the life of Jesus of Nazareth (Latief, 2011; Craig, 2000; Berkhof, 2000; Brown, 1996; Stark, 1996; Niebuhr, 1951); “pattern ideas” to help civilization interact with one another in a way that is moral and not predatory (Ellwood, 1920); or when “Absolute Being finds its complete reflection” (Reardon, 1977, p. 58). Merriam-Webster (2019, para. 1) defined Christianity as “the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies.”

Sociologists have provided a broader context from which to view the definition of the church. For example, Durkheim (1915/1965) defined the church as a community of people who shared the same beliefs and moral practices as it related to things considered sacred and profane (Turner, 1971; Neal, 1979; Strauss, 2014). He argued that religion is

A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. (p. 62)



Durkheim believed the connection between these beliefs and practices created a religious communal environment where there was agreement on what behaviors would produce the desired system of unity.

Max Weber (1963) defined church as a religious organization that used psychological methods or mysticism with spiritual benefits as a way to gain compliance among its followers (Alexander, 1985; Swatos, 1976). Weber studied the interplay between religion and economics. He became interested in the connection between the Puritans and their religious beliefs, which played a significant role in the Industrial Revolution. He was fascinated by the Puritan's connection of financial success to divine favor, disciplined living, and a strong work ethic.

### **The Christian Faith**

Although the term Christian was mentioned in the Bible (such as in Book of Acts 11:26 and Book of Acts 26:28), it was not until the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century that the term was used to designate those who followed the teachings of Jesus Christ (Freedman, 2000). According to Dietrich (2015), there are currently over 30,000 versions of Christian beliefs around the world, making Christianity one of the largest religions in the world (Hackett & McClendon, 2017; Latief, 2011). In America, 76% of Americans identified themselves as Christians with Catholics being the largest Christian group (25%), though 51% identified as belonging to the category of "other Christians" (American Religious Identification Survey, 2008). Baptists are ranked as the largest denomination, followed by other mainline groups such as Non-Denominational, Methodist, and Pentecostal/Charismatic, to name a few within the Protestant denominations.

Despite the diverging beliefs and various versions of Christianity, a majority of Catholics and Protestants share core tenants of the Christian faith (Grudem & Grudem, 2005; Elwell & Elwell, 1996; Fairchild, 2019). These core tenants include the belief that:

- God does exist and there is only one.
- God is all-powerful, God is all-knowing, and God is everywhere.
- God is love, God is Holy, and God is Righteous.
- God is a three-part being: Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is God (fully God and fully man).
- Jesus was perfect and without sin.
- The Holy Spirit is God.
- The Bible is the "inspired" or "God-breathed," Word of God.
- God's Plan of Salvation is a free gift to anyone who believes in Jesus.
- God created humans in the image of God.
- Death came into the world through Adam's sin.
- Sin separates us from God.

### **Catholics versus Protestants**

The division between the Catholics and Protestants started about five hundred years ago when a German monk named Martin Luther published his infamous *95 Theses* that challenged the religious monopoly held by the Holy Roman Church. The event later became known as the Protestant Reformation, and Luther's central tenets became the foundation of Protestant beliefs and grievances against the abuse of power (MacCulloch, 2003; Nichols, 2018; Veress, 2018; Kleinhans, 2019). The Reformation not only impacted the legitimacy of Christendom, but it also shifted the economic, political, and

social power of Europe for many years to come (Hoffmann, 2019; Wurpts, 2019; Turner, 2019). According to Scott Hendrix (2015),

The goal was not to foment a German uprising against Rome but to reform the practice of religion in Christendom. Because the clergy were shirking their duty, the only recourse was an appeal to laypeople in authority who could twist arms and force change. (p.90)

Among many of his scathing critiques, Martin Luther argued that the bishops, priests, and monks should not enjoy the “spiritual estate” or spiritual elitism over the masses. Instead, those who have been baptized, as all Christians have, were already consecrated with the ability to seek repentance and salvation for themselves. Luther also challenged the Holy Roman Church’s practice of indulgences and the papal supremacy. He argued against the idea of the pope leading the church and said that it was against the teachings of the Bible (Krämer, 2019). His initial intent was to change the corrupt practices within the Catholic Church, but the church’s resistance to change ultimately gave rise to the Protestant Reformation (Johnson, 2010; Moorman, 2013; Pierce 1986; Ohnsman, 2015).

Protestants do not view themselves as Catholics, yet they do consider themselves Christians. However, there are critical differences between Catholics and Protestants aside from their religious identifications. Catholicism emphasizes confession, remorse, atonement, the hierarchical chain of authority, and the strict practices required for all Catholic followers (Demaria & Kassinove, 1988; Hutchinson, Patock-Peckham, Cheong, & Nagoshi, 1998; Sheldon, 2006). Another, Catholic governance is universally followed,

whereas each Protestant denomination dictates their own governance, which may even extend to the individual churches (Greeley, 1989).

Leadership differences between Catholics and Protestants are evident in their hierarchical structures. In the Catholic Church, the highest level of the priesthood is the office of the bishop, and the bishops are considered the successors to the apostles. They also govern and represent the churches (Tanenbaum, 2019). The pope is regarded as the direct successor of St. Peter and resides in the Vatican City in Rome. The pope has the highest and most important position of all of the bishops (Gingerich, 2018; Wijngaards, n.d.). Other positions include the Patriarchs, Major Archbishops, Cardinals, Primate, Metropolitans, Archbishop, Diocesan Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (Tanenbaum, 2019).

In the Protestant church, there is no overarching presider like the pope. Each denomination—and often the individual church organizations—will develop a hierarchical structure of their own. In the Protestant Church, the senior pastor may lead the congregation and hold other positions such as executive pastors, associate pastors, pastors, elders, lay leaders, and deacons (Tanenbaum, 2019). Protestant churches do not have priests. Interestingly, only males are consecrated with the religious authority of God within the Catholic tradition. Conversely, Protestants believe that priesthood can be transferred to any person, even if, in theory, such a believer is a woman (Krämer, 2019).

### **The Church as an Institution**

The scholarship of the church as a religious institution did not come about until the early 19th century with the works of Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. These theorists wanted to develop a conceptualization for understanding the function and impact of the church institution on society. Emile Durkheim (1915/1965), for example,

viewed the church as a means for meeting the social needs of a people. His functionalist perspective was that there was a system maintained by those who belonged to it, which dictated the equilibrium of the whole (Schilbrack, 2013; Radcliffe-Brown, 1935). Should anything occur to disrupt this harmony, adjustments would recalibrate to bring restoration to the whole. In essence, everyone had a role to play, so the system operated properly.

Karl Marx (1844) believed that religion was “the opiate of the masses,” where everyday citizens relied on belief as a crutch to escape from addressing the ills of the day. He argued that religion had no relevance of its own accord and was shaped by any debilitating economic issues that were connected to it. Another scholar described this to mean “religion appeals to the disenfranchised and helps them through suffering, but in so doing distracts from the root causes of their suffering and suppresses the development of emancipatory politics” (Schnabel, 2017, p.2).

Robert Merton (1957) developed functionalism theory, which stated that religious institution functioned because it addressed both people’s expressive needs as well as their adaptive needs. From an expressive functional standpoint, religion served as an outlet for comfort and support during challenging times of powerlessness, fear, uncertainty, and tragedy. From an adaptive functional standpoint, religion provided a bond where people can connect through shared common beliefs and rituals, which was the most important aspect of religion. Merton argued that these functions could become dysfunctional, particularly in situations where the social norms of behavior conflict with the social changes of the time.

Outside of the “business” of the church, social researchers also recognize the emotional, spiritual, familial, and communal aspects of the church. By attending

religious services, churchgoers experience heightened feelings of wonder, gratitude, and hope (Krause, 2015; Emmons, 2005). Gratitude has been linked to greater benevolence displayed by others and increased in pro-social behaviors (McCullough et al., 2004; Wood et al., 2008; Froh et al. 2009; Froh et al. 2011). The multi-faceted context of religion yields to multi-dimensional experiences (Glock & Stark, 1965; Cornwall et al. 1986).

Today, people are living in a society of religious pluralism, which is the freedom to select a religious affiliation that best meets the needs of the individual. Religious pluralism also benefits the churches. For instance, preachers can operate more as free agents within the marketplace rather than as a middleman to a particular state religion (Finke & Stark, 1992). This concept of pluralism also brings to bear the direct and indirect competitive advantages among the churches, given the fact that churches are seeking to increase their church attendances. Churches must motivate long-standing churchgoers to attend and encourage new newcomers to join at the same time. Finke and Stakr (1992), Selka (2010), and Chiswick (2013) find this to be beneficial for churchgoers because churches can examine issues such as morality, emotional connection, shared views on non-religious topics, the existence of the supernatural, and deliver on what has been preached.

### **Beneficial Impact of the Church**

A recent Gallup Poll (2018) found that over 81% of Americans attend a religious service as a mean for feeling closer to God. Other external reasons included imparting morality to their children (69%), becoming a better person (68%), and seeking comfort during difficult times (66%). Consequently, sociologist, psychologists, and medical

professionals have long testified to the mental and emotional welfare of regular church attendance. In fact, consistent religious practices and a firm religious conviction were related to lower levels of depression, anxiety, substance disorder, and suicidal behaviors (Whitley, 2017).

Other researchers have found a positive association between religion and overall mental health wellbeing. Jablensky et al. (1992) found that countries with higher levels of religiosity also reported quicker recovery time for those dealing with mental illness such as schizophrenia as compared to countries with lower levels of religiosity. The advantage may be due to the impact of multi-dimensional benefits as espoused by Glock and Stark (1965). These benefits occur on four levels: a confirming experience which denotes that one is in the presence of God; a responsive experience which indicates that one is believed to be acknowledged by God and have access to form a relationship or communication with God; the ecstatic experience which denotes a sign of awe because of a life-altering experience (such as near death or an actual encounter with a spirit being); and, the revelation experience which denotes that one has reached the level of being a spiritual agent (a prophet). Of these four levels, Glock and Stark argue that confirming and responsive are representative of typical feelings of close communion with God. According to Kvande et al. (2015) and Ellison and Fan (2008), the types of experiences indicate overall wellbeing, happiness, and optimism about life.

### **The Church as a Patriarchal Institution**

Sociologist Cecilia Ridgeway (2009) has argued that gender can shape both social behavior and organizational structures. She coined this dynamic as gender framing, which is the established common, cultural knowledge regarding how identity (self) is

understood contextually. The environment dictates acceptable responses, actions, and expectations that, in term, become personalized. Ridgeway found that gender framing has often been utilized to shape organizational policies and social behaviors that favored one gender over another. This is the case because people are dependent on the social connections to fulfill their wants and needs; thus, people are conformed into gender framing.

Both Catholic and Protestant churches have held underlying biases against Religion has had a significant role in perpetuating the stratification of gender inequality and gender framing among men and women. women by denying them ordination privileges as clergy leaders (McMahon, 2006; Nieuber, 1957; O’Dea, 1966; Zetterberg, 1952). Thus, it is not surprising to find that the church has been viewed as a symbolic representation of male patriarchy and power, and this image has not changed even with the increase of female leaders over the recent decades.

Ridgeway (2009) has described gender as “a multilevel structure, system, or institution of social practices that involve mutually reinforcing processes at the macro-structural/institutional level, the interactional level, and the individual level” (p. 146). In essence, the belief is that gender is in the “doing” and not the being (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999; Risman, 2004). West and Zimmerman (1987) also described it as a performance and may include how one acts, what one wears, and how one behaves, all constitutes acceptable gendered responses. This type of gendered response is experienced at the individual and the micro-interactional levels. The macro-institutional responses to gender effects are evident through laws, policies, and organizational practices that are perpetuated by the dominant patriarchal groups that govern them.



Ridgeway (2009) stated, “We typically act in the context of some institutional or organizational framework that suggests specific role identities and role relations” (p. 150). Regarding the mutually reinforcing gender norm, one may find multiple early biblical references that appear to perpetuate the role of women as second-class citizens. According to Scripture of the early days in the church, the Apostle Paul admonished women converts about their conduct and their dress while he was teaching them about the standards and function of new Christ followers. Furthermore, the number of references to women in leadership roles in biblical time was sparse. Winters-Sellars (2004) argued that the direct and symbolic functions of women in leadership were significantly weakened as Christianity became mainstream.

The onslaught of rejection and the realization that churches do not fully embrace women’s unique skills and abilities can be disheartening for many women who desire to lead the church (Nason-Clark, 1987). Even when successful, the results were not always a clear victory for women. In fact, Craig-Horne (2008) asserted that churches that have fully embraced the ordination of women in leadership roles did not always fare well, and in fact, many experienced varying degrees of polarization within its ranks. This ordination of women, in some churches, has not only resulted in disagreements but in some cases lead to an exodus of its members altogether. In the case of the United Presbyterian Church, the schism led to the development of a new denomination called the Concerned United Presbyterian.

To assist women in redefining their role within the church, Ridgeway and England (2007) offered the following insights regarding the impact and effect of gender framing within institutions

The gendering of institutional tasks or roles, then, empowers the background gender frame in the situation to become a significant part of the process by which people enact their institutional roles. The extent to which organizational rules and procedures constrain individual discretion in judgments and behavior. The extent that cultural beliefs about gender do shape behavior and social relations in an institutional context, either directly through the gender frame acting on individuals or indirectly through biased procedures, these gender beliefs will be reinscribed into new organizational procedures and rules that actors develop through their social relations in that setting. (p. 153)

Consequently, churches have the opportunity to determine how the culture of their institutions and established policies will affirm and support women leaders or resist and oppress them. Charles and Bradley (2009) pointed to societies that have intentionally gendered their occupations, and they found that those societies have the lowest levels of material inequality between men and women. These scholars discovered that wealthy societies removed the issue of salary connected to vocation and encouraged their citizens to pursue their interests and passions, which are often gender framed. Thus, the propensity of cultural ideas lived out through natural gender differences. These postindustrial societies can greatly predict natural propensities of men and women when there are no rewards or penalties connected to gendered cultural norms.

### **The Black Church Experience**

Most of the research participants in this study are African Americans who attend churches that are predominantly comprised of African Americans. This is also known as “black churches” (Barnes, 2006). Not all black churches function alike, and

denominational differences dictate much of the cultural, social, and religious nuances that are pertinent to each location. Nonetheless, there are some historical underpinnings that African American churchgoers share. Regarding African American churchgoers, a recent study from the Pew Research (2018) found that:

- 75% of African Americans self-identified as Christian and 53% belonged to historically Black Protestant churches.
- The U.S. is the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc. is the largest black church in the U.S., followed the Church of God in Christ, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, National Baptist Convention of America, and the Progressive National Baptist Association Inc.
- African Americans were more religious than Whites and Latinos and were more likely to attend services at least once a week and pray regularly.
- Older African Americans were more likely to belong to historically black Protestant churches.

African American millennials were more religious when compared against other millennials. However, the same Pew Research also found a decline in church attendance among African American millennials who were praying less, attending service less, and less likely to place high importance on religion. Taking all things into consideration, this data does not diminish the significance or the influence the Black Churches have in African American communities. By all accounts, African Americans are by far the most religious people in the world (Pattiol-McCoy, 1998; Mosley, 2016).

Since the era of slavery, the church has literally and symbolically represented a place of safety for African Americans (Mosley, 2016). Due to the racial subjugation and

the lack of acceptance from White institutions, African Americans have been forced to create their own gatherings where they could freely express themselves through dancing, singing, and worshipping God, as well as receiving protection and getting their personal and spiritual needs met (Barnes, 2015; Mosley, 2016; DuBois, 1903; Morris, 1984).

There are other benefits that black churches provide for their members, and these include education, community initiatives, and civil rights activism, which is still present today (Billingley, 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Barnes, 2015). Due to the rich heritage, the emotional connection, and the symbolic traditions of the Black Church, it is considered the most dominant institution for African Americans (Pattilo-McCoy, 1998).

### **Women's Movement and Feminisms**

The women's movement, also known as the Feminist Movement, has played a pivotal role in the advancement of women from around the world, and sociologists, anthropologist, psychologists, and theologians have provided their perspectives relating to the gender dynamics, stereotypes, and gender bias regarding the role of women in society. The general ideology of feminism is that women should be treated similarly as men in all areas of opportunity (civil and social rights) as well as being given equal respect at home, on the job, and at church (Gallagher, 2003). As women began to successfully campaign for their rights in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, additional questions emerged about women's function within the home and the church, causing a deeper rift within society. These questions also sparked debates regarding a woman's "place" in the family, the church, and her relationship with God (Capitani, 2003). This debate is still a source of contention even in the present day.

The origin of the word feminism could be traced back to the 1880s when Julie-Victoire Daubie successfully championed for women's suffrage in France (McCann and Kim, 2010). In fact, the word “femme” is the French word for woman, and the suffix “ism” means political position, a term used to identify those who defended the rights of women (Cott, 1986). Notwithstanding the many notable accomplishments of the movement such as the 19th Amendment (1920) securing women’s right to vote and the Equal Rights Amendments (1972), and making discrimination based on sex illegal, the women’s movements have faced much opposition. Furthermore, reactions to feminism have been mixed with negative implications attached to feminists (Slowick, 2015).

### **First Wave of the Feminist Movement**

The Feminist Movement occurred in three waves. The first wave started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the women’s suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment (Acker, 2008). Women were also concerned with the issues of education, owning property, obtaining a divorce, and earning a living that was independent of their husbands (Slowick, 2015). Women officially addressed their grievances in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention. Over 300 men and women stood together to fight for women’s equality (Rampton, 2008). Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted *The Seneca Falls Declaration*, which delineated the ideology and political plans for the new movement. The women’s movement was also a strong supporter of banning slavery and allied with abolitionists such as Frederick Douglas and Sojourner (Renzetti & Curran, 1989). The first wave was dedicated to gaining the political ground necessary for change.

## **Second Wave of the Feminist Movement**

The second wave or Women's Liberation Movement occurred between in the 1960s and the early 1990s, and it centered on race disparity within the movement. Women of color began to challenge the gender issue by highlighting the race disparity between women of color and their counterparts (Thompson, 2010). By this point, many women were abandoning the traditional role of motherhood and wife in the home and instead had joined the workforce in significant numbers. White women, who initially spearheaded the movement, emphasized the issues of sexual harassment and unequal pay. Women of color, on the other hand, wanted to address the plight of Black women and argued that their problems were different from their White sisters (Strongman, 2018).

This period also saw the emergence of radical feminism, which called for a fundamental restructuring of society that has traditionally favored male patriarchal power. Bernstein (2005) noted that the second wave birthed identity politics, which introduced alliances for women along with gender, religion, race, culture, and social backgrounds instead of broad-based party politics. One of the recorded dangers of this wave was the rising mantra that one sex was better or more significant than the other.

## **Third Wave of the Feminist Movement**

The third wave of feminism started during the mid-1990s, which was more global in nature and emphasized global inclusivity. The importance of intersectionality provided credence to the disparaged treatment experienced by women in such areas as race, age, ability, class, sexual orientation, culture, language, and education. These interactions influenced the way women rallied to fight against discrimination and prejudicial treatment (Voltmer, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Sumi, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Mack-

Canty & Wright, 2004). Women were also reestablishing themselves as women, and they were more comfortable with their sexuality, their power, their strength, their courage, as well as their position within the home and in the marketplace (Aronson, 2003). The social and political fights continued, however. Those who continued to advocate for women's rights emphasized the diverse needs of all women.

### **Feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There are two typologies that exist as the movement head into the 21<sup>st</sup> century: those who embrace and herald the title of feminist, encompassing a cadre of feminist identifications and ideologies such as liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, black liberalist, and womanist versus those women and men who choose to join the movement without becoming beholden to feminist organizations or labels. From the various feminist waves over the centuries, major accomplishments have been connected to them. The most recent movement is the #MeToo Campaign which has brought about the exposure and gross eradication of sexual harassment and sexual assault in politics, business, religion, entertainment, media, sports, and academia (Evans, 2018; Pazzaneese & Walsh, 2017).

Though the movement has grown, explicit feminist credentialing continues to be a source of division within the ranks. Some find it wearisome to the point of contention if activists feel forced to stake an identification with one type of feminism over the other (Slowik, 2015). The dangers of both generalizing and categorizing feminists, however, add to the misunderstanding and minimization of the importance of the contributions of the feminist movement (Kensinger, 1997). It is possible to be interested in the cause of gender equality from a neutral place with an egalitarian agenda to see women who are disenfranchised and oppressed liberated, without self-identifying with feminism at all.

## **Christian Feminism and the Church**

The Feminist Movement has played a critical role in redefining the roles of women within the churches and the homes, resulting in the closure of so many male-dominated churches (Craig-Horne, 2008). The movement also has been successful in pushing for the removal of the gender roles within the religion and church, particularly the critical analysis of the biblical passages that referenced women's contribution. Pierce and Groothuis (2005) suggested that the conflict of positions in the church could be decreased if the focus of ministry were gift-based rather than gender-based. They argued that churches that had opened their leadership to women were rewarded with greater human effort and resource supply.

Although feminism has had a reputation of taking gender equity and equality to the extremes, many Christian women differed in their opinions about the degree to which women were leading in the church. They fully embraced gender roles and did not subscribe to the need to eradicate or be redefined by them. The Barna Research Group (2012) found that most women considered themselves to be servants in the church rather than leaders. To boot, these women also believed that their churches embraced women leadership. Notwithstanding these facts, in the same study, there was a cadre of women, to a much lesser degree, who were unfulfilled and believed they were not able to fully express their abilities, talents, and leadership within the church. Of those women who identified themselves as leaders, the command was expressed in broader terms than just church. Leadership was acknowledged in their homes, work, and community as well.

Feminism has morphed into a homogenous nomenclature used to represent all of the gradations of feminist ideologies as one and the same. This has been especially



challenging for Christian women who often struggled with deciding if they too are willing to be identified with feminism, or rather to strictly tout their beliefs in equality and liberation theology (which emphasizes freedom from social, political, and economic oppression). Bessey (2013) explained that suggesting feminism in some Christian circles is like using a curse word and taken as an offense. Thoughts about feminism were offered in a recent *Huffpost* article entitled, “15 Christian Women Get Real About The Role Of Women In The Church,” where women from different denominations shared their thoughts about feminism (Kuruvilla, 2017). For many, feminism meant paying homage to past women who have paved the way for current women to preach and become ordained today. Others felt feminism meant upholding the teachings of the Bible and representing what Jesus had taught and stood for regarding how he treated all people. Regardless, all of the women in the interview felt that the church should be leading the charge and setting the example of equality, liberation, and care for its entire population.

Interestingly, there are organizations that are spearheaded by women that advocate for and against gender equality in the church. Organizations such as Christians for Biblical Equality, the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women’s Caucus, and the Women’s Ordination Conference work with both Catholic and Protestant churches to elevate equitable practices for both male and female church leaders. Opposing organizations such as Concerned Women for America and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood have promoted against equitable practices and instead advocated for the traditional gender roles of males as the leaders and women as the nurturer and supportive help for women (Groothuis, 1994). Both types bolster thousands of members and provide conferences, teachings, and advocacy that support their

respective causes. These causes include the roles of women in church and family, ordination of women, sex education in schools, physical and sexual abuse, homosexuality, and abortion. Though women have founded most of these organizations, men actively participate in these organizations as well.

## **Women and the Church**

### **Doctrine and Scriptural Debates on Women**

The biblical doctrines are fundamental in Christianity, and they are the basis for the teachings of Jesus Christ. According to biblical scholars, doctrine is the theological underpinnings or truths taught to support what occurred through the life and work of Jesus (Machen, 2009; Wells, 1993). It was considered the Gospel of the Good News because within it was salvation offered to those who believed in what Jesus did on the Cross. Sound doctrine referred to Scriptural information, which was theologically accurate as it pertained to both broad and particular Scriptural text. This was rooted in systematic theology, which included topics such as the attributes of God, the Trinity, the Creation, Biblical Hermeneutics, and eschatology (Machen, 2009). What was not included, however, was the issue of gender or the role of women as it was related to being Christian. For every Christian believer, it was the Bible and Bible doctrine that was considered to be the trusted, infallible, authoritative word of God, though written by men (Groothuis, 1994; Pierce & Groothuis, 2004).

While this dissertation did not focus on Christian theology, I felt it was valuable to highlight some of the New Testament Scriptures that were at the core of the debate regarding the role of women within the church. The interpretation of these Scriptures (see Table 1) seems to be keeping the identity of women conflict continuing within the

institution of the church. It should be noted that none of these Scriptures were doctrinal to the Christian faith. In no way can the adherence to or the refuting of them add to or take away from anyone's ability to be a follower of Jesus. Nonetheless, the continued conflict about these Scriptures lives on. Some arguments could be made for and against each Scripture to support or deny the right of women to led and teach in the church.

Table 1

*Debated New Testament Scriptures*

<b>Bible Chapter &amp; Verses</b>	<b>Themes Relating to Women</b>	<b>Scriptural Text</b>
1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (New King James Version)	Women Remain Silent in Church	<sup>34</sup> <i>Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they were not permitted to speak; but they were to be submissive, as the law also says. <sup>35</sup> And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it was shameful for women to speak in church.</i>
1 Timothy 2:11-12 (New King James Version)	Women Not Permitted to Teach a Man	<sup>11</sup> <i>Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. <sup>12</sup> And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.</i>
1 Timothy 3:2;12 (New King James Version)	Qualifications of a Bishop and a Deacon	<sup>2</sup> <i>A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach...</i> <sup>12</sup> <i>Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.</i>
Ephesians 5: 22-24	Wives Submit to Husbands	<sup>22</sup> <i>Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.</i>

In so far, there has not been academic literature to explicitly opposed women speaking in the church; though, there were articles that do suggest that women should not hold the offices of pastor, bishop, or eldership. Resistance to women functioning as leaders or pastors was predominantly spoken or understood in local church gatherings. It was also customary that denominational protocol may uphold these Scriptures in a literal fashion as it was related to women within their congregations. The question of whether

women should serve in leadership in the church may also be discussed in books, articles, on social media or in blogs.

Tom Brown (2019) tackled these questions in his article entitled “Can Women Be Pastors?” by explicitly addressing the Scriptures. Brown employed an *exegesis* approach (interpreting Scriptures based on detailed analysis of the content and context) as opposed to an *eisegesis* approach (interpreting a text of Scripture based on pre-conceived ideas about its meaning). He stated,

Here is the way I interpret passages, which appear to discriminate. I will not use the Bible to discriminate against anyone. I always look to use the scriptures [sic] to liberate people, not place them in bondage. I think it is time to quit holding to interpretations that put people in bondage. (para. 12)

Hermeneutics is the scientific approach of reading the Bible whereby the individual actively read the Bible to study its written message, meaning, and how it should be applied to one’s life (“What was Hermeneutics?”, 2018). Olive Hemmings (2004) believed that the hermeneutical debate over these scriptures had been used as a scapegoat to prevent women from ordination. It has been called “process of scripturalization defined by a larger social process” as a means for suppressing women who are not knowledgeable in full gender equality within the church. However, just as in the early church, despite the rejections and slights women had overcome for centuries, there were many examples offered in my literature review of women, both past and present, who continue to answer their God-given callings, despite the resistance.

## **The Scriptural Interpretation of Women's Roles**

The debate amongst theologians and evangelical scholars about the role of women and God's intent for how they should function in the church, family, and society has not waned. It has been centered on, for the most part, the Scriptural interpretation of women. According to Strauch (1999), "The gender debate was not an abstract, impersonal, doctrinal controversy. It touches directly on our humanness, our sexual identity, our ministry opportunities, the marriage relationship, family life, and life in the local church" (p. 5). Fagan (2005) argued that the disagreement would continue since nobody has a clear understanding of God's true intention for either men or women. This speaks to the notion in the Book of Genesis where it discusses the creation of mankind. It's believed that God had a specific plan for how men and women would live and function on the earth. Consequently, Craig-Horne (2008) contended that the core identities of both men and women were at risk, especially in church conflicts relating to their spiritual commitments and faith. While some biblical scholars believed that God created woman to be a "helper" to man in a subordinate capacity (according to Genesis 2), others thought that the same Scripture portrayed women as a "helper" who is fully competent but with superior strength to establish oneness and co-rulership with man (Bilezikian, 2006). There was great significance for the roles and identities of both male and female (Piper & Grudem, 2006).

Walker (2011) wanted to uncover the underlying core issues and undeniable stalemate that kept this debate center stage in many Christian denominations. The researcher wanted to understand what was behind the conflicting interpretations of Scriptural references to women in the church. He conducted a thorough review of

Evangelical Protestant scholars to evaluate the rationale behind the ongoing gender debate and found four main themes: 1) women in ministry, 2) gender roles in the church, 3) gender roles within religion and culture, and 4) the relational interactions between men and women. He did not find Scriptural support to prove that men had been divinely chosen to lead in the church or can assume leadership in every male/female relationship dynamic. Walker raised poignant questions that will require lengthy, dedicated debate towards possible resolutions and unity for the greater good of the church universal.

Clouse et al. (1989) provided four perspectives regarding the role of women in ministry: 1) the traditional or complementary view was that women should not be involved in ministry; 2) the male leadership view was that women could be included in ministry only if they were under the covering of a man; 3) the plural ministry view was that both men and women were ministers, yet the overemphasis of ordination has caused the narrowing perspective of women; and, 4) the egalitarian view was that men and women were equal concerning all things related to church and ministry and God calls them both. As it pertained to Scripture, the perspectives were meaning and timing for humankind to understand and to actualize all that God through Jesus Christ desires to impart, comes continually through progressive revelation, which was the acceptance that all there was to know was yet unfolding (Stewart, 2018).

There were numerous examples of women operating in leadership positions from biblical times. Winters-Sellars (2004) conducted a study on the role of women in the early church movement. She wanted to investigate whether women were freely allowed to enjoy ministry work and leadership in partnership with the Apostle Paul during the era of the development of the church. She conducted a historical reconstruction of church

events during the Greco-Roman period looking exclusively at women. She concluded that women were powerful and impactful during the early church and that the contributions women made to the spread of Christianity were expansive. Winters-Sellers' focused on contributing to the gender debate with a desire to reclaim the rich history of women and their ministry contribution through a critical process of authenticating holy text.

These devastating effects were actualized in home, marriage, the church, and in the workplace. The implications dictate how people see marriage, how people parent, how people educate, how people work together in the workplace, and how people implore therapy, counseling, and the like (Kimball, 2005). Through this research, I intended to showcase 21st century prevailing beliefs about the purpose of women as lived out in churches. The accompanying goal was to have these findings serve as a catalyst for continued dialogue, which can spark changed thoughts and behaviors where needed.

### **Women's Role within the Protestant Church**

The role of women in the Baptist Church had been a source of contention for decades. Campbell-Reed (2008) studied the schisms that plagued the Southern Baptist Church since 1920 and how these schisms correlated with the belief of soul competency, which was the nexus between the authority of Scripture and liberty of consciousness. Her research focused on the ethical and systemic problems plaguing women who served in the clergy. She recorded the lived experiences of eight Baptist women clergy between the ages 30-52 as they described the history of the church and their personal experiences in the leadership position. Campbell-Reed surmised from her findings that women were continually teetering between the conflicting beliefs related to the authority of the Bible and their personal religious experiences. The balancing act was contentious, and it further

worsened with internal resistance from within the denomination. Campbell-Reed found a fine balance between maintaining a sense of peace between the church practice, the self, and the personal spiritual relationship with God.

Even though women clergymen faced internal resistance, women churchgoers, in general, were more receptive of a female ordained minister. The Barna Research Group (2012) surveyed women churchgoers and found that despite the low number of women currently serving in pastoral roles, 84% of the women supported the idea that women can be church leaders if they were encouraged and were allowed to do so. Nason-Clark (1987) found that women were gradually changing the ministry through conflict, counseling, and direct interactions even though the traditional roles of women were in a state of flux.

Researchers raised the question, with the challenging views of women in ministry, why would any woman be motivated to enter this profession? Out of the many reasons to compelled women into the ministry, Carrol et al. (1983) found that for most women, it was the call to serve God. The second biggest reason was their personal perception that their ministries needed official recognition in order to be substantiated. Rose (1987) pointed out the reality of a struggle for identity as an issue for women. Nason-Clark (1987) revealed that, in response to these conflicting responses, women clergy seek to redefine traditional ministry roles within the church. The differences in perspectives by men and women created a greater challenge in how women perceive themselves and their role in ministry.



## **Identities of Women in the Church and the Home**

For many women, the identity challenge was a significant struggle; and, instead of attacking the conflict head-on, many women have retreated to the traditional gender roles (Rose, 1987). From the traditional perspective of the church, women were expected to serve men, be silent, follow their husbands' teachings, and not occupy a leadership position (Culver et al., 1989). Not all agreed to this narrative. In fact, Munroe (1984) suggested that men should not see women as inferior, but rather women should have equal dominion and partnership. He viewed male leadership as positional power (order of creation, desires to be announced or recognized, and has primary responsibility for his family). He considered women's leadership as influential power (able to affect the emotional, mental, spiritual outcome of people and situations without the need for a title or position). Both types of power are necessary.

The traditional role for women had often been described as that of the "helper," which meant support or administrative role in the church. In the homes, it meant maintaining the home, caring for their children, and assisting the husband in any way necessary (Munroe, 1984). If women were continuously acquiescing to this definition of "helper" both at home and at church, it would confirm existing research data that pointed to the women feeling undervalued and underutilized at church (Barna, 2012).

The rejection associated with women accepting the calling but being denied by their church can breed disheartened attempts at self-actualization and life fulfillment. Truman (2010) wanted to understand the disparity of treatment for women clergy in religious organizations. The researcher was interested in the experiences of women pastors to gain a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a female pastor. She

interviewed and observed Seventh-day Adventist pastors between the ages of 25 and 59. Two prominent discoveries included the journey these women told about accepting their calling and the personal sacrifices that followed. They described an eventual peace and contentment that was able to support their struggles, bringing joy and desired self-actualization amid denominational rejection and organizational social distancing. Truman's identification of the struggles that women face added to the pressures they were experiencing as leaders in the church while serving the church.

The need for validation and acceptance amongst women in the church had adverse effects on their perceptions of their personal and spiritual identity. Halverstadt (1992) explained that the female pastor's conflict with the church could lead to psychological ramifications and hinder her beliefs about God, her reason for existing, and confidence in her abilities. In Black churches especially, the issue of shame was prevalent because of a plaguing debasing minority status over women (Handy, 2002). Barnes (2006) suggested that Black clergywomen are often challenged with the "triple oppressive reality" of racism, sexism, and classism.

### **Perceptions Male versus Female Church Leaders**

Interestingly, gender may play a pivotal role in determining the efficacy of women leadership and acceptance of female church leaders. According to Konieczny (2000), congregations with twice as many women as men were more likely to have women as pastors. It can also be argued that within these same churches, the number of women serving in other leadership roles would also be higher. The converse was also true with male-dominant churches. Perceptions can also have a significant impact on female church leaders. Edward Lehman surveyed both male and female executives within the

American Baptist Church to understand the cultural and organizational impact of religious symbolism of church leadership. He wanted to understand their perception of the church leader and found that over 90% of church attendees felt that the image of the head leader or minister should be a male figure (as cited in Nason-Clark, 1987).

Konieczny (2000) further supported this ideology and asserted that women led only 1% of traditional Black congregations. Organizational behavior can be a breeding ground for conflicts, which can further impede the church's mission of reaching and helping those in need.

Past researchers also have highlighted the different leadership styles between women and men compared within the church. The experiences and personalities of women brought a nurturing and comforting aspect to the pastorate (Chang, 1997). And, either by biology or socialization, women were perceived as doing ministry better than men. These perceptions, however, were not attributed to women in a broad sense, but specific women that the churchgoers had encountered. The implication was that not all women could be characterized as being a better pastor than men. The conflict between genders has had its roots in the Biblical interpretation of the role of women. Reeves (2012) made the argument that the role of women in the church should be determined in the same way the Apostle Paul created it in Scripture: by educational and spiritual qualifications. Both men and women should be educated and religious. Although women, by in large, perceived the role of women to still be that of helper and supporter to men both in church and at home, women leaders always felt it was their responsibility to challenge the patriarchy in church and society (Cody, 2006). Due to the gender barriers and the differing perceptions, the conflict in role identification lent itself to additional

conflicts for women in spiritual giftedness, callings, and even making career choices that align with ministry aspirations.

### **Women as Church Leaders**

By in large, women find fulfillment and joy in serving in the capacity of church leaders and have identified the social and communal aspects and establishing familial support as the leading factors. This is also evidenced for women serving in more conservative Protestants denominations (Bartkowski 2001; Gallagher 2003) and Pentecostals churches (Griffith 1997; Brasher 1998). In one study, Suckle (2005) explored both the challenges women clergy faced and how they developed coping mechanisms to get through difficult times. The researcher conducted 39 interviews of women clergy from six different denominations including Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran. These women were confronted with gender inequalities and the inherent resistance from others that came with accepting their calling to ministry. These included the expectations of others and how women were expected to fulfill their duties even though the role of clergy in itself brought its unique issues. Suckle also discovered many primary and secondary resolution strategies that the participants employed when facing challenges. These techniques included prayer, speaking directly to those in opposition to their position, and pretending not to be affected by the negativity. Interestingly, the negativity from others did bring its degree of pain that the women had to manage in order to remain effective as leaders.

Consistent involvement in prayer and fellowship brings greater understanding of life and purpose forcing women to make decisions about their next steps, especially if accepting or pursuing leadership of any kind is involved. Charlton (1997) argued that

clergywomen were forced to deal with a contradiction. They can respond and answer the call to what they believe to be promoting or directive from God; or, they can ignore it, choosing instead to maintain traditional expectations or religious, social constructs. To say yes, may mean hardship, isolation, judgment, conflict, and ridicule. However, the decision to stay would mean that the woman was promoting the status quo, business as usual, and complacency.

Cody (2006) wanted to understand clergywomen's experiences as ordained leaders inside and outside of the church as well as their attitudes towards feminism. Cody argued that,

Although women have been ordained since the 1800s, the association between the statuses of woman and minister is still uncommon. Because of the separation of church and state, religious institutions have the power to quell any rhetoric of social equality, thereby, perpetuating a subculture which views clergywomen as an anomaly. (p. 51)

Cody (2006) interviewed over 35 clergywomen from the United Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Mennonite denominations and found the following: women experienced conflict with other church leaders and churchgoers regarding how they should present themselves physically to their congregations and how what style of preaching was appropriate; while few women identified themselves as feminists, they believed part of their responsibilities as clergywomen was to challenge patriarchy in church and society by being transparent with personal challenges involving gender bias, and to support women's rights issues; women clergy may adopt leadership styles that appear more feminine by functioning more as a facilitator rather than as a

supervisor when addressing issues within the church; and, the level of prejudice they experienced would be considered discriminatory in other work environments.

Over the decades, researchers have provided a plethora of data on the selection of clergy and the role of women in the ministry. For centuries, the protocol for pastoral screening had drawn strife and criticism. In the early years, determining the best way to ordain pastors was derived more from a premise of creating the necessary supply for the increased demand as the need for churches was rapidly growing. Winters-Sellars (2004) argued that

Candidates for pastorates could and did come from all walks of life, and the criteria for selection might have been based more on availability and the candidate's declaration of a sense of inner calling for ministry than on any external evaluation of the prospective pastor's vocation. (p. 71)

The case for women in the pastorate was not made at that time; however, the issue of women serving as pastors became more pronounced with the continual expansion of church development and the need for additional pastors. In the literature, the matter of "calling for ministry" had also been an issue of contention, especially for women. In instances where women had been able to attain pastorate level careers, it was often a reality that they were forced through what Chang (1997) described as "pushing", to secondary labor market positions (temporary work, or high-turnover, low-paying and part-time temporary work) because of the blatant discouragement of women in ministry.

The traditional family values highlighting the patriarchal model for both home and church had been the most significant hurdle for women who believe they were called to preach. Rose (1987) pointed to the fact that many women accepted this model, but

question whether men were operating from a position of competence, strength, and sensitivity to lead in both areas properly. This conflicted with a woman's ideal purpose for serving within the ministry. Rose noted:

While these women encourage their men to express themselves in ways that were traditionally thought to be womanly (crying in pain and in joy, praying passionately), the women themselves have stifled their own voices. These women, many of whom "knowingly" submitted to the patriarchy, made a sacrifice which involved choice. The choice, however, demanded a denial of personhood, a dampening of spirit, and a stultification of power and talent. (p. 256)

In another research, Hogan's (2008) wanted to understand the connection between increasing women leadership in the church and its impact on encouraging other women to pursue leadership opportunities. She wanted to understand the experiences, barriers, and issues as they pursued their positions. The researcher used a mixed methodology involving both men and women in leadership and non-leadership roles ranging in age from 20-92 from five church denominations: National Baptist Church, Church of God in Christ, United Methodist Church, Pentecostal, and Non-Denominational. The findings showed that the majority of the men and women believed women could lead but admitted there were not many women leaders in their churches. Most of the participants believed that pastors should have theology training but admitted that the women leaders had more training than the men. Most believed the Bible supports women leadership but agreed that church practice did not adequately represent this belief. Hogan's belief that more women were needed in leadership to demonstrate the value women bring to ministry, as well as

their contribution to the increased effectiveness of church work overall, added validity to the overall arguments she outlined in her study.

### **The Glass Ceiling Effect on Female Church Leaders**

Although women were instrumental in the daily operations of church functions—based on cultural and traditional behaviors—churchgoers perceived it to be impossible to change how women were identified within the church (Barnes, 2006). Furthermore, Barnes (2006) and Rose (1987) found that both African American and Caucasian women who served in leadership positions diminished their own needs and aspirations in the church so that they could bolster their husbands' careers. Barnes (2006) also found that although churchgoers were happy to highlight work done by women within the church, less than 1% would support a female pastor. Those who opposed a woman pastor had cited indirect opposition (the glass ceiling effects), theology, doctrine, or tradition as their reasons for the opposition. Barnes considered the responses as gender inclusivity as opposed to a lack of women leaders present within the churches as gender inequity.

Gender inequality at the highest levels was not just a factor in churches. The literature also pointed to faith-based institutions of higher learning to show the same discrepancies. Johnson (2011) specifically examined Christian colleges and universities to study if women were granted opportunities to lead at the upper administrative and executive levels. She wanted to ascertain why women were not getting the same opportunities for leadership in Christian higher education as their secular counterparts. She interviewed 26 men and women participants who occupied various levels of leadership in faith-based colleges and universities across the United States. The insight gained revealed that more women were needed in the higher levels of leadership; also,



women needed to see role models and have access to female mentors. The organizational culture seems to be a direct reflection of the affiliated church to which the academic institution was connected.

While the acceptance of women leadership in the church still faced an uphill battle, some women stayed the course because they wanted to fulfill their calling. Arnold (2001) sought to discover the collective experiences of women pastors and their interaction with their communities. The researcher wanted to understand how churches interpreted the organizational shift associated with a change in leadership gender in the 21st century. She interviewed eight female pastors from varying Christian denominations. Arnold noted that her findings were consistent with the available literature on women clergy. She found that women struggled with defining what it meant to be feminine and how to function as a woman leader. These gender issues were steeped in their religious culture along with hierarchical vying for power and control. Arnold highlights the growing malfeasance of gender discrimination that was blatant and accepted.

It was thought that having women involved in leadership would bring an additional value to the functioning of the church. Trout (2013) wanted to discover the root cause of the impenetrable gender barrier that kept women from serving in church leadership without consideration for their skills and calling. The researcher was interested in understanding if male leaders were aware of the prevailing gender bias towards women within the organizational structure of their church and were seeking to discover the attitude towards making the necessary changes. The researcher administered a cross-sectional exploratory questionnaire to survey hundreds of past church leaders, board members, and a broad spectrum of employees varying in age and gender. Historical

church data that spanned over 58 years was also reviewed. The researcher found an interesting dynamic: women desired to see a change in the current way the church was structured whereas men wanted to keep it the same. Trout discovered that the men felt it was more expedient to maintain the status quo than to undertake the turmoil associated with changing how women and men were utilized in church leadership. The leadership had no plans to bring consistency between the Scriptures, by-laws, and church practice. Trout's research supported the gender discrepancies found in church leadership. The disproportionate number of men leaders verses women leaders was found to be most evident in the top positions within churches.

The gender ideologies that were accepted by both men and women can impact how women function at church. Schnabel's study focused on discovering the narratives of churches regarding gender roles and the dichotomy that existed between the church's explanations of gender equality and the reality. Schnabel wanted to understand how Evangelical women from different churches identified their position within their church organization. Interviews were conducted at three large Evangelical churches. The researcher utilized focus groups to engage Caucasian female congregants and one-on-one meetings with the senior pastor from each location. Women identified themselves more as church servants or facilitators rather than leaders. And although each church spoke in terms of having an equal view of men and women (based on Biblical principles) their church practices revealed only one of the three churches entirely operated as they stated. According to Schnabel, the three Evangelical churches represent varying ideological views of women, and their organizational practices defy what familiar gender equality narratives state about women's goals.

Although the call to ministry for men had been challenged over the years as it related to their intellectual prowess, women had to acquiesce in the areas of sex, race, intellect, and socio-economic status (Nason-Clark, 1987). Additionally, Nason-Clark revealed in her research that the lack of acceptance and encouragement from fellow churchgoers and male clergy leaders, reduced “the probability that a woman will make a positive decision to embark upon a clerical career” (p. 333). There is a growing trend among some women who are seeking acceptance from other sources of faith. Consequently, this trend was also prevalent during the early development of Christianity. Winter-Sellers (2004) explained, “When the women lost interest in the supervised state religion, they often turned to the foreign cults. The foreign cults offered freedom and prominence and transcended race, wealth, and class bias” (p. 51).

The ongoing gender issues occurring in the larger society were also the same types of concerns that impeded women’s desires to serve God centuries past. There was an ongoing animosity against women leaders in the church. The Biblical interpretation of Scripture was continually highlighted and addressed by both men and women leaders within our local churches.

### **Women and Marketplace Ministry: Living the Calling**

Despite the resistance shown towards Christian women leaders, some challenged and frankly disregarded the perspectives of their male counterparts. Beyond serving at church, these women understood that they were able to be useful and practical within the spheres of religion, family, education, arts and entertainment, business, and media. Michelle DeRusha (2014) described the lives of many of these women in her book *50 Women Every Christian Should Know*. She explained that not only were these women

serving in their God-given callings, they were fulfilling what they believed was their ministry assignments and life's purpose. In the following section, I have highlighted women to represent ministry from various vocations to demonstrate the endless possibilities and abilities of women who desire to be of service.

The time span covered various ages, nationalities, marital status, economic status, and eras. These women all lived between 1820-2013. The common denominator was a faith, belief, and determination to allow God's plan for them to be actualized. They lived fulfilled and accomplished lives. And, they lived in service to God within the church walls and the marketplace. These women leaders were successful because they had to understand and accept new ways of thinking to work through different areas as they related to gender and ministry.

**Harriet Tubman.** Harriet Tubman was a well-known woman of incredible will and talents. Beyond her role in moving slaves through the Underground Railroad, she later became a nurse, scout, and spy for the government. Tubman believed it was her faith that guided what she did and gave her insight with how to navigate dangerous situations. When the Civil War started, her unique experience, preparation, and knowledge of covert travel made her the desired candidate to help the military. Her race and gender made her more suitable to carry out dangerous missions, and she became a vital asset during that time (DeRusha, 2014).

**Mary McLeod Bethune.** Mary McLeod Bethune believed in service to God, church, and missions work. At an early age, she went to Moody Bible Institute with aspirations of going to the mission's field. Much to her dismay, she was rejected an opportunity to serve in Africa because Mary McLeod was an African American.

Although she was disappointed, she redirected her attention to helping others through mission work in the United States. Her new mission's field became the education of young African children. She believed Africans in America needed to know God and to be educated like everybody else. She dedicated her life to teaching and started schools and eventually opening her college: Bethune-Cookman College. She was also known for founding the National Council of Negro Women and organizing the Federal Council on Negro Affairs. For all of her various accomplishments, she credited her faith and her love for others, which brought her great victory and tremendous impact on people (DeRusha, 2014).

**Corrie ten Boom.** Corrie ten Boom was a well-known Nazi extermination camp survivor. She came from a family active in faith and committed to protecting Jews from the Nazis. Interestingly, it was her sister Betsie who spoke about a ministry vision to Corrie just before Betsie died, which was to be carried out upon both of their release from prison. Unfortunately, Betsie did not survive. However, miraculously, Corrie ten Boom was mistakenly released a couple of days after her sister's death, and one week before everyone in her age group and older was executed. During their months of imprisonment, they found increased faith and hope by reading the Bible. Upon her release, Corrie proceeded to accomplish all Betsy envisioned armed with the Scriptures and the vision shared between her and her sister. A few years later, Corrie opened multiple rehabilitation homes for war victims with the aid of dedicated financiers. She also wrote numerous books and launched a worldwide ministry which allowed her to travel to over sixty countries to share the stories of her family's ordeal and to offer a message of hope in Jesus (DeRusha, 2014).

**Mahalia Jackson.** Mahalia Jackson was most famous for her gospel musical influence. She was able to segue that influence into a lucrative flower shop and beauty parlor. Later in her life, she used much of her earnings from these three vocations to become a voice and a financier of the civil rights movement. It was recorded that gospel music served as an anthem during those difficult times and Mahalia served an essential role as one of the leading voices of that era. Although she was offered various opportunities to sing secular songs, her commitment solely to gospel music even cost her marriage. Mahalia believed her musical gift was only to be used to make a joyful noise to the Lord (DeRusha, 2014).

**Dorothy Day.** The account of Dorothy Day's life was about the recollection of a prayer she prayed having no idea how God would fulfill her request to allow her talents to help poor people. What followed was beyond her imagination. Dorothy followed in the footsteps of her father by becoming a journalist. She started her newspaper and used those proceeds as well as donations to open "houses of hospitality" and to offer housing and food to those who were unemployed and poor. She believed her love for God should be lived out, and her primary focus in her writing was to speak the Words of Jesus (DeRusha, 2014).

**Gladys Aylward.** According to Christian beliefs, the hallmark of a true calling to ministry occurred when one was celebrated and validated by those in authority granting one access to the ministry field. This was not the case for Gladys Aylward, who was a London native. She was told that her age and her subpar grades diminished her ability to learn Chinese, and, therefore, she was denied permission to do missionary work in China—her lifelong dream. Undeterred, she continued practicing Chinese and worked

hard to save money for a one-way ticket to China. She knew she was called to mission work. While in China, she witnessed heinous acts of violence. Her mission became to change what she saw through the love and wisdom of Jesus Christ (DeRusha, 2014).

Gladys began serving a people that despised her, where they threw rocks at her and called her a foreign devil. She lived in a region where she witnessed death daily. Nevertheless, Gladys and another missionary opened an inn called the Inn of Eight Happinesses where they took in travelers and poor people, feeding them and sharing Bible stories. She also worked for the government as a foot-binding inspector, and eventually became a spy for Chinese soldiers. Her role as a spy was gut-wrenching because the intelligence she provided led to the loss of Japanese lives. Her work eventually got her excommunicated by the Communist government, and she was forced to relocate years later to Taiwan where she opened an orphanage. Her life has been made into a book and movie.

**Edith Schaffer.** The ministry path of Edith Schaffer seemed satisfied. Born to missionary parents while living in China, Edith longed to fight for the injustices she witnessed as a child. As fate would have it, after the family returned to America for a visit, they were unable to return to China when her mother could not pass a routine medical exam. Edith went on to graduate from college with plans to return to the mission field. It was at that time that she met her husband and became the wife of a pastor. Her role as a pastor's wife did not stop her aspirations for life. She supported her husband while he attended seminary by working as a seamstress and selling her wares to high-end New York City boutiques. She also taught classes for seminary wives on how to think for themselves and understand the Bible. It was not long after that Edith, her husband and

their children were sent to do missions work in Sweden. It was short-lived. The Swedes thought their brand of evangelizing was too strong. Needing to figure out next steps, through much prayer, Edith and her husband founded L'Abri International Fellowship. These homes which were now in over eleven countries serve as safe havens or shelters where people can come, stay, and enjoy intellectual conversation on various topics such as religion, music, art, literature, science, philosophy, and a host of other issues. Additionally, the couple has written over 12 books, have written for magazines and newspapers, and have ministered to thousands around the globe influencing people through media (2014).

### **Significance to the Field of Conflict Resolution**

In the field of conflict resolution, practitioners can utilize this research data to provide consultation to churches that desire to transform how women were viewed, as well as how women were prepared for ministry – as the terms ministry and leadership can now be operationalized from a broader perspective. The offering of education and training within churches, as it relates to both identity and interpersonal conflicts, was the starting point for church leaders to see areas of contention that need improvement, and to find ways to address these conflict areas successfully (Gordon, 2003). Conflict resolution practitioners can then help church leaders through an assessment process that includes critically evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of ministries and programs offered by the church. Additionally, speaking with church members about their experiences with gender acceptance or resistance can be advantages to gain a more expansive perspective than from exclusively those in leadership.



A conflict resolution practitioner can support these churches through the offering of training, coaching, facilitation, or mediation to help them make any necessary shifts as deemed by all who attend and work at each church respectively. When a conflict practitioner offers this level of guidance, it shows our significance to the field of conflict resolution. We represent the merge of theory and practice to help those in need of conflict management and resolution see the desired change to any culture or system.

### **Need for This Research**

Although women have been fighting for equality since the 19th century, society is ready this time around. The landscape has also changed for women serving in the capacity of church leaders. Women are completing college at higher numbers and are attending seminary schools by record numbers (Durham, 2016). Additionally, by in large, women make up the majority of churchgoers on a national scale (Pew Research, 2016). The #MeToo Movement has changed the game in both the church and in the marketplace, forcing society to confront the unjust abuse of power against women (Higginbottom, 2018). As a result, more meaningful discussions are taking place about the role of women and the impact of conscious and unconscious gender bias in society.

In short, the assessment and needs of women have taken center stage. The emphasis on gender equality has reached a peak and is demanding a favorable response from influential patriarchs, and the church is the perfect microcosm for the broader gender debate and eventual change. The expectation is that the church will lead society in implementing equitable treatment towards women. Women leaders in the church are primed to champion this cause. The timing and scope of this research are relevant to all social arenas.

It is important to note that this study will explore both male and female church leaders as they reflect on their perspectives on female church leaders and the church. Having men analyze their spoken words against their experience with women church leaders will cultivate an appreciation for the effort and ability of their female co-laborers. Also, hearing the lived experiences of men who are questioning and grappling with the gendered methods and systems that are no longer working will open the door for further dialogue. This research will provide more significant evidence that the stereotypes could be broken when circumstances and encounters demand an override of the bias and tradition of the past, even if stereotypes are still active.

The research of women church leaders is gaining interests in academia, seminary schools, and the medical field. The vastness and depth of the subject matter warrant a multitude of perspectives in order to tackle the systemic challenges associated with the topic of gender equality. This research adds richness to the current debate by exploring the lived experiences of female church leaders from the perspective of conflict analysis and resolution. This research is also unique in that it will address the experiences of both male and female church leaders and their gender biases concerning the topic of female church leaders. I will examine the data from the perspectives of power, change, and mental model theory in order to dissect the underlying issues and provide recommendations for church organizations. While the conversation about the research is quite helpful, the implementation of radical change is imminent.

### **Theories**

Although the research bears out the continued disagreements regarding the role of women, it was not my goal to join this debate. My goal was to examine ways to open

opportunities for women to live fulfilled lives just as the women introduced here. It was important that I discovered the prevailing thoughts, ideologies, and philosophies that may keep church leaders from encouraging or supporting the advancement of women both in church and in the marketplace. To that end, I analyzed and identified three areas of organizational conflict, through a theoretical lens, which continually makes it difficult for church members and church leaders to accept women in ministry *and* leadership: power, change, and mental model theories.

According to Katz (2015), the leadership crisis was inherent in every segment of the professional world. The challenges facing organizations and how to combat them were still a looming question with no clear answers. The need for active and diverse leaders had become a growing topic as the demographics of the United States evolved. Katz explained, “the process of becoming a leader is the process of becoming an integrated human being” (p. 21). The definition of the word integrated was to make into a whole by bringing all parts together. When it came to leadership what were those parts? In my estimation, the integration included personal development, which might consist of physical (diet, health, and exercise), spiritual (connection to God), emotional (relationships, mental health), and intellectual (self- and professional development) aspects of people, as well as interpersonal development encompassing how we engage others. Wilmot and Hocker’s (2011) theory on interpersonal power was a key component to understanding power theory. They described interpersonal power as:

The ability to influence a relational partner in any context because you control, or at least the partner perceives that you control, resources that the partner needs,

values, desires, or fears. Interpersonal power also includes the ability to resist the influence attempts of a partner. (p. 116)

Wilmot and Hocker argued that the potential for conflict increased when power was mishandled. One relational partner may view his or her level of experience or knowledge as an element that makes him or her superior to the other as opposed to merely being the one with the knowledge or experience. If it was one's desire to increase another's dependency this can become constructive or destructive behavior both to the relationship at stake and the organization as a whole.

### **Power Theory**

Power was the essence of leadership, as per Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (as cited in Katz, 2015). It was the driving force or fuel of leadership. Power is also strongly connected to one's level of influence (Keltner, 1994). Power was bestowed through the empowerment of self and others and thus responsibility goes along with it. It was my desire to understand which types of power may be contributing to the ongoing organizational behavior conflict in the church and whether the clergywomen can serve to address or eradicate these power tensions regarding gender inequalities relating to leadership.

There are different types of power or influence (Katz, 2015, pps. 38-42). They are:

1. Coercive power- reinforced by fear
2. Connection power- according to the level of influence and interactions with important persons
3. Expert power- because of the leader's knowledge, skills and competencies
4. Information power- possession of and access to knowledge

5. Legitimate power- based on the leader's position
6. Referent power- determined by the personal traits that followers admire or identify with
7. Reward power- salaries, advancement and recognition given to employees

According to the theory of power, self-interest action that leaders capitalize based on their followers' self-interests, with the use of manipulation and persuasion, to aid in the pursuit of their own will and desires. There must be great care in not abusing that power as leaders were automatically given power. Power was bestowed through the empowerment of self and others, and thus responsibility goes along with it. Power used responsibly was a vital tool for leaders to spearhead a needed change to expand ways of thinking and to operate within any organization. I desired to understand which types of power contributed to the ongoing interpersonal conflicts in the churches selected for this study. For leaders to embrace this theory, change would be necessary, though not easy.

### **Change Theory**

Change theory (William Bridges, 2003; Wildflower & Brennan, 2011)

incorporates three stages:

- 1) Ending – characterized by confusion about what had ended and what had not;
- 2) The Neutral Zone – a fuzzy period where the old and new are both in operation;  
and
- 3) The New Beginning – the new life was starting, but just as it was unclear what has really ended, it might be equally unclear what has really begun.

According to William Bridges (2003), change theory may be analyzed about the process of transitioning during various phases in life and through immunity to change as

outlined by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey (as cited in Wildflower & Brennan, 2011). Conflict practitioner H.B. Karp argues that focusing only on positive responses can be missed opportunities to understand the presence of negative reactions such as competition, anger, and resistance (Keltner, 2003, Chapter 11). Resistance to change was best described as what we want versus what we can do.

I analyzed immunity to change in relationship to conflicts resulting from identity issues and unfulfilled personal goals of women members of each church. Specifically, I looked at perspectives on the roles of women and how those may or may not have changed, the perceptions of church and marketplace ministry, and how feminism and the impact of intersectionality may be interpreted when considering change theory. Additional information regarding these focus areas was analyzed further through data gained from the biographical narrative interviews. This aspect of change was also researched to understand the natural mental blocks that impede potential progression within an organization.

### **Mental Model Theory**

In its purest form, a church was an organization. Within organizations there were teams of people with their individual and corporate mentalities that comprise perceptions, understandings, and imaginations that may or may not be true. The organizational culture and the connected mentalities were exemplified and reinforced by those in charge. Halevy, Cohen, and Chou (2013), believe there is a direct correlation between personality, degree of social interaction, an one's mental model regarding conflict.

The ladder of inference was made up of mental rungs in the mind that dictate what we believed. These beliefs were often operating in our subconscious and the only

way we saw the outcome of those thoughts was when there was an observable action resulting. According to Senge et al. (1994), there was a reflexive loop that encompasses our beliefs, which affect what data we select each time.

Senge et al. (1994) offered the ladder of inference for further probing to understand the breakdown within teams when individual beliefs do not consider the abilities of the whole. Mentalities were encouraged and influenced by those in charge. The literature review demonstrated the level of conflict that was present from entrenched gender barriers, perspectives on the roles of women in leadership, and the identity challenges of women. I used the ladder of inference to analyze perceived divisions within churches relating to their personal experiences with female church leaders and their receptivity of women in church ministry and marketplace ministry.

### **Conclusion**

The literature review offered the philosophies, ideologies, practices, and teachable moments of both researchers and women who have answered the call on their lives to serve God in ministry or leadership both in church and in the marketplace. The literature review was divided into sub-sections that highlighted the current research related to gender barriers experienced by women leaders in the church, and the gender debate as it has unfolded over the years. There was a review of the varying researchers' perspectives on the role of women in leadership and how women and men perceive the purpose of women. Additionally, research was gathered on the concept of identity, and the Scriptures that were much debated about women were reviewed. Finally, perspectives on ordaining women were discussed, and some women who have served in marketplace ministry were introduced. The literature review ended with an overview of power,

change, and mental model theories that were used to address the research topic. In Chapter 3, I utilized a biographical narrative, qualitative research methodology to examine these phenomena further.



### Chapter 3: Research Method

This research employed a biographical narrative analysis to examine the lived experiences of male and female church leaders as they explored the social implications of women leading the church, the marketplace, and the family. Specifically, I wanted to examine the various ideologies relating to the identity of women, the definitions of ministry and leadership, the role of women in church ministry, and their understanding of the marketplace ministry. Consequently, Chaitin, Linstroth, and Hiller (2009) considered this form of study ideal for the biographer since it enabled the person to share his or her life with no limitation of scope. For Riemann (2006), a biographical narrative can serve as an opportunity for people to interpret their lives with new meanings. It was for that reason that I was primarily interested in exploring the participants' life history, which included both the obvious and not-so-obvious experiences that had shaped their biographic narratives. In applying this particular research method, I was able to document the biographers' lives through their eyes and in the process was able to understand how church leaders formed their values, convictions, and resulting biases.

I also employed conflict resolution theories relating to power, change, and mental model as the underlying context for my unit of analysis. These theories were an integral component in classifying the interpersonal and church-related conflicts, thus providing the vehicle for evaluating the impact of church policies and practices on the utilization of women in leadership positions within the church. This research also included the various instances of overt and covert resistance to women leading in the church. Furthermore, conflict resolution theories were effective when I relied solely on the biographers' ability to recall information. Some biographical studies may utilize varying levels of

triangulation to provide supporting documentation as corroborating evidence to validate or support a perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018); however, it was important to create a safe space for the free flow of information for the sole purpose of entering their lives as they remembered them. Past researchers such as Bertaux and Kohli (1984) have advocated for this approach and argued, “Life stories are shown to be rich ground for the formulation of substantive theories, which are conceived of as interpretations rather than as scientific explanations” (p. 215).

### **Biographical Thematic Analysis**

Harrison (2008) argued that the earliest construction of the “individual story” can be traced back to the late sixteenth century in Europe. He noted, “European society became interested in individuals, in their differences from one another, in their imputed psychological depth, their moral value, their capacity for change and development” (p. 154). Biographical history was also evidenced in the Bible within the sixty-six books of the canonized Scriptures. The individuals of that time told the numerous accounts as oral traditions, and these stories were later transcribed into printed books, songs, and movies. As such, the ancient gospels were, in a sense, the earliest accounts of biographical narratives.

Through the biographical life history method, the reader was able to join the social science behind the research study process of the person and not just the product as in a quantitative study. In the process, I hoped to provide additional insights into the psychological, emotional, and psychosocial development that were co-occurring. Interestingly, the foundation of Christianity was based on early biographical accounts, and it was only fitting that I employed the very same narrative techniques used in the past

to uncover how today's church leaders wrestle with the impact of female leadership in the context of the ever-changing societal morale, norms, and values. Torill Moen (2008) argued for the need for narratives research as a useful unit of analysis. Citing the works of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), Moen argued:

The challenge is to examine and understand how human actions are related to the social context in which they occur and to consider how and where they occur through growth. The task for the analysis is therefore to find a way to avoid the pitfalls of individualistic and societal reductionism. The narrative as a unit of analysis provides the means for doing this. (p. 294)

My interest in people and how they have come to think, live and feel about themselves, their loved ones, and their lives prompted me to select the biographical history as my research methods for this qualitative research study. Though I do acknowledge that other useful qualitative approaches were equally as valuable. For instance, Creswell and Poth (2018) and Roberts (2002) provided detailed summaries of various and well-used qualitative research methods that ranged from biography (a narrative that records the events in a person life), to autoethnography (a narrative told by the individual him/herself and the broader social context experienced through that individual), and to oral history (a collection of personal or organizational data of events or the circumstances a particular situation), just to name a few. There is a distinction between autoethnography and biography with former being a self-reflection whereby the author explored his or her experience from a wider social, political, and social context

whereas the latter is an account of an individual's life. Biographies are generally written by a third person (Ellis, Adams, & Brochner, 2011).

### **Biographical Thematic Analysis Procedures**

In documenting the lived experiences of Cuban, Haitian, and Guatemalans immigrants in the context of personal meaning and public expression of their ethnicity, home, and belonging, Chaitin, Linstroth, and Hiller (2009) employed an interdisciplinary thematic analysis that was part biographical, part psychosocial, and part conflict resolution. I applied their thematic analysis approach to address my research question since our research shared similar research objectives (i.e., the lived experiences in the context of the social, political, and cultural influences).

As such, Chaitin and associates outlined seven steps for employing the biographical thematic research method: 1) listen and transcribe interviews; 2) read the notes taken and craft interpretations; 3) construct a chronological analysis of the interviewee's life; 4) complete a global analysis by reviewing the overall interviewing process; 5) identify thematic analysis themes; 6) select metaphors to describe the interviewees; 7) and finally write a summary. While this process was established with a group context in mind, I was able to work through the steps smoothly.

#### **Steps 1-2: Listen and Translate Interviews**

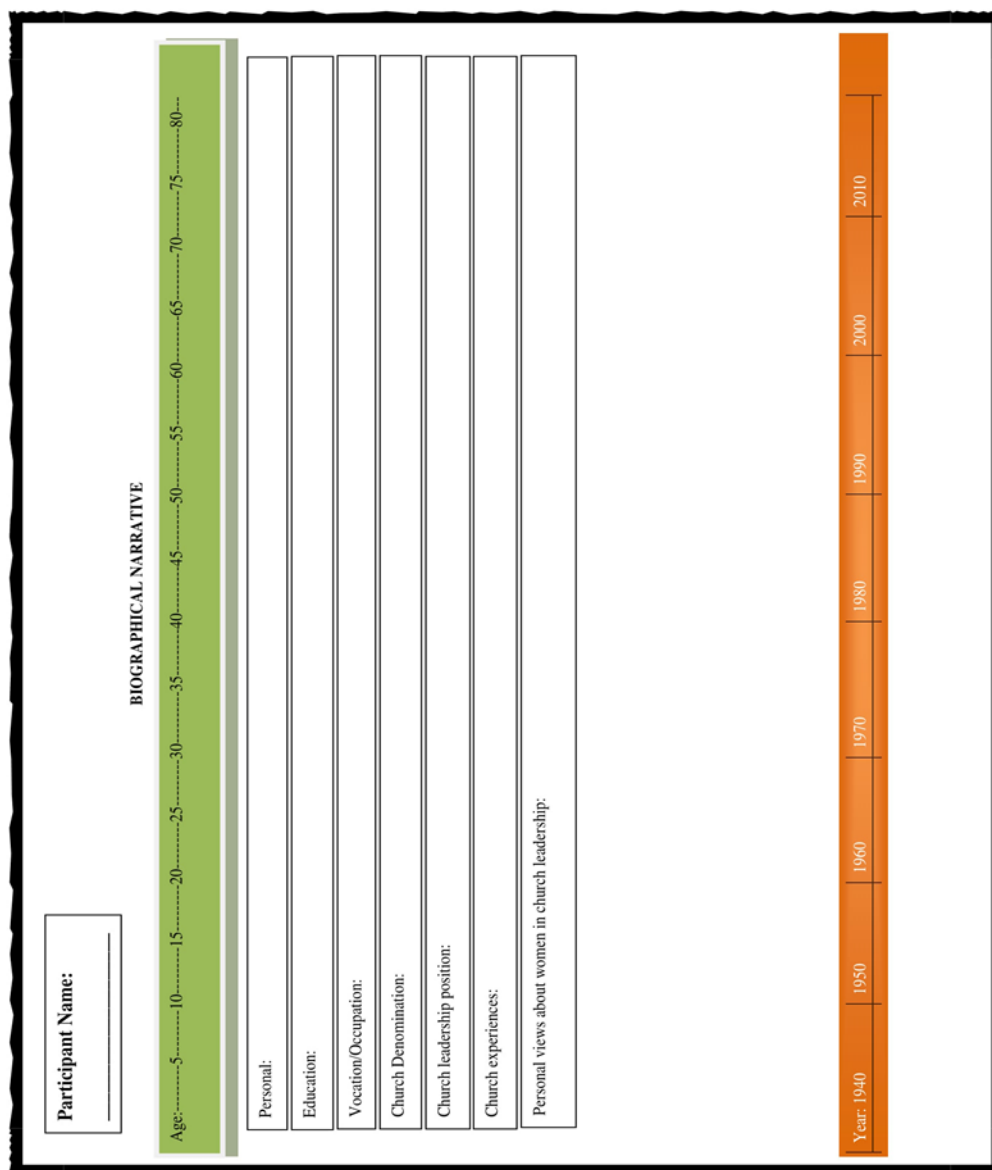
The first and second stage involved listening and translating the interview. This process was important because it provided the researcher with an opportunity to review the transcripts, to discuss the meanings, and to infer their significance. I hired an outside transcription company to transcribe the interviews to standardize the process. Before sending the recordings, I required the company to sign a confidentiality agreement form

ensuring the protection and security of the data (see Appendix C). Each record was sent to the company via a secure electronic Dropbox that I owned. Over two weeks, the company completed the transcription of all twelve interviews. Once completed, the transcribed interviews were sent to me via the secure electronic Dropbox. I then read the complete interviews while simultaneously listening to each recording in a private area. During a second round, I viewed the interview videos while writing comments and crafting interpretations based on observed interviewee dress, voice tone, facial expressions, and body language for a fuller effect.

### **Step 3: Construct a Chronological Analysis**

In constructing a chronological analysis, Chaitin et al. recommended that the researcher create a chronology of the biographer's life that included information relating to the family information, education, and career history. They also suggested that researchers include other "extraordinary experiences" such as trauma, events, or political and social phenomena that may impact the participant's lived experience.

To organize the biographical chronologies, I created a template that summarized the interviewees' narratives (see Figure 1). The chronology included the participants' marital status, family status, race, gender, age, church leadership position, church denomination of origin, and current church denomination (see Appendix E). I also provided an overview of their educational accomplishments, vocation/occupations, and church experiences. Finally, I provided their personal views about women in leadership. The visual display of the interviewees' data provided a snapshot of the critical aspects for each participant.



The form is titled "BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE" and is enclosed in a decorative black border. It features several input fields and a timeline.

**Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_5.....10.....15.....20.....25.....30.....35.....40.....45.....50.....55.....60.....65.....70.....75.....80.....

**Personal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Vocation/Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church Denomination:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church leadership position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church experiences:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal views about women in church leadership:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year:** 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010

*Figure 1.* Biographical Chronology Template

#### **Step 4: Complete a Global Analysis**

In the global analysis, Chaitin et al. detailed the overall impression of the interview through a four-step process:

- 1) “a description of the interview context that described how hard/easy it was making contact with the biographer, the interview setting, the manner/dress of the biographer, how the interviewer felt, length of the interview, etc.;

- 2) “an overall summary of the interview including themes, style of speech (questions, arguments, stories, hesitations, etc.), emotional atmosphere, etc.;;”
- 3) “first hypotheses concerning possible meanings the experiences have for the biographer;” and
- 4) “a critical examination of the interview process in respect to the positive/negative aspects, the necessity of follow-up interviews, and/or ideas/concerns for future interviews.”

I provided an outline of these steps for each participant in order to ensure that I accurately captured the “overall impression of the interview, the interviewee, and the interview process” (Chaitin et al., 2009, p. 69). For a more detailed explanation of my contact and interview process, please see the expanded Global Analysis (see Appendix G).

### **Step 5: Identify Themes**

Step five involved the identification of “specific salient themes, recurring ideas or patterns of belief that link people and settings together, and possible meanings and explanations”, being careful “to look for no more than six main themes for each interviewee and deciding on a name for each theme” (Chaitin et al., 2009, p. 68). More details on the salient themes for each participant were available for review (see Appendix H).

The data analysis and results offered here were gathered using the biographical model developed by Chaitin, Linstroth, and Hiller (2009). I listened to the interviews, had the interviews transcribed by a third party, constructed a chronological analysis of the interviewees’ lives, completed a global analysis for each participant, identified themes,

selected metaphors to describe each participant, and then wrote individual summaries to create a broader picture of the life of each participant to pull all the aspects of their lives together in the final step.

I created a color-coded excel spreadsheet to list the participants' numbers, the themes found for each, the page number of the transcript where the theme was found, and the quote that connected the theme to the research focus of this dissertation. Through this process, I made note of the themes that were repeated by all participants across told stories and determined main themes by reviewing the occurrences of the same theme for each participant.

#### **Step 6: Select Metaphors**

The metaphor stage was used to look for “central metaphors of the biographer’s life that could capture succinctly the way they seemed to approach and understand their life” (p. 68). Chaitin et al. noted that every metaphor be coupled by “one or two explanatory sentences”.

#### **Step 7: Write a Summary**

In the final stage, Chaitin et al. suggested that the researcher create summary paragraphs for each interview that were chronicled, and globally and thematically analyzed, to include metaphors that can “capture the interviewee in general” (p. 69).

### **Sample**

In developing my sampling plan, my “stratified purposeful” sampling, which encompasses the ability to select a specific subgroup for interviewing (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Miles and Huberman, 2014) consisted of 12 church leaders made up of six women and six men. Two women and two men leaders were selected from three



different Christian church denominations including a Non-Denominational church, a Baptist church that recently converted to being a Non-Denominational Church, and an African Methodist Episcopal Church Non-Denominational Church. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended researchers should have “stories to tell about their lived experience” for narrative research. Selecting the most appropriate individuals is integral to gaining the data needed. Each church provided four adults to be interviewed, and each person was interviewed individually. During the interviews, participants were asked a series of questions about intrapersonal conflicts with church practice and their personal sense of God’s purpose for the role of women, reconciling identity conflicts regarding ministry functions of women; personal feelings about women leaders in ministry; and church conflicts around power, mental models, and perspectives on change regarding women in ministry. With the consent of the participants, I videotaped the interaction so that body language and voice inflections could be observed during data collection. All participants signed a confidentiality agreement to protect the privacy of the participants. I secured a neutral location for the interviews that was agreeable by the participants.

### **Data Collection**

Narrative data collection was tailored using Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data collection circle model. Site locations for the face-to-face interviews were the three selected churches where the participants attend and serve. A room was reserved at each church for the days and times suitable for each participant. These spaces were available for an unlimited amount of time per my request.

Interviews were conducted with church members who have lived the experience of being a leader in a Christian church. The interviewees came from three denominations,

which included a non-denominational church, a Baptist church that recently converted to being non-denominational church, and an African Methodist Episcopal church. I worked with personal acquaintances who were pastors and affiliates of larger church associations, who network with numerous denominations, to get assistance in selecting the three denominational churches needed for this study.

Upon selecting the three denominations I personally introduced myself to the senior pastor or designee of each church to gain access and develop immediate rapport and trust. I personally knew the pastor of one of the churches. The pastor of the second church recommended the third church be involved. I learned that the pastor of the second church and I have a mutual friend, and the mutual friend coordinated my introduction to the second pastor. I visited each church during their worship services as a complete participant to observe leadership interactions and meet the leadership staff. The pastor for each church helped determine the best path for selecting participants through pre-selection of leadership and church staff based on whom the pastors' thought were most qualified or by the pastor making a voluntary request of those leaders available to participate. Church size also influenced how and which church leaders were selected to be participants in this research. The group of leaders interviewed consisted of pastors, elders, church staff, departmental heads and administrators.

The narrative aspect of the data collection involved face-to-face interviews of four participants from each church to include two women and two men. I used an interview protocol to maintain an organized structure of note taking and for asking questions to be followed for each session (see Appendix D). The questions selected were open-ended and non-directional. Data was gathered during the semi-structured interviews via audio

recording and video recording. I had the audio recordings professionally transcribed (see Appendix C).

Creswell and Poth (2018) also explained that a researcher needed to choose between first-order and second-order narratives. First order are stories directly from the person being interviewed, and second order were in the form of storied biographies or a combination of many stories constructed by the researchers (2013). I only utilized first order storied biographies.

Upon completion of each interview session, I stored data in a file on a personal computer and created a back-up file on a personal hard-drive. Data was also stored on a jump-drive for portability purposes. All data provided by participants, whether electronic or written, was masked with the alias identifier ‘participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, and such.

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

I endeavored to bring insight to the research question, “How does church leadership define the terms ministry and leadership for women in the church and in the marketplace, whereby women can find fulfillment, self-actualization, and acceptance of self both personally and spiritually?” My sub-questions had been formalized to allow readers “to enter the perspective of the narrator” (Riessman, 2008) which included:

- What are the life stories that shape the view of women as leaders in the church?  
Outside of the church?
- How does church practice regarding women in church or marketplace leadership conflict with personal views about women in church or marketplace leadership?
- What are the current church policies regarding women leadership in the church?

- As men serving in ministry, how do church leaders practice ministry leadership for women inside the church? And in the marketplace?
- What is the perspective of men as it relates to recognizing women in leadership positions in church and how might issues of resistance manifest?

Through the data collection and thematic analysis, I hoped to prove a deeper context of female church leaders and in the process provide additional research and study on the topic of this dissertation.

### **Church Policies and Bylaws of Participant Churches**

I was able to secure church policies and bylaws for all three participating churches. One of the churches, classified as an evangelical non-denominational church, wrote a position paper within the last ten years to specifically address the role of women. The by-laws did not assign gender specifications for the various current church roles, which include: a board of trustees, a chairman, a president, a vice-president, a senior pastor, a secretary, and a treasurer, the position paper clearly outlines the conflict within the church in the acceptance of women leaders. This non-denominational church was making a definitive stand in favor of women leaders, specifically for the role of an elder, which had historically been held only by men.

The second church, once classified as Baptist for many decades, had undergone a transformation that as of now have classified itself as non-denominational. The by-laws were also general in expressing opposition or support of women as leaders. The church did outline the positions of senior pastor, executive pastor, elders (which listed the names of both men and women), finance ministry, and administrator. The church recently started ordaining women as elders within the last five years, and they too experienced

backlash and conflict for this decision. Similar to the first church, the decision to ordain women resulted in an exodus of members who were not in favor of the policy change.

The third church was an African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), led by a woman pastor. Its bylaws specified the role of women as leaders in the mid-1980's. The sole purpose of this addition to the AME bylaws was to explain, increase, and support women in leadership within their denomination and to fight against sexism and gender discrimination. The contingency within these bylaws was that women should be able to hold most offices within the AME church. The downside of their evolution of increasing the leadership capacity of women, which included the head position of pastor, was the present struggle of soliciting men to join their church.

### **Ethics & Credibility**

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated the most significant ethical concern for qualitative research was trustworthiness. Other factors of interest included credibility, dependability, and transferability. According to Marshall and Rossman, the qualitative and quantitative analysis must answer questions such as, "Do we believe in the claims that a research report puts forward? On what grounds do we judge these as credible? How do we evaluate it? Were the claims potentially useful for the problems we were concerned with?" (p. 40). In addressing these concerns, they believed that researchers should present data with greater confidence.

From my perspective, it was critical that each person's case was chronicled with care and respect; and, it was important to weigh both what information was gathered and how the information gathered was to be utilized. As a researcher, I must maintain sound ethics and integrity throughout the research process. Marshall and Rossman (2011)

admonished researchers also to consider their role and to be mindful of their impact on the human subjects while gathering information.

I also considered the ethical issues as it related to the confidentiality of the participants, protecting the participants from harm, not compromising the participants' values, and ensuring that the participants were unidentifiable to the public (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It was also essential to communicate the data that illustrated the real intent of the participants. Since the participants were the specialists in their lived experience, I used interviews, extracts, and quotes to give the participants the opportunity to share their stories in their own words.

As it pertained to confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the churches and the real names of the participants were not revealed. I briefed participants on the research process and had them sign an informed consent at the beginning and debriefed them at the end so that I could address any follow-up questions or concerns.

When it came to ethical considerations, Riessman (2008) suggested that all work acquired from the research participants be taken back to them for their review, input, and approval. In this way, participants would be able to ensure their information was being conveyed or concealed with integrity and care. The research should be in partnership with the participants so that they were comfortable and confident with the study.

During the design stage, I focused on transactional validity, which encompassed keeping the participants involved in the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I was committed to co-construct each narrative with the assistance and full knowledge of the participants and did not take liberties to express thoughts, ideas, or facts with single subjectivity (Riessman, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

The methodology selected was a biographical thematic narrative analysis on the church experience of women, and the lived experience of the men who served in ministry with women. The participants came from three different church denominations and varied in age and degrees of church leadership experience. I heard the life stories of six men and six women as well as their life decisions that had taught them how to address the debate regarding women in leadership roles within the church, in the marketplace, and in the family. I interviewed 12 church leaders using the research process advocated by Chaitin and associates (2009).

## Chapter 4: Results

The following chapter described the participants by chronicling their life experiences as well as exploring the various themes and significant findings from my study. The participants included both male and female from all walks of life, educational levels, church experiences, age, and experiences as church leaders. However, all shared similar thoughts and accounts regarding how women leaders in ministry and the marketplace were seen, treated, and valued. There was a noticeable evolution of their views about women in leadership in both the church and the marketplace.

Some suggested that these beliefs have come to be stagnating, suffocating the church. Others recognized the need for change, but they were not quite sure how to go about it. Many of the biographers had epiphanies along the way, which resulted in modified views that were based on new information, personal encounters with women leaders, or a changing community that demanded a shift in behavior.

The themes and metaphors associated with each biographer highlighted meaningful moments and events in time that were seared in their memories and contributed to their current philosophies and ideologies about women, church, ministry, and leadership. The discussion about the marketplace showed there were mixed opinions and understanding about what the term means and how it was associated and connected to ministry. Changing demographics within churches, the “me too” movement and a thrust for respect and recognition by women around the world draws many of them to reconsider past views about church and ministry to look forward to the future excitedly. Nevertheless, in the meantime, some of the women leaders were still not sure how to use their voices to impact change around them, while others were apparent, yet still waiting



for proper recognition and positioning within their respective churches. I will follow this individual data analysis with the collective thematic results to provide connection and relevance to the research topic being explored.

I developed the biographic summary for each participant based on the following question: What are the life stories that shape the view of women as leaders in the church? Chaitin and associates (2009) suggested that the creation of summary paragraphs include chronicled events, as well as globally and thematically in order to “capture the interviewee in general” (p. 69). Towards that end, each participant was given a pseudonym to protect his or her privacy. My data analysis and summary of each participant has followed the seven steps for thematic narrative analysis as outlined above.

Seven salient themes emerged from the thematic analysis. They included: 1) struggle for gender equality; 2) gender vs. competence; 3) male dominate church culture; 4) gender bias and discrimination; 5) kingdom culture debate; 6) women resisting women, and 7) the significance of voice.

### **Chronological Stories of the Participants**

The chronological stories of these biographers provided a glimpse into their pain, disappointments, successes, and justifications for why they felt and believed as they do about the role of women. Although there were areas of stark contrast as it related to whether a woman could lead within the church, all agreed that this mindset could not continue if the church and society were to move forward. Furthermore, it was necessary to rectify the Church’s divisive stance as it was related to leadership, solely based on gender, if the church is to maintain positive influence within its walls, its community, and

its nation. They all agreed that the sentiments towards female church leaders originated from deeply rooted historical forces and theological beliefs.

Research questions for narrative analysis answers what, how, and why questions (Creswell, 2013). The overarching central question was, “How do church leaders understand the meaning of ministry and leadership for women in the church and in the marketplace?”. The research sub-questions for this study were as followed:

- 1) What are the life stories that shape the view of women as leaders in the church?  
Outside of the church?
- 2) How does church practice regarding women in church or marketplace leadership conflict with personal views about women in church or marketplace leadership?
- 3) What are the current church policies regarding women leadership in the church?
- 4) As men serving in ministry, how do church leaders practice ministry leadership for women inside the church. In the marketplace?
- 5) What is the perspective of men as it relates to recognizing women in leadership positions in church and how might issues of resistance manifest?

### **Participant James**

James was a 57-year-old Caucasian male who was married and serve as an Executive Pastor. Over the process of time, James had grown to respect and honor women even though he did not grow up in church nor had strong women examples to shape his views on women. This experienced shifted once James entered the seminary and was encouraged to wrestle with his ideology about the role of women. Gradually, he came to embrace the new ideologies. He explained,

One of the things I appreciated about how they chose to teach us as students was to give, have you look at all the positions or different positions...and you can look in there and they ask you, what's your sense? And so, they weren't trying to drive a viewpoint. They wanted you to actually wrestle with it and then write about it.

James recalled the internal conflict regarding the inconsistencies of church practice and Scriptural congruency about women in leadership years later after serving as a leader within the church and being a husband and a father. He overheard one of the men arguing that if the church accepted women, then they would have to accept gay pastors as well. Though this argument was supposed to persuade others from advocating for women leaders, James was not swayed by such rhetoric. He said:

There's fellowships or different people who were thinking more advanced or progressively in the right way, but this has been going on as you know for centuries. This way of thinking about women and people of color or whatever it is, it's just wrong. It's wrong. So, this was the prayer. We're praying for breakthrough.

James shared a vulnerable place of contemplation that shaped his current theological position when he expressed, "I just don't know what to do with, with women who I know have those gifts and they wouldn't be able to be unleashed in them so that's part of, for me, the full embracing of them being in every position."

James struck me as someone who had unapologetically embraced women in leadership and was quite intentional in his actions to be supportive of women leadership. Even though his stance was strong, he also understood and respected that fact that the other pastors and church leaders did not share his views. Throughout the interview he

made references to the need for expanded conversation on the topic as well as patience as others grapple with if and how to embark upon such a change in their churches. The metaphor “*meeting of the minds*” best described James’ desire to speak with other pastors, share the transition experience of his church, and do his part to help other leaders move to advance the use of women in leadership.

### **Participant Suzanne**

Suzanne was a 60-year-old African American woman who was an elder and a pastor. Suzanne had decades of experience in both the church and the marketplace setting. Although she had no idea what she was walking into when she agreed to marrying her pastor 15 years ago, her realization of the gravity of it now, as she measured the growth and changes that were occurring within the church and in other affiliate pastors, gave her hope for her church. With satisfaction in her voice, she proclaimed,

Our marriage has been more than a marriage between a man and a woman. It’s been a marriage and bringing together Baptist, Pentecostal, and Church of God in Christ, all of the—the roads that we had traveled that had never intersected. It was bringing all that together.

When asked about the evolution of women’s involvement in their church, she laughed, “when you have a wife like myself, who was very outspoken, very verbal, and a workaholic in the Kingdom, then you kind of get used to women being, you know, very active. So—and he embraces that.” Suzanne believed whole-heartedly that men and women should be working together to build the church. She pointed out,

If you really search the Scriptures, there’s not a whole lot of division between men and women in the ministry. There’s just not. And so we don’t—we don’t

make that in our church...we try to promote women in ministry in our church in every facet of our church.

Suzanne had taken her role and positions within her church very seriously. As the pastor's wife, an elder, and the business administrator, she accepted what was, as it related to the Baptist Church and religious experiences and traditions. However, she also embraced what can be, such as the denominational shift to non-denomination, the changing of church positions, and the addition of more elders. She was working hard to bring change using a slow, consistent process. The approach she was using was fitting of the metaphor "*turning the ship around*" to bring about massive change in both their church and the church leadership practices.

### **Participant Yvette**

Yvette was a 60-year-old married elder who was African American. Yvette's life story embodied the word *dedication*. As a wife, a mother, and a woman, Yvette had made no apologies for who she was and how she had chosen to live her life. With a very simplistic approach to all things church and life, Yvette was contented to serve wherever was needed. The unspoken culture that long kept women in their place at church did not bother her. In fact, she worked within "the model" of not being invited into leadership roles as women, and she found great satisfaction as a bible study teacher and small group leader. To her surprise, leadership came looking for her. She confided:

And so when I was brought into that it was very humbling for me. I still didn't know why I was there, why I was being called. But I also knew I had something to give. I didn't know what it was. I'm just now learning what I have in my own voice. So, I just wanted to see what God was going to do with me in leadership as

a woman and as a black woman. Because that was a very specific role for me that nobody else to this day has had this role here.

Greater responsibility eventually beckoned her, and she ultimately became the voice for the needs of minorities in a predominantly Caucasian church. She attributed this calling after many years of trusting and waiting on God to reveal why she was being singled out. She believed that God knew what was best for her even when she did not. She trusted Him even when her comfortable place of existence was rocked by false accusations, harsh criticism, and lost relationships with both friends and family when she stepped into her eldership role. Although the process was less than smooth, Yvette's love for God, reading, and her church helped her and her family traversed the most difficult years. She had since made it through that difficult time to the other side now feeling more emboldened and clear-minded about who she was and why she was needed at the table. Yvette stated,

I wanted to call an end to the assimilation that now we intentionally design our ministry to reflect you, and you, and you, and you. And that's been an uphill battle but it's a battle that I feel called to. That's why I'm in the room. Because if I'm not then it will be business as usual."

She went on to proclaim, "But alas there's a woman that God has prepared. She didn't know why she was here, but she knows now why she's here." Yvette was now a voice for others, and she is not going to stop.

Yvette's story revealed a person who knew early on that God had a plan for her. She just did not know how that would be manifested. Race also placed a critical role in Yvette's experience in God. Her family joined the church in the early 1980's as the

second African American family to join a predominantly Caucasian congregation. Yvette recalled the many changes over the years that involved both race and gender issues, but she remained a faithful member. She was committed to witnessing her church fellowship grow and evolve. She did not want anyone to expect to be assimilated anymore. The metaphor that encompassed her steadfast resolve and loyalty to this church was that she was “*stuck like glue*” and would not be moved, no matter what.

### **Participant Anna**

Anna was a 65-year-old married woman who was African American. Anna had lived a full life. As a retiree, she believed that her greatest responsibility was to study the Word of God to ensure that she was properly living His desires. She stated:

My desire was that there’s always room for one more in the Kingdom. And I work hard towards that. I take a lot of time and I study the Word because sometimes I’m just a little disappointed at some of the things that we say that not scriptural, in the Bible.

As a human resource manager in the federal government and as a reverend in the church, Anna had seen firsthand how women leaders were discriminated against because of their gender. Nevertheless, she did not allow those perceptions and ideologies to prevent her from fulfilling her calling. Anna stated,

I don’t let that deter me that I will question the call upon my life. And I think that—that was what the enemy wants us to do when we hear these things was to begin to question the call upon our lives.

Her journey had taken her around the world and to various church denominations. Anna summed up her observations and experiences this way, “I think it’s still an issue

universal. I think it's more an issue of our power, who was in control, male or female.”

At her current church, another woman ordained Anna, and she commented that both the men and women work fine together, which was most important for Anna. The title and position ultimately had no appeal to Anna. She explained it this way,

It doesn't matter. So, I don't get caught up in all that. What I get caught up on is the work of the ministry, whether you call me an evangelist or you call me a reverend. Whether you call me a teacher, whether you say she operates in the office of the teacher. Well, my work will speak for me. And, you know, it speaks louder than anything that I could say. My work.

As Anna discussed her experiences in work and ministry, what mattered most to her overall was that her life—and the lives of those who professed to be Christians—matched the teachings from the Bible. It was about how Christians and Christian leaders should conduct themselves. She gave multiple examples of what she believed a Christian life should look like. To Anna, the pinnacle of good living was to be an example of God's love through the way we live. A metaphor that culminates this belief was “*a shining light on a hill*” which allowed others to see Anna's life and want to know more about who she was, giving her an opportunity to share her faith.

### **Participant Bill**

Bill was a 63-year-old male who was married, a bishop, and African American. Bill's church, seminary, and pastoring experiences had an indelible impact on his thoughts about women and his pastoral leadership style for the past 31 years of ministry. Although his early days taught him that women should not preach, with the use of



scriptural references from the Old and New Testaments, it was seminary school that transformed his thinking on women and ministry. Bill shared,

I'm a junior just getting there, and one of the seniors, who was a woman, wanted to talk to me about helping her with her senior sermon, which I thought was an honor. Okay. And I helped her. But what really got me was that she was the essence of femininity, and here she was a preacher. I hadn't seen that before...that caused me to—okay. Let me rethink where I've been. And so that began my rebirth, in terms of women, and the light coming on about women in ministry.

In recent years, Bill started working with his wife, and women like her who demonstrate "*commitment for excellence in ministry*," and he encouraged the use of more women in the role of teacher. Bill beamed when he shared the following about his wife, "She has taught with excellence—the deacons who were training—with excellence, to the point that I even have some of my preachers to sit in on class." Personally, he admitted that he does not prefer to be led by women. Nevertheless, he admitted that women's position in ministry was changing because of how well they were performing. He stated, "I do know that there have been some churches that have said—okay, we've tried men, now let's try the women." Bill was also seeing more fathers whose daughters served as their assistant pastors with the inevitable succession into the position of pastor. He stated,

A father has built the church, and his daughter was the assistant pastor, and when he closes his eyes—or should the Lord call him—she will probably become pastor. I think you're going to be seeing that dynamic a lot across the country, and

it will probably work because the people are already accustomed to her being in that position.

He also believed that the church will have no choice but to allow women more opportunities to possess the “sacred desk” or suffer dire consequences with more women attending seminary in greater numbers.

The only pushback I see is in the pulpit—African-American pulpit—the independent church, as we sometimes say. But the other denominations—they are wide open...I know a few pastors...who were very rigid, who have crossed over now. And then I know a few pastors who still remain rigid—a woman will not preach in this church. And the vast majority of them are, I would say, dying.

Those churches are not doing well.

The requirements are all the same, regardless if it is a man or a woman leading the church. Bill stated:

Leaders are expected to be generous givers. They’re expected to be a part of Christian education programs. They are expected to participate in church-wide prayer. All of those foundational things that make for our constant spiritual growth and development—they’re required to do that.

Bill offered an interesting response when asked about women operating in the five-fold ministry gifts as detailed in the Bible. This consisted of people being apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. He responded,

I don’t have a problem with that. Not at all. I learned a long time ago—that’s male and female—if someone tells you that the Lord has called them into ministry,

that's nothing to debate. If anything, all you can say is: Okay, we'll see. And there's the Scripture that says, you shall know them by the fruits that they bear.

Bill's reference served as a compelling argument regarding the topic of the research, and as a summation for the thoughts he shared about women in ministry. The metaphor to best describe his view point about women and men in ministry overall was, *"you shall know them by the fruits that they bear."*

### **Participant Cornelius**

Cornelius was a 52-year-old associate pastor, married, and African American. He described himself as "Church baby". His family was always in church. Even when his mother had to work and could not attend, she would check with family members to make sure Cornelius and his siblings were in attendance. Cornelius reluctantly accepted his call to preach during his teenage years. He stated,

And I felt the call on my life. I went down the street, talked to a pastor, was hysterical, crying, whatever and he's like well, if this s what God has called you to do, you've got to yield, and I yielded and started to go in that direction.

In fact, he cited the date he preached for the first time. "I did my trial sermon on August the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1982." Cornelius recounted the courtship of being selected to pastor, and he also detailed the challenges he encountered during his two pastorates. All along the way, the limited role of women in church leadership was obvious. He recalled,

My first pastor that I had, the churches that I attended women were not even permitted in the pulpit. If they had women's day they preached from the floor.

Even with them coming to aid the pastor they stopped at the steps because the

pastor viewed the pulpit as holy ground and it was only for the male pastor and that's where I come from.

Even during times when he would buck the system, he knew he was going against the grain with his decision to allow women to preach.

So, we would butt heads that I respect the office of the woman, if she says she's called to preach...And I would have them, and preach for me and I would buck the system where I would say come on and welcome them into the pulpit.

Cornelius' personal philosophy of women leaders was born in this environment and still shapes much of his viewpoint today. He was quite clear that he respected the office of pastor. Though, he was adamant that it did not change his perspective of what God said about men and women. He gave this defense for his stance,

For me it would be—I would not serve as under a woman pastor and that's just my personal preference. Just based on my interpretation of the Scriptures because I will hold to the doctrine of Timothy. He who desires the office of the bishop desires the office, he must be the husband of one wife and I just hold onto that. And it's just a matter of—and going back to the authority situation, the leadership role requires that the man be in the leadership position.”

The metaphor “*black and white dualism*” marked this interview. At times Cornelius seemed to champion women, and at other times he seemed to oppose the idea of women leading the church. At one point, he stated,

I don't have a problem with it, again if they're qualified and they meet the criteria they can go forward. For me it would be—I would not serve as under a woman pastor and that's just my personal preference.

In another point, he stated,

Well, as a woman being president, again that's separate from—the marketplace is separate from the church. In terms of—I voted for Hillary, I would think she would have done a better job than 45.

### **Participant Kevin**

Kevin was a 58-year-old Caucasian man who was married and a former pastor. Kevin did not imagine pastoring would be his life. Although he grew up as a Catholic, he admitted not being “churched.” He was involved in the inner workings of church organizations, particularly during a period of a big transition. As he was accepting his new role as a pastor, his church decided to include women on the elder’s board, which interestingly enough sparked a curious question regarding the church’s stance on women. Kevin could not answer the simple question. The topic of women leaders never came up during Kevin’s 6-year tenure as an elder. It was not until he had the idea of asking a woman to speak that Kevin realized he was not sure if he could. He explained it this way,

There was a particular weekend coming up that I wanted to ask a woman to speak because of what we were doing and what I thought she could bring to it but I also knew—I actually didn’t know, I’d been an elder and I—like we’d never like even talked about it as an elder.

It was determined that a study on the topic of women in leadership would be needed, Kevin, for the first time, had no idea what that would entail. He admitted that the process was painful with the subsequent loss of over 500 members, but despite the loss of members, he had no regrets. Kevin learned a great deal through it and believed that he was a better person and a better leader for it. He summarized it in this way,

Yeah, I mean it was incredibly painful. Yeah. Yeah. I had people that were close friends, you know, that left the church over it, I had some personal challenges going on with a family member right at the same time as well, it was incredibly—it was incredibly difficult and incredibly painful. I mean, there were times I thought gosh, I'm like wrecking this church and thankfully our elder team like stayed very unified and very encouraging.

After further contemplation and marveling at the ultimate widespread acceptance and embrace of the change by the remaining and new church members, Kevin confided, “I'd do some things differently for sure. I believe it was the right decision.” It was clear throughout the interview that Kevin wanted to be a positive force for and with people. Whether addressing his role on his hypothetical relay team, contemplating his responsibility to “create an environment where each one was exercising their gifts as called by the Lord”, or being a cheerleader for women, Kevin's metaphor was “be a fountain not a drain”. Such a metaphor encompassed the duty Kevin felt he had to add to those that he served.

### **Participant Marcus**

Marcus was a 59-year-old reverend who was married and African American. Marcus had an intriguing metamorphosis on his Christian journey. He was initially afraid of the church, even though he was raised in a home where his mother was a regular church goer. Marcus described his dad as having a “stronger faith in God than she did, even though she was church-going.” He recalled the following experience,

I'll go to church and I'll be out, because it was like I was afraid. It was like I would go to church, and all of a sudden something would touch me, and it's like—and bring me in tears, and I didn't feel comfortable.

Over time the fear turned to a solid bond with God when a gambling problem threatened to destroy his livelihood. Marcus found restoration in God. He eventually met his second wife, and they began a different kind of life together: a Christian life. They went to church together and everything began to turn around. Marcus recalled having respectful relationships with women in general. He did not have a problem following women leaders within the church. Even though he had worked for women leaders in the military, he discovered that many men and women held negative views about women in church leadership.

I feel that—and not just men, there are some ladies out there that feel that they shouldn't have a woman leader... She can be a supervisor over this group, but not the main thing. Or, she can be a pastor over this church, because it's just got 500 members, but not that church that's got 2,000 members or 3,000 members, unless she builds it up herself.

While comfortably serving in a church during that time, Marcus faced another daunting challenge. Marcus said,

Pastor [name] was a minister at the church that I was really involved in—and all of a sudden, the bishop gave her a church, and God directed me to go help her. And there was a conversation with me and God then, because I was like—God, I don't even like her.

It was not long before Marcus' heart and mind would be forever changed about her as a pastor. He shared, "It's like when we're really focusing on God and doing the things of God, we were not really—we're not treated different. We just treat each other different." He summed it up this way,

I think it's just basically a spiritual thing. I think it's a spiritual battle that, until men have a closer relationship to—with God—where they're so close they're not really looking at the person up there, whether it's a female or a male, but they're listening to what's coming from up there.

As for his thoughts about his pastor, he beamed, "she's a great leader." Listening to Marcus' positive experiences with women in both the church and the marketplace was only eclipsed by his story about how he came to his current church. He described a time when he received a directive from God to leave the church that he enjoyed, to go to help a newly commissioned female pastor, whom he didn't like. Marcus' journey reminds me of the metaphor, "choices are crossroads" because that defining moment put him on a path of greater discovery: learning about how men think about women and learning too that his pastor was truly an outstanding leader regardless of her gender.

### **Participant Michelle**

Michelle was a 44-year-old woman who was an elder, administrative assistant, and African American. Michelle struggled to find her identify during her college years even though she grew up in a religious household. As Michelle recalled that period in her life, she said,

After graduating high school, I went to college for a couple of years, but I dropped out, after, like, my second year. And it was around that time where I also



stopped going to church. And so, I was just kind of out there for, like a few years.

I call it my dark years, because I really was just—I didn't know what I was doing.

Michelle left school after her second year and ended up making a number of poor decisions. She eventually found her way back to the church family. After many years of missteps, a group of women helped Michelle get back on the right track.

I was going through a really rough, like, a really rough time. Not long after my son was born, I was in an abusive relationship with his father. And her, along with some of the other women, some of them were ministers, some of them not, but they were aware that something was going on. And, so they were praying for me.

Years later, the main minister who helped Michelle traverse the difficulty time was tasked with starting a church of her own. Michelle recalled, "So I missed the installation service, but it was like the very next Sunday, I was there. And I've been there ever since." That decision changed her life. Michelle was now very active in church and served in various leadership capacities. She gave considerable homage to her pastor's life of grace, and style of leadership. Michelle also gave a special acknowledgement to her pastor's interactions with men. She said,

But men, because I think Pastor knows how to navigate those waters where she doesn't intimidate the men or make them feel emasculated in any way, but she was very secure in who she was as a woman. And it's not like, okay, she's good for a woman in leadership, no. She's good in leadership, period. And so, I feel like when women come here, they were empowered by that.

When Michelle talked about her life and the impact that her pastor has had on her, it was obvious to observe the level of respect, admiration, trust, and love that Michelle

had for her pastor. Michelle felt that her pastor pulled her from a wandering place years ago when she was questioning everything about herself during a difficult period in her life. The metaphor that best resonated with me was regarding Michelle's pastor was "the light of her life" because she exemplifies what it meant to be a woman leader personally, professionally, and spiritually.

### **Participant Antonio**

Antonio was a 51-year-old male who was married, a church steward, and African American. It was apparent that Antonio ascribed his life view of women to the man he labeled the "patriarch of the family": his grandfather. During Antonio's early days, he recalls the Christian example of his mom, and how his family shaped his thoughts and behavior. He has lived a life seeking to follow God's direction. Antonio sought God's guidance in what he was to do and how it should be done. At one point Antonio shared how he became a member of his current church:

It was just where God led me to go. And I trusted that God was going to send me someplace that was going to do community ministry, that was not going to focus on stuff that we made up, was not going to focus on a denomination and that the Bible was going to be the, you know, what we're really following, not anything else that we made up.

He believed that the Word of God does not lend itself to limiting the abilities of anyone. Antonio compared the church work of his female pastor to male pastors, and would say hands-down, his female pastor was by far the better leader. He enjoyed discussing the topic of women leaders and was convinced that the Bible did not offer any scriptural references prohibiting women from serving in a leadership capacity. He stated,

And that's where we have to try to change the mindset for people to understand.

The same thing for women, you know, we know the history was what it is, but we have to wake-up and find it in Scripture. If you find something in Scripture that says women cannot be in ministry then show it and produce it and then, we can go from there. But you're not going to find that.

The metaphor that best described Antonio was *solid as a rock*. From the beginning to the end of the interview session, he was unwavering in his thoughts and convictions about the competency and the legitimacy of having women leaders from “the church house to the White House.” Antonio was raised to respect women. He served under a woman pastor. He spoke openly of the need to support her and all women and to remove any barriers that deny women equal access. Antonio has defended his pastor to many friends and men who question the ability of a woman to lead. Antonio has a mature, calculated, fair, and analytical approach to life, which he believed was necessary in order to remove the discriminatory behaviors. Antonio held the church to a high standard of being the example and wonders why we would not be leading the charge on providing support and freedom to women. He believes wholeheartedly that we cannot question or reject women if God has gifted them to lead.

### **Participant Diane**

Diane was a 58-year-old woman who was an elder, married, and African American. Coming to a place of trusting God was a long painful rode for Diane. In her early years, she stated, “I considered myself a churchgoer and the kid of a minister. But, I never really thought of myself as a Christian.” During Diane's formative years, she did not see many women leaders in the church. However, as the years progressed, she

marveled that, “I’ve seen women move from the pew to the pulpit.” Diane had never wrestled with the idea of whether women should be in leadership. In her mind, God could use whomever he pleased. Since Diane had been busy doing the work of church ministry for so many years, the barriers for women in ministry had a small degree of impact on her. However, the sobering reality of the disparate treatment came across clearly when she said,

But I’m finding that even as women make certain advances within the church there are still barriers there, and sometimes they come from other women. There are still barriers there that it’s difficult to get through. There are still if I can put it using a secular description here, there’s still a certain glass ceiling that’s there. There’s still a pecking order that’s there. And you deal with the ministry but then you have to deal with the politics of that environment that you’re in and you have to be—you have to sometimes be aware of the fact that people still have you in—well they want to have you in a place.

Diane expressed concerns for the generations to come if there was no change in how women were handled in the church, and if there was no concerted effort to accurately educate people regarding what the Bible said about women and their identity in God. According to Diane, new women leaders need proper training to do the work of ministry instead of just being thrown into positions without proper guidance.

And that’s another issue, we have become church members. Okay. And there’s a difference between being a church member and being someone who recognizes that you were part of a Kingdom and part of a lifestyle and that lifestyle impacts not only what happens in here, that impacts what happens in your home and that

impacts what happens out in the marketplace as you use that terminology. So that's what we've got to get back to. And the time is very short. It is very short. And I'm—I'll say this one last thing, I'm afraid in America if the church does not wake up soon, it may be too late.

Throughout the interview it was easy for Diane to look at each question from various perspectives and to be quite objective in her responses. Diane's knowledge of Black history and how she interpreted the current condition of the church was quite fascinating. Although Diane offered explanations for the conditions of both men and women in the church and in the marketplace, they did not come across as excuses. She gave what seemed to be well-thought-out prescriptions to remedy what she described as the failures of her generation. The metaphor that best described Diane would be *wise as an owl*.

### **Participant Judy**

Judy was a 57-year-old woman who was a program pastor, married, and Caucasian. Judy's life story was a tapestry that has been woven in one church for over 30 years. Judy, her husband, and their family had given their lives to this ministry every way imaginable. It was a very comfortable and enjoyable existence supporting her husband and the church ministry. Judy's appetite for leadership and having more meaningful influence with the direction of the church had taken on new meaning.

Over the years Judy had been able to taste the experience and the impact of having this level of leadership, only to be thrust back to the outskirts of the major decision-making. One of Judy's more prominent responses when asked how her dad's encouragement shaped her, she stated, "I didn't feel ashamed of my leadership. Because

he told me I had a voice. The frustrating part was when I was in situations where I didn't have a voice, you know." Judy felt that the inner calling and unwavering recognition that she was truly a leader at the core of her being, continued to drive her to seek validation in this area. She shared the following,

And the elders studied for three years and really did a lot of praying and discerning and said we really believe that in the church we've been living in a post fall mentality for thousands of years and God's intent was for men and women to co-rule and co-reign. Now the interesting thing was this was from an all-male elder board. There were no women speaking into this which actually was very affirming to me and confirming that these guys were hearing from the Lord because they could have just kept it the way that it was, and nobody would have said anything.

Judy wanted her voice, as well as other women's voices, to be considered and weighed on issues that matter the most at her church. Though at times Judy felt quite discouraged, she remained positive about the experience. Eventually, she believed that things would get better, growth would be sustained, and lasting change would be evident. At the same time, Judy remained hopeful and was quite unsure of what the future held for her. She stated, "I'm at another place of waiting kind of—I'm not on the elder board anymore."

Although Judy experienced many struggles as a female church leader, she maintained a forgiving attitude, even when other members within her church attempted to injure, demean, and undermined her leadership authority. Judy managed to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Judy had an ability to look at life from a nurturing vantage point.

The metaphor that was most apt to her narrative was *rose-colored glasses* because she was able to see the positive in things, no matter the situation.

### **Research Findings from Thematic Analysis**

The subsequent data analysis confirmed the existence and ongoing challenges that women leaders face within the church organization. Many expressed the prevalent issues of acceptance as qualified leaders, which was consistent with findings from the literature review. This also suggested that the gender issue was still pervasive today as it was in the past. The lived experiences of both men and women painted a vivid picture of 1) their personal understanding of the meanings of ministry and 2) the reality of women who led within the church and in the marketplace. From this viewpoint, I presented 7 salient themes (see Figure 2) that emerged from the analysis to study aspects of the told stories that spoke directly to how the perceptions of God's purpose for women were practiced within the walls of the church and to showcase how these beliefs may translate to held ideologies regarding a woman's ability to succeed in marketplace ministry.



*Figure 2.* Thematic categories of the church leaders.

At the end of this exercise, I was able to identify the seven themes as outlined below. I found there were seven main themes that resonated with the participants in varying degrees: 1) struggle for gender equality; 2) gender vs. competence; 3) male dominate church culture; 4) gender bias and discrimination; 5) kingdom culture debate; 6) women resisting women, and 7) the significance of voice. Each theme will be further discussed in Chapter 5 with an examination of literary and theoretical implications for this study.

### **Theme 1: Struggle for Gender Equality**

The struggle for gender equality was the single most talked about issue, though it was discussed in varying degrees. Seven biographers expressed thoughts from two different spectrums. Some discussed that while women were qualified, men were still not willing to be pastored by them.



**Bill:** I know a few pastors who still remain rigid – a woman will not preach in this church.

**Cornelius:** I would not serve under a woman pastor and that's just my personal preference.

**Marcus:** We still—we got certain positions that we'll put ladies in, or we think they should be in.

**Antonio:** I don't see like a valid reason why any woman would not be able to step forward and just do what needs to be done in a church.

Others described the double standard that existed in the church for men and women offering the following statements:

**Yvette:** And subsequently they did put some women at the table but they didn't have a title. So they were there so this kind of moved into that and you sat in with the elders but you didn't have any—not voting privileges but you weren't going to speak on a level where it made a decision. So you could—you maybe influenced the decision but you didn't have a final say in the decision.

**Diane:** You know well when company comes I gotta—again in his defense I don't know who he was dealing with. I don't know who that male figure that's in the pulpit with him maybe that person has issues with women being in that place. So, I don't know all of that so I don't let myself get, you know, all bent out of shape about that. But you kind of feel sometimes like okay well it's okay on Sunday morning but if Sunday afternoon, you know, maybe I'm not going to be good enough to sit up there then so, you know, that kind of thing like that.

Many of the male and female participants were perplexed and surprised that women were still expected to work harder and prove themselves more to lead in church. The striking disproportionate number of females to males attending churches as described by participants made it even more baffling. It was unanimous amongst the participants that the church would not be thriving if it were not for women. The men participants all admitted if the women were to leave there would be no church. Nonetheless, women were described as “different” and less than their male counterparts, despite their contributions.

**Antonio:** He was like, “Oh, there’s no way that a woman can be the Pastor of a church. It’s like how is that even possible?” And my question is, you know, how is it not possible? You know? What makes you think that a woman, or, what makes you think that you can think the thoughts of God? And that you can dictate and tell God who to call and lead and do His work? And he was like, “Well...”. And well, he didn’t really have an answer. You know? Like, exactly. I’m like, what makes you think the way that women are, what would make them not be able to do leadership in a church? And his response was, no, because they have like family, and they have kids, and other responsibilities. And I’m like, well, don’t you have family, and don’t you have kids? You know, as well, yourself. So, does that mean that you can’t do leadership, like, in the church? And he’s like, ‘No, but women are different.’

The desire for equality for women as it was related to the scope of work necessary to run or lead congregants was still an uphill battle. Although many agreed that women could be called and were qualified to lead, there was no consensus that there were ample

opportunities for women to lead in church. However, participants believed that there were more opportunities for women to be leaders in the marketplace than in church.

**Kevin:** There are people who would have been super happy to have Sarah Palin as president of the United States or some other women as president of the United States, but they wouldn't have wanted a woman to be pastor of the church.

**Judy:** I think that overall in the church we are well behind the marketplace. Well behind and I think it all depends on the—on the denomination and but I know that in evangelical Christianity I would say we are well behind. The valuing women as fully—fully equal partners in ministry which I think – I think women in the marketplace have much more opportunity probably because they're not living in that old, old biblical mentality.

The contradictory statements made by some participant's, both for and against women, added layers to the already challenging conditions for women who felt the called to lead in church. The struggle for equality theme was followed up with a discussion concerning gender vs. competence.

## **Theme 2: Gender vs. Competence**

Some of the participants expressed the existence of tension amongst leaders or congregants when it was known that certain male leaders were not as skilled as some women who were not being afforded opportunities to lead. Of the 12 participants, six spoke specifically to this theme. Women participants felt they must exude patience and understanding instead of addressing malfeasance. It was still classified by some as the “good old boy network” whereby the men leaders look out for one another and select

friends for leadership positions instead of considering who was the most qualified or best fit for the role.

**James:** Just like if, yes, a man if he has these things because we've had people, we've had men in leadership that didn't have those things. And it doesn't go well. So, it's not about gender. It's about calling, destiny, gifts, abilities, passion, all of that wrapped up in the package of a person, not the package of a gender.

**Suzanne:** Now, what does bother me is when you have unqualified people, male or female, in the marketplace and in church that I have to adhere to because I should not be sitting there—if you're my leader--knowing a whole lot more than you do as far as leadership.

**Anna:** We have a couple of presiding elders that are females. Well, these are very powerful women. But one of the things that we struggle with, even in [church name], we are women. Example, we cannot wear open-toed shoes in the pulpit because men have feet fetish. We cannot wear earrings, big earrings, in the pulpit. Or when we're at the annual conference and we are in procession, you know, we have had men that come down looking at our ears. I think a lot of that is going away. I think the open-toe shoes are gone away. But I think a lot of the earrings—I think we've resolved that. But here, again, it's not looking at us as pastors or preachers. It's looking at us as female pastors.

Participants also discussed their views of women functioning as leaders in the church and in the marketplace. There was a double standard for a woman's level of fitness and her suitability for leadership in ministry versus her fitness and suitability for

leadership in the marketplace. The rationale offered for the distinction was based on Scriptural interpretations.

**Bill:** Well, our country can be led by a woman. No question about that. But, I didn't want a woman. And, again, it comes out of the headship that I see in the Bible.

**Cornelius:** Well, as a woman being president, again that's separate from—the marketplace was separate from the church. In terms of—I voted for Hillary, I would think she would have done a better job than 45. So, if they're qualified, if they have the acumen to do the job, they can do it. Some of the—you know, you think in terms of some of the talent that women have and the mindset that they can be great CEOs, great leaders and they can do the job so I don't have a problem with that in the market place.

When Cornelius was subsequently asked if the same woman felt a call on her life and wanted to come over to the church, he responded, "Go forth. I'm not going to be a part of it but go forth." Other participants did not subscribe to making gender a focal point and found it to be completely irrelevant to do so.

**Marcus:** Because —the thing is—it's like it ain't about—to me, it's not about being a female or a male, it's about just being a good leader, period. Because the bad leader is the one that you follow because you have to. The good leader is the one you follow, and you enjoy and you want to, and you want to see them succeed.

**Michelle:** And I feel like we, as the body of Christ, would really grab hold of operating in our lanes, whether you are a woman or a man, and not really look at

it like, okay, because you are a man that you should get this position, or because you are a woman. I think that hurts, because then you put a limit on how God wants to move or try to, because, you know, you do what you want to do.

**Antonio:** It's unfortunate. They say that women, they're too emotional, that they're not strong, they can't distribute strength. They can't lead a man, not capable. You know, it's like, but I've heard like it all. And it is kind of surprising to hear that a lot of women do not want women to be in leadership. They prefer to follow a man and not a woman.

It was also believed that women were routinely not considered for leadership positions, which will require intentional thought for women to have a place at the table. The participants also noted that it made a significant difference on how one perceived female leadership candidates based on the level of personal knowledge about them before making judgment calls about their capabilities.

**Marcus:** Everybody—and I tell my youth this all the time. I say you're going to walk up to people who haven't did nothing to you, but you just don't really want to be in their circle. And that seems like how I felt with [pastor's name]; because it was like—and people do that, or judge people when they don't really know what's going on in their mind, or when you don't really get to know people. When I got to know her, it was a whole different thing.

**Judy:** I just think he doesn't know me. Like he doesn't know my gifts and that's probably the most frustrating thing, is that he doesn't know what I can bring. So, when we're—you know, so that's my struggle right now is that even when I'm in

a meeting with him being myself and bringing my gift and not pushing and not trying to convince him that he needs me on that team.

Another argument, participants noted how the importance of maintaining a gender balance in an environment where a majority of the churchgoers were women. Still others argued that it should not be about gender, “It’s about calling, destiny, gifts, abilities, passion, all wrapped up in the package of a person.” These perspectives fueled the debate of theme three: male dominant church culture.

### **Theme 3: Male Dominant Church Culture**

The Scriptural interpretations stating that men should be over women was still a dominant defense as understood or given by both male and female participants. When asked what biblical perspective was given for how women were utilized in leadership roles in church, the majority of participants referenced Scriptures taken from 1 Timothy or 1 Corinthians.

**Suzanne:** In church—church at large, not my church, but in church—they—there’s still people who don’t believe that women should pastor because they take that one little 1 Corinthians Scripture that says that women should be at home teaching their children, but forget to look at the whole context of that—of that teaching.

**Anna:** The mindset of a lot men is they cannot sit under a woman pastor because of some writings that Paul did in the Book of Corinthians and I think in the Book of Timothy where he addressed women in leadership authorities.

**Michelle:** Now, I don’t know whether they held the leadership positions in that church, but you know, and another Pastor spoke of how it is, you know, some of

the women who are like, “I don’t want a female pastor.” Which I can’t understand. You know, I can’t even wrap my mind around that. I’m like what would make you say that? I just think it’s if anything, ignorance. You know? Because you have that, you know, people take Paul out of context when he said, “Let the women be silent.” Not understanding he was specifically writing to an issue that was pertaining to that church at that time, but not that he was shunning women from the ministry.

**Diane:** They go back to where it was in first Timothy where women were to be silent. Women were to be silent, you know, women were to know their place. And of course, I’ve learned since then how that Scripture has been misinterpreted.

A majority of the male participants agreed with the male dominant understanding of Scripture. All of the female participants and some of the male participants believed that the same Scriptures used to subvert female church leaders were based on the context of its time and also were theologically incorrect. However, they admitted that men and women alike shared the subordinate biblical view. There were still those who took a more even approach recognizing the argument could be made for either position.

**James:** And so, you know, when you walk through the scriptures and probably why this topic can be so divisive or controversial or whatever is you can actually defend either side biblically. So that makes it a little more difficult, and so then, we just got to the place where we said, you know, we just need to discern what the Lord’s calling us to do in this season.

**Kevin:** And so we said well let’s get into it and look at the Scriptures and really study it and I remember saying at the outset of that process I said listen, here’s



what I'm 100 percent sure of, that this is going to be much more of a process of discernment for us for what the Lord is saying to us than it is about finding some magic bullet about what the Scripture teaches.

Despite the advances of women in the marketplace and in the church, many women were still not open to the idea of having a female pastor. Both men and women participants suggested that the view of women as second-class citizens was archaic and debilitating to the advancement of the church and the church's influence in the secular arena. Notwithstanding these facts, because of the growing number of women in the church, and the scarcity of men who were present and willing to serve in leadership roles, it was believed that the future would show a different landscape if the church was to survive and to stay relevant.

**Suzanne:** Well, I have learned over my years that a third of your people are going to listen to what your plan is, what your vision is. And they're going to try to hop onboard. The other third, they're going to sit and wait and see if what you're saying is going to work before they even consider getting onboard. Then the other third, they're never going to get onboard. And that's how we approach everything that constitutes change and what we're doing in ministry. We already know we're going to take that third that's going to try to be with us. And it normally starts with our leadership. And we're going to move them along.

**Bill:** So, I think that's going to be a real break for women into what has not been a welcoming opportunity for women. And as they see women perform at that level, I think churches are going to do better. I do know—since we're talking—I do

know that there have been some churches that have said—okay, we’ve tried the men, now let’s try the women.

**Michelle:** When you have persons who are uncompromising in their faith, I think people need to see that in real time, practically, you know? I don’t think you have to compartmentalize serving God and being an ambassador, if you will, to just church activities and what you do at church. You know? I think in our education system, in our judicial system, in our government, if more people would be unashamed about who they are in Christ, and really be the change agents that I think God wants us to be in the earth, we would have more influence on the world than the world would have an influence on us.

Today’s church model has yet to demonstrate the reality of not compartmentalizing service to God, and there were still perplexing questions today regarding how to make the shift, yet keep men engaged simultaneously. Theme four, gender bias and discrimination, further describes other concerns the participants had regarding the church’s effectiveness or lack thereof in society.

#### **Theme 4: Gender Bias and Discrimination**

The belief that there were gender bias and discrimination in the church was dominant. All 12 participants agreed that it was harder for women to be accepted in a leadership position in the church than in the marketplace. They attributed the bias due to general resistance, barriers, and the glass ceiling effect.

**Yvette:** So, I’m in the restroom so I come back, and I come in and I address this man, the nominee, and he was turned like this, so he doesn’t acknowledge me he doesn’t want to acknowledge me. And so, the whole time—and I knew it, nobody

else picked it up see they're just all clueless. And so anyway afterwards we debriefed, and I said to them, "did you notice that he would never look at me, he would never address me, he actually turned from me when I came in the room." And they were like "no, no we didn't notice that." And I said, "well yeah he did, and I didn't know whether it was because I was fat, black or a woman.

**Bill:** Here—there is no prohibition here. And, again, there may be—I would say in the workplace none either. As I did say, churches are not calling—although the numbers in seminary are greater—females have great numbers—but the churches are not calling females as pastors. They're just not. They're still calling male—men rather than women.

The participants noted that the most blatant display of discrimination occurred in plain sight. They talked about church rules that prohibit women from being in the pulpits of many churches, and they also described scenarios where men had outright refused to listen to a woman if she was serving in a leadership role.

**Cornelius:** My philosophy is in terms of even the church in [church name] where I was pastoring women were only allowed in the pulpit once a year and that was on women's day and I thought that was crazy.

**Anna:** So, we still have that issue. My husband's barber, who is Baptist, will not sit under—he will sit under a missionary. He will listen to a missionary. He may listen to an evangelist, not in the pulpit on the floor. But he will not submit himself to a woman.

**Michelle:** You know what's interesting? And it was a shock to me, a real culture shock, was that, with as many women as we have in a lot of our churches, they

don't want a female pastor, or they still take issue with a woman being in a leadership role.

In churches where the discrimination was not blatantly announced, participants emphatically alleged that there was a culture within churches that diminishes and excludes women.

**Antonio:** You know, does that kind of tell us what kind of society we really are? We've not been verbally saying those things, but are there still undertones and things that are suppressed, that are not talked about, that are discriminatory against women? Yes. I would say, yes, it still exists. Can we get people to talk about it? How do we fix this? I don't know.

**Diane:** So, my skin has to be a little thicker believe it or not in the church than it has to be in the marketplace.

The corresponding belief to the double standard in the church was that the marketplace was a haven for unscrupulous dealings unmatched in the church. There was a clear portrayal described in each denomination that men and women congregants and leaders could be blatant in their opposition to women being considered for leadership position, a practice that would be considered illegal in the marketplace.

**Kevin:** Well, you know, I think within the context of the church here before the most part I think we're probably doing pretty well at treating equally but I'm sure that men are given more deference than women. I mean, I'm just sure that that's the case and I wish it was not but I'm sure it is.

**Marcus:** Because, like I said, Baptist, or whoever, they say that women can't be pastors, but they can be everything else. And, see, that's one of the things that we

have discussions about, because I recall what Timothy said—he's saying that they shouldn't teach a man. But yet, you don't want her to pastor, and it's like you're using that as an excuse, but yet, you have your females teaching Bible study. You have females teaching Sunday school. And you have your males sitting in there, your deacon is sitting in there, the pastor is sitting in there. That's why I told them, I don't get it. I don't. I don't understand it. I don't. I don't get it.

**Diane:** Because as a society—I mean let's look at it. Let's look at the way our society thinks of women and treats women, you know, the broader society okay and especially black women okay. The broader society still demeans, still pays women less than men, still has a glass ceiling that says this is as far as you can go. Now some women break through that glass ceiling but for the most part and then for African American women we've not only got the issues connected with women but then we've got our color that's also a factor and our children, our daughters, are constantly being fed images that say in a negative way that as an African American woman you are not valued by the broader society. So, some of that—let's be honest about it some of that creeps into the church.

The predominant thought is that such bias and discrimination are steeped in the church's history and religious traditions, and yet, ironically, all participants acknowledged that there were no major differences between men and women leaders in the church or the marketplace. If church leaders promoted the similarities of leadership as acknowledged from the men and women, then theme five, kingdom culture distinction, could become the new normal.

### **Theme 5: Kingdom Culture Debate**

Half of the participants made references to the distinction between a church focus and a kingdom focus as it related to how women were perceived and the contribution that they were currently making or should be able to make.

**James:** This is what we're wanting to do, and so it's a Kingdom vision. It's not just about our, you know, fellowship and having it be built up and so it's also, it's a philosophy and vision and theology that out of John 17 where he says Lord, make them one...

**Anna:** Ministry is about people and about Christ, and the mandate that he has placed upon the Body of Christ. He said that he has been given all power and authority. And he was given that, he said I go. You have this authority. So, ministry is about people. It's about helping those that can't help themselves spiritually and physically, mentally.

Some participants expressed the need to teach church members the importance of valuing both genders equally. One participant explained how their church leaders make it a point to remind the children and teenagers that they can become anything they choose in life if they were willing to work hard. Students were encouraged to bring in report cards for a public celebration of their hard work. Another participant spoke provocatively about the importance of understanding the difference between being a member of a church and being a member of the Kingdom of God.

**Diane:** ...the church has got to teach people biblically what their kingdom role is and how to live as kingdom believers and not just church members. And that's another issue we have become church members okay. And there's a difference

between being a church member and being someone who recognizes that you are part of a kingdom and part of a lifestyle and that lifestyle impacts not only what happens in here, that impacts what happens in your home and that impacts what happens out in the marketplace as you use that terminology.

Interestingly, these church leaders understand that a shift is needed with regard to the view of women because it is undeniable that women are essential to growth.

**Kevin:** ...God's desire was for men and women, you know, when He gave the sort of cultural mandate to—that mandate was given to Adam and Eve together to co-rule and co-reign and, you know. And so, you know, then the Fall perverted a lot of things but one of the things that it perverted was the relationship between men and women and it also perverted people's exercise of power and those two things have continued to dog the human race throughout time. And, you know, Jesus had a lot to say about power and authority and that you really get power and authority wrong and that people think, you know, that power and authority is about being on top and who gets to make the decisions and who's in charge but, you know, that's not what power and authority is about and that, you know, and the people that use power and authority to marginalize others and again, that's, you know, His ministry was incredibly inclusive and always looking to the outside and always bringing people from the margins to the center. And so, you know, we felt like, that in part it's a justice issue and part it is God's will, you know, for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, you know, and so if His original intent was for men and women to co-rule and co-reign and to do so in

partnership with one another then we ought to experience that in the life of the church.

Participants viewed the kingdom mindset from a cultural construct that embraced and appreciated the value that men and women contribute together to society, recognizing that the two must work together to accomplish what was in the heart of God for a stronger, healthier, and overall greater contribution to humanity. Ironically, some of these limitations that prevented women from succeeding also stemmed from deeply rooted ideologies within the notion of women resisting women, as discussed here in the next theme.

### **Theme 6: Women Resisting Women**

The theme of women resisting women was quite pronounced. As participants discussed this phenomenon, it appeared to surprise both the men and the women biographers to what extent the resistance existed by women against other women. Of the 12 participants, five spoke candidly about their experiences in hearing or observing women speak negatively about other women.

**Marcus:** And I feel that—not just men, there are some ladies out there that feel that they shouldn't have a woman leader.

**Anna:** You will hear women today—a lot of women today don't think that women—a woman is ready to lead this county. Not just male. Women. Because they think leadership is associated with males.

Generational differences also played a significant part in the perceptions of women shared by the participants. Older women were described as more likely to resist and reject women as leaders than younger women.



**Cornelius:** The older saints are hesitant and reluctant because they again are used to the old paradigm and even to this day they—they welcome the male presence more than they do the female presence.

**Diane:** Well I think not so much among the younger generation but I think among women in my generation, I think there are some of us that still can't embrace the idea of women being that active in ministry...And some of it has to do also with, you know, the dynamics that goes on between women in church: jealousy, envy, whatever is there, you know.

**Judy:** But you know, it's interesting when we made the decision it was more strong women that had the issue than men. It was more—I got more emails from strong women than you would have thought, yeah finally, and they weren't. I don't know whether it—I don't know whether—and they were older women so I don't know whether it was like gosh, why did they make this decision this late, and now I have to own male hierarchy and I can't let that go because my husband believes that, I don't know what all that was about but I had more—there were more issues with—with older strong women after that decision was made.

At the same time, others could recognize the value of women leaders and spoke of the influence women have had on them specifically.

**James:** I think it's fantastic. So, like I would see somebody like [name] who is someone that I feel led by often times. You know, we're, we both lead in different settings, but she's changed my life. She's a remarkable, Godly, wise woman of God who I need as a part of, a host of reasons, you know, her being a woman is not an issue to me. She's a person who I'm in ministry with, but then because

she's also African-American and a woman whose experienced a ton of things in the City and seen so much and all that, like she's, like I feel like I'm her student, and so I come up under her and I'm asking her questions all the time and why is this happening, what does this feel like, and teach me this cause you know so that's been fantastic. And then I feel, in our Elder Room, you know we have two women that we're just, we're in there together. Like so it's good.

**Suzanne:** So, when you have women that can appreciate what each of them have to offer, then you can develop a real good team of leadership.

**Michelle:** And it's not like, okay, she's good for a woman in leadership, no. She's good in leadership, period. And do I feel like when women come here, they are empowered by that. You know, she's not afraid to bless her husband, you know, and makes it quite clear that when they ware home, he's Priest. And she doesn't try to mix that up. So, I think all women see it helps us to feel empowered. To say you know what? Okay. You know, I can step out, I can do that, I can be that. And not feel like I have to compromise or feel less than, because I am a woman.

It appeared that the resistance to having women leaders was a mindset that touched both the church and the marketplace. Women also were opposed to having women lead them. This resistance made it difficult for women to strengthen their position for equality. The final theme the significance of voice, highlighted the importance of being heard and ensuring that others were also heard.

### **Theme 7: The Significance of Voice**

The most reverberating theme was related to how participants utilizing their own voice or being influenced by the voices of others. Some recalled how finding their voice

helped them to either pursue the institution of women in leadership, accept leadership for themselves, or become confident in why women in leadership was important.

**Yvette:** And it's like yeah because we want the church doors to be open to everybody. You're saying that, but you have no intention of making everybody feel at home. So, my role now is to speak in and say "it's not just about having them here and we're glad you're here and all of that and we go on with business as usual. It now has to take the turn where everybody—when we say this is your home that you feel like this is your home. That you're represented here. That we get to know you, we get to—that what you see around is reflective of what you bring.

**Anna:** So, I think we just need to find what God has called us, in the manner that God has called us, to do what He has called us to do. And He will do the rest. When we're—when we have that confidence in Him that He called us for who we are, that He made us who we are, that He gave us the emotion, that He gave us the voice that He gave us. And we begin to be confident in those things, we're able to find our voice and our way in leadership and not be more concerned about what this man thinks or how he interprets the Scriptures that would say that you have no right to be in the pulpit.

Voice was also connected to identity. While one participant made a powerful appeal that not only was voice important to the identity of women, it was also necessary for the edification of men. Another female participant painfully recalled how the lack of an open invitation to participate as the leader ultimately left her feeling somewhat desolate and directionless.

**Kevin:** ...the image of God is both male and female and in Genesis 1, you know, we're created in his image and there are dimensions of what it means to be created in the image of God that are distinctly male and others that are male and others that are female and that when either gender operates apart from the other that there's—there's something missing there, you know, that the feminine voice has something to offer that may be unique and that our elder team and our pulpit would be enhanced by having a feminine voice in there.

**Judy:** He's the overseer of elders. And so, I remember going to him and saying I don't know what to do, I was sobbing. I have no place to use my voice, I have no place. And so, he—he said [name], your place is in God and he's going to make a place for you. And so, I just held on to that.

From a different perspective, other participants shared there were people, specifically men who used their voices to encourage, support or advocate the importance of having women in leadership positions.

**Suzanne:** My husband has been a pastor for 30 years. He has always been open to women being verbal. He respects women in the Kingdom. He's always been open to women preachers and women in ministry.

**Michelle:** I believe a woman has to prove herself more. I do think that there are some, like I said, with leadership, like the Bishop we have in place now, I think he's looking to change some of the stereotypes around that. Like, he is strategically putting women in leadership positions that, as long as I can remember, they were spearheaded by a guy.

## Summary

These seven salient themes presented the overarching results of the data analysis. Although the data was not exhaustive, it provided an insight into the hearts, minds, and experiences of those who were currently leading in various church denominations. The themes reflected areas of importance to this group of biographers who told their stories independent of one another. The similarities of experiences demonstrated the work that was needed and yet to be done to create a society that accepted individuals for who they were, the skills they possessed, and the passions that drove their work—irrespective of their gender. Many of these participants would argue that gender should be an added bonus, and not a condition to restrict, rebuff, or diminish an individual's contribution whether at church or in the marketplace. In Chapter 5, the research findings were discussed, and the subsequent implications were outlined.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

*So, I think we just need to find what God has called us, in the manner that God has called us, to do what he has called us to do. And He will do the rest. When we're—when we have that confidence in Him that He called us for who we are, that He made us who we are, that He gave us the emotion, that He gave us the voice that He gave us. And we begin to be confident in those things, we're able to find our voice and our way in leadership and not be more concerned about what this man thinks or how he interprets the Scriptures that would say that you have no right to be in the pulpit. (Anna, Reverend)*

This research study analyzed the lived experiences of 12 male and female church leaders from various respective churches. The life experiences of all 12 provided a smorgasbord of rich, emotional, and insightful stories that provided insights about what it meant to be a woman, women leaders, or women leaders in church ministry. The purpose of this dissertation was to explore how the meanings of ministry and leadership were understood, and to examine how the issue had shaped the lived experiences of male and female church leaders as it pertained to functionality within the church and marketplace organization. The overarching central question was, “How do church leaders understand the meaning of ministry and leadership for women in the church and the marketplace?”

The research sub-questions for the study were:

- What were the life stories that shape the view of women as leaders in the church?  
Outside the church?
- How does church practice regarding women in church or marketplace leadership conflict with personal views about women in church or marketplace leadership?
- What were the current church policies regarding women leadership in the church?

- As men serving in ministry, how do church leaders practice ministry leadership for women inside the church? In the marketplace?
- What was the perspective of men as it relates to recognizing women in leadership positions in church and how might issues of resistance manifest?

This framework of questions was central to my examination towards the discovery of the vitality of a potential paradigm shift that could open interest with church leaders to explore the impact of gender and leadership. A greater acceptance of this strategy could ultimately propel church leaders to expand the teaching of leadership to be beyond church ministry within the four walls and embrace as well as teach marketplace ministry from a broader perspective, going beyond community and moving into the global marketplace. I desired to encourage the thought of having ministry embraced and promoted more expansively.

At the conclusion of the research data analysis, I discovered seven salient themes, which were further analyzed in the theoretical application section of this chapter. They were: 1) struggle for gender equality; 2) gender vs. competence; 3) male dominate church culture; 4) gender bias and discrimination; 5) kingdom culture debate; 6) women resisting women; and 7) the significance of voice. This chapter was devoted to a discussion of the research findings, literary and theoretical application, limitations of the study, contributions to the field of conflict analysis and resolution, recommendations and future direction for further study, and the conclusion.

## Discussion of Major Findings

### **The Meaning of Ministry and Leadership for Women in the Church and in the Marketplace**

The overarching finding of the central question (CQ) was that although both men and women acknowledged that women were indeed qualified to lead in the church, the gender barrier had hindered or prevented women from doing their job effectively. As reflected in the literature review, the cultural distinctions and the religious symbolism of church leadership was historically male. In fact, the American Baptist survey, Edward Lehman surveyed the American Baptist church attendees and found that more than 90% of both male and female church goers agreed that the image of the head leader in the church should be a male figure and that it was difficult to imagine otherwise (Nason-Clark, 1987). Similar overt and covert male-domination symbolism beliefs influenced the thoughts and actions of my research participants.

Much of their recollections were centered on how they were raised, what they were taught, and how things had been done in the past. Very rarely was there a connection to what was working to advance the church in a positive, sustaining way. Interestingly, Bolman and Deal (2013) called this an aspect of the symbolic frame that was responsible for shaping the various disciplines such as sociology, political science organizational theory, neurolinguistic programming, and magic. When considering the church as an organization, I saw the connections as described by Bolman and Deal in their explanation of how the symbolic frame concept were related to the five main philosophies (p. 248):

- 1) “What is most important was not what happens but what it means.”



- 2) “Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience situations differently.”
- 3) “Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.”
- 4) “Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what was produced.”
- 5) “Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends.”

As for the marketplace, participants felt that women were not only expected to lead and pursue leadership in the marketplace, and it was actively encouraged. In the literature review, I reported that Nason-Clark (1987) felt that though the traditional roles of women were in a state of flux and still being challenged in the church, it was conceivable the skills of women in counseling and personable interactions was beneficial to change various aspects of ministry. And, although I expected that there would be findings of both acceptance and resistance of women leaders, I was surprised to find the degree of demarcation regarding the acceptability of women in leadership was more favorable to activities outside of the church walls (i.e. marketplace), as opposed to acceptance for women being in leadership positions within the church walls.

### **The Life Stories that Shape the Participants View of Women**

The intense emotion surrounding the topic of women leaders had not waned in this country as demonstrated in this research. During the interviews, both men and women spoke with great conviction about their experiences of women who had touched their lives both negatively and positively. Since these 12 participants were leaders within

in church, their first-hand accounts of working with women added to the complexity of this topic for many reasons:

- 1) Many of them had/have strong mothers who were credited for teaching them about God and preparing them for life;
- 2) Many had seen women do extraordinary things both in church and in the marketplace;
- 3) Many had seen the erosion of church ministries that refused to embrace the leadership of women;
- 4) Many had seen great destruction simply for embracing women leaders, and the havoc wreaked on both the church and personal relationships; and
- 5) Many of them had wrestled with their internal conflict over the lack of congruence provided from church practice when comparing the scriptural references that promoted diminishing and limiting women from functioning in the higher leadership roles such as senior pastor and bishop.

In the research, although women were instrumental in the daily operations of church functions based on cultural and traditional behaviors, churchgoers perceived it to be impossible to change how women were identified within the church (Barnes, 2006). Barnes also revealed that although churchgoers were happy to highlight work done in the church by women, less than 1% supported a woman in the role of pastor, and they often cited many reasons to their opposition, such as indirect opposition (glass ceiling effects), to include opposition based on other religious factors involving tradition, doctrine, and theology (2006).

## **Conflicts Between Personal Views and Church Practice Relating to Women in Leadership**

The women participants were unanimous in their belief that there was no difference between marketplace or church when selecting someone for a leadership position. Only one church in the sample had a female senior pastor. Competence and the calling were the most critical attributes for consideration. However, there existed a conflict between their personal views (that women were capable of leading the church as they were in the marketplace) and the church practices (women were viewed as inadequate in leading the church). Similarly, Cody (2006) found that although women in large perceived their role as a helper and supporter both in church and at home, women leaders felt that it was their responsibility to challenge the patriarchy in church and society so they could be viewed as equals.

Interestingly, the church became more receptive when women began to participate in leadership roles, which was also consistent with the findings from the Barna Research Group (2012). In concert with the literature review, more women occupied the leadership roles more so than in the past, most felt that women had more significant opportunities for leadership outside of the church. Both men and women still believed there were barriers for women in both the church and marketplace, but all support women in leadership in both areas. There were two male participants who made contradictory statements. Both accepted women as leaders in church and marketplace, but neither participant was willing to be led by a female church leader. Interesting to note, one of them voted for Hillary Clinton for president in 2016. The participants all stated that they believe if a woman was qualified, she should be able to attain any level of leadership in

Church and the marketplace. Notwithstanding this fact, two of the churches were not confident that their specific churches would be open or willing to have a woman, senior pastor.

It was also worth noting that many of the participants had a lack of definitions and differences between a church ministry and marketplace ministry. When asked to define church ministry, the participants were able to provide a list of services that constitute church ministry, however, the term marketplace ministry often bled into the definition of church ministry which settled around the primary functions of providing for the hungry, the needy, those incarcerated, and those in their local community. Only a third of the participants had a clear understanding of a distinction between the two ministries, and two of those participants made an argument for the necessity of incorporating a stronger approach to equip Christians to be more influential in the marketplace. When one male participant commented that marketplace ministry incorporates working with the billionaires, business people, lawyers, and judges, because they need to be saved, I asked, “How do you minister to the people in the marketplace?” The participant responded by stating:

Well, it was like anything—you have got to come up with a strategy, got to come up with a plan. Moreover, I think that is where we fall short. We don’t—I mean, we can identify. Okay. This person needs help, this person needs help, this person needs help. But, actually sitting down and putting together a plan, putting together a strategy, putting together a game plan—that’s where we fall short. What’s the statement? You can plan to succeed, or you can plan to fail. And when you don’t plan, then you’re planning to fail. So, I would say that a strategy is so important,

in terms of addressing those persons, because they can be reached. They can be reached. And it requires more than what you've been doing. It requires stretching beyond what you're used to doing to reach those folk (Bill, Bishop).

For more details about the participants' personal views about women in church leadership, I have provided an extensive account of their biological chronology in Appendix E.

### **Church Policies on Women Leadership**

As stated in Chapter 3, one of the churches that was classified as an evangelical non-denominational church wrote a position paper within the past ten years that specifically addressed the role of women within the church. This non-denominational church was making a definitive stand in favor of women leaders, specifically for the role of elder, which had historically been held only by men. The second church, once classified as Baptist for many decades, had transformed to that of non-denominational, provided by-laws that were vague in either taking a position for or against women as leaders. This same church recently began ordaining women as elders within the last five years, and they too experienced a backlash and conflict for the decision. The third church, which was an African Methodist Episcopal Church, developed and released bylaws in the mid 1980's that specifically addressed the role of women. The sole purpose of this addition to the AME bylaws was to explain, increase, and support women in leadership within their denomination and to fight against sexism and gender discrimination.

In the literature review, I highlighted some of the New Testament Scriptures that were at the core of the debate regarding the resistance of women in leadership roles in the church. I found that some participants advocated that the comparison of how the church

discriminated against women should be seen as illegal when compared to how discrimination was treated in the marketplace. The notion of not embracing women in leadership in the 21st century only because of their gender was seen as deplorable, oppressive, and biased.

Tom Brown (n.d.) pointed to this very issue in his article entitled, “Can Women Be Pastors?” He addressed the three Scriptures relating to the inclusion of women within the church. Brown employed an exegesis approach (interpreting Scriptures based on detailed analysis of the content and context), rather than an eisegesis approach (interpreting a text of Scripture based on pre-conceived ideas about its meaning). He stated,

Here is the way I interpret passages, which appear to discriminate. I will not use the Bible to discriminate against anyone. I always look to use the scriptures [sic] to liberate people, not place them in bondage. I think it is time to quit holding to interpretations that put people in bondage. (para. 4)

The participants who still held to the belief that women cannot lead them in church had trouble juxtaposing the acceptance of women as teachers and leaders in other areas, but they could not imagine that a woman could be a pastor of a church. Consequently, these same participants made mention that the church would flounder without women. Additionally, they boasted of either being taught by good women leaders or have experienced women who did an excellent job as church leaders.

### **Male Perspectives for Recognizing Women Leaders**

It was interesting to find that most of the participants defined the church ministry as helping people with emotional, relational, physical, mental, financial, educational,

medical, and related needs. Nevertheless, when it came to describing what was required to be a qualified leader in the church, some of the men participants used gender to rule women out. They embraced the spiritual approach and referenced the Scriptures portion that designated men as the head– not the qualifications needed to provide service or leadership in the areas of need just listed. These findings demonstrated that there has been minimal progress made towards changing inferior perceptions about women clergy. The literature stated that for centuries, research demonstrated that the protocol for pastoral selection had drawn strife and criticism. In the early years, determining the best way to ordain pastors was derived more from a premise of creating the necessary supply for the increased demand as the need for churches was rapidly growing. Maag (2004) noted,

Candidates for pastorate could and did come from all walks of life, and the criteria for selection might have been based more on availability and the candidate's declaration of a sense of inner calling for ministry. (p. 71)

Researchers also touted the traditional family values by highlighting the patriarch model for both home and church, which had been the most significant hurdles for women who were called to preach. Rose's (1987) research pointed out that many women accepted this model, but question whether men were operating from a position of competence, strength, and sensitivity to lead in both areas properly. Bolman and Deal (2013) detailed such stereotypes associated with leadership with both men and women implicitly accepting men as the top position. They told of research evidence that suggested, "High-level jobs are powerful, but women, in the minds of many people, should not be" (p. 353).

These findings were instrumental in gaining a broader perspective of how power, change, and mental model theories highlighted the underlying ideologies and philosophies that had the potential of hindering progress. Pierce and Groothuis (2005) found that most people were unaware of their biases, which was detrimental to the advancement of us all. They stated, “Hierarchies of domination over others have devastating effects on God’s creation” (p. 465). Church leaders need to be cognizant of the role of both genders on leadership, its relevancy, and its impact on church in the decades to come. To do this, the church must choose to reconcile the needs of people with traditional thinking that has resulted in the version of the church in operation today. I provided a list of substantial supplemental findings from this study in Appendix H for further reading.

### **Male Perspective for Issues of Resistance Towards Women in Leadership**

Although this was a sub-question directed towards the male participants, I found that both men and women shared their own stories of resistance against other women leaders. The level of astonishment offered by the participants was high as they shared their experiences of things seen and heard, which reflected the many challenges that women leaders faced. They also shared their challenges of how others resisted their leadership.

Some of the male participants seemed to be in a state of disbelief that women would reject other women, but they found it to be typical. Consequently, they thought it was unacceptable for men to reject women who were responding to the call to ministry. As expected, many of the men and women participants quoted the same Scriptures offered in this study either in support of the resistance of women leaders or as an origin



of disapproval of how these Scriptures have been used to resist and oppress women from having or pursuing church leadership. As stated in the literature, Olive Hemmings (2004) believes the hermeneutical debate over these scriptures was used as a scapegoat to further the resistance of ordaining women. He stated that it was a "process of scripturalization defined by a larger social process" used to suppress women and not acknowledge full gender equality within the church (2004, Abstract).

Past theories on organizational conflicts and studies relating to the church's treatment of its female church leaders had corroborated through the stories of 12 people who came from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience in the church. All agreed to the same conclusion: the plight of women leaders in the church while not ideal required changing.

### **Theoretical Application**

The theoretical focus on the effects of power, change, and mental model, on the subjects of leadership, gender, and church practice created the ideal working combination for this research study. My process for selecting the theoretical models was based on the outcome of the data analysis. After I identified the seven themes, I then matched the themes to theories for further analysis. For instance, I applied power theory to analyze the struggle for gender equality and the significance of voice; change theory to understand the gender versus competence, gender bias and discrimination, and women resisting women themes; and mental model theory to analyze how a male dominate church culture collided with Kingdom Culture debate.

## Power Theory Analysis

Power was a fundamental force in every relationship (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Turner, 2005). Power was also present in an organization, social constructs, and in the church. Kevin best described the impact of power. He said,

God's desire was for men and women, you know, when He gave the sort of cultural mandate to—that mandate was given to Adam and Eve together to co-rule and co-reign and, you know. And so, you know, then the Fall perverted a lot of things but one of the things that it perverted was the relationship between men and women and it also perverted people's exercise of power, and those two things have continued to dog the human race throughout time.

The most basic definition of power was the ability to influence others (Katz, 2015). Roberts (2003) argued that it would be difficult to debate the fact that power was at the center of our human affairs. If this theory was correct, Turner warned that “every group, organization or society must solve the problems of power to achieve its goals or risk failure, dysfunction or even extinction” (2005, p. 1).

For this study, I analyzed different types of power, which allowed the reader to surmise better how the Church responded to different types of challenges: should it remain silent or should it resist in response to the signs pointing to continued bias, suppression, and dysfunction within its walls. Katz (2015) argued that there are many types of power. They include:

- 1) Coercive power – reinforced by fear
- 2) Connection power – according to the level of influence and interactions with important persons

- 3) Expert power – because of the leader’s knowledge, skills and competencies
- 4) Information power – possession of and access to knowledge
- 5) Legitimate power – based on the leader’s position
- 6) Referent power – determined by the personal traits that followers admire or identify with
- 7) Reward power – salaries, advancement and recognition given to employees

Theme 1 (struggle for gender equality) and Theme 7 (significance of voice) demonstrated the remarkable impact of power regardless if the participants were conscientiously or sub-conscientiously aware of it. As they shared their lives, the participants gave countless examples of how the perceptions of power worked to create dissension between the genders. Reverend Anna stated it this way,

I think it’s still an issue universal. I think it’s more an issue of our power, who was in control, male or female. It’s almost like the United States struggling with the fact that a woman could be president.

Those in control spoke of the ability to *connect power*. Katz (2015) explained this kind of power as predicated on gaining the approval and favor of the person in power instead of their disapproval. As women continued to look for significance, they would look for those within the leadership ranks who would validate their right to be in ministry. As the women participants discussed the need to have their voices heard, it was evident in the ongoing struggle that exists for relevance and acceptance.

Theme 1 tapped into the idea of *referent power*. This type of power was necessary because people could often respond best to those whom they identified with (Katz, 2015). After listening to the participants’ stories, I noted that both men and women witnessed a

level of frustration by women when women did not have someone to directly associate with (another female leader). They did not have others to identify with; or as women, knowing they possessed a certain gift, skill, or talent that would help others but were not able to utilize such gifts (because they are women). The desire of both men and women for approval and achievement did not go away. When legitimate power was not bestowed upon those who believed they were qualified to have it, tension and dissatisfaction manifested. Kevin shared these thoughts,

I mean conflict can occur and it might not necessarily always be conflict although it could be friction, it could be when there are women that have leadership gifts or teaching gifts and those are being suppressed. That often creates some conflict and angst and so within the woman herself who might be really trying to live within the system and yet that gift just like leaks out and people are blessed by that and people are like, let's have some more of that, that's good. Well now I can't have more of that. Why can't we have more of that? So, it creates an unnatural condition where somebody's gift is being unnecessarily suppressed.

Power was bestowed through the empowerment of self and others, and thus responsibility went along with it (Katz, 2015). Power used responsibly was a vital tool for leaders to spearhead much-needed change and to expand the old ways of thinking and to operate within any organization. Themes 1 and Theme 7 demonstrated that leadership could have a positive effect on those watching. As with any significant change, it started from the top. Cornelius offered a vision of what power, gender equality, and significance can look like wrapped neatly and tied with a bow, when he stated,

We're responsible to be here, we're responsible to do that and he's looking at us, you know, because the elder board consists of, there were two men and three women and he still looks to us all as equal and we're looked at—he relies on all of us the same.

### **Change Theory Analysis**

As stated previously, change theory (Bridges, 2003; Wildflower & Bennan, 2011) incorporated three stages: 1) ending – characterized by confusion about what has ended and what has not; 2) the neutral zone – a fuzzy period where the old and new are both in operation; and; and 3) the new beginning – the new life was starting, but just as it was unclear what has really ended, it might be equally unclear what has really begun. Yvette exemplified change theory when she was offering guidance to her brother who was a pastor from a different church. She told him about her experience as a female elder in hopes that he would incorporate those changes in his church. As individuals and organizations go through these three stages, leaders need to be clear regarding their process so to eliminate confusion and resistance. Yvette described it best when she said,

Because see, now he's getting ready to do exactly what happened here and he was on the front lines of throwing stones at me, and so I just told him I said, 'you know you're going to need to walk it out, you're going to need to preach about it because that's what you told me. And you're going to need to have your position, position paper, be able to sit down and talk to people and shepherd people through this because this is going to be a change'.

As I examined the seven themes derived from the data analysis, the areas for change presented provided a fascinating insight of how scary, devastating, and rewarding

change can be for the various participants in the study. Two of the three churches reported significant impact from their decisions to incorporate women as church leaders. I was able to see the stages of change played out in pure form. James candidly described it:

Well, we went back and realized our error and really very humbly, we were broken and humbled, and confessed, asked for forgiveness from the whole congregation and from the different people. We ended up having meetings to talk through, which should have come before, so it was post, it was not, but to just explain how we got, where we got, what the process was, how we got where we got, how we got where we were theologically and those were very challenging because you had people in there that, what are you doing to our church, and you're destroying it, and you know, it was just a real issue. It was a very hard time.

I employed gender bias and discrimination as the underlying context to best understand change theory, and these themes included women resisting women and gender versus competence. Change theory provided a deeper understanding of the gap between what we want versus what we can do. The participants talked about the strain and dissatisfaction they had with bias, resistance, and discrimination in the church, and they provided suggestions for addressing the change, which some admitted seemed out of reach. Kegan and Lahey (2001) coined this an immunity to change, and it occurred when there was a gap between what was wanted and what could be done.

The data revealed that change had been slow to non-existent in the actions, thoughts, and identity attached to women leaders. The majority of the participants agreed

that change in the Church was way behind progress, even though tremendous progress was made in the marketplace. While some were optimistic about the future of the church, others seemed ambivalent. The neutral zone was best illustrated from the narratives of Suzanne, who recalled how her church had dealt with congregants through their transition,

So our church has been through—or is going through a metamorphosis. We've had some fallout, meaning we've had people leave our church. Although, during the two years that we were training to be elders, we also put the church through training sessions. We had people come in from the outside to teach the Biblical principles of eldership in the church. And they taught from Titus. They taught from Timothy. All the – you know, all Biblical based. And you can do that, number one, most of the church did not come out for the training sessions. They didn't feel the need to do that. Number two, they could come out and still not accept the training or accept the Word of God as written in the Holy Scriptures. Number three, they thought it was going to change the way they did church. And some of them have left because they're not willing to change. Or they're not willing to see what changes would occur, if any. Some people, when you talk about change, they run. I say you cannot grow without changing.

The accurate assessment of one's readiness to change is paramount for the change to be accepted and to last (Prochaska, Diclemente, & Norcross, 2002). Although the change was challenging (Wildflower & Brennan, 2011), it was a process of transitioning through various stages of life (Bridges, 2003). The Church had been markedly slow in embracing change, which was an inevitable part of life.

Two churches in the study were in the process of embracing the third stage of change. The elder board was solidly in place at one church. Many of those who fought the transition eventually left the board and the church. The participants talked of more patterns that were needed to change, such as genuinely shifting mindsets around women in leadership that would be prepared the congregation for the possibility of installing a senior woman pastor in the future. Another, they suggested of intentionally pursuing more women to the elder's board and not falling back to old norms. There was a concern that there will be no consistent momentum, but they will just be meeting a gender quota to please the people.

My focus on change theory was not just a good idea. It was to sound the alarm that the participants from this study believed that the Church was unwilling to embrace change in the area of acknowledging, embracing, and positioning women in leadership. This may be difficult, if not impossible to rebound from. Kevin summed this best when he considered the plight of the Church:

So, conflicts in the church don't happen because women are serving in leadership. Conflicts in the church happen because we're sinners and because we—we resist change and we—we as a generalization but generally people are resistant to change and so, you know, I'd say that women exercising their leadership might become a flashpoint for an issue but it's not the real issue, the real issue is something deeper." He went on to say, "So if—if we want to in Rome be Romans for the sake that all people might know Christ, then to act in the way that is so counter to the culture that the culture is much more affirming and embracing and releasing than the Church might be, cripples the church's witness and further



marginalizes a church's ability to—to be a transformative presence in its community.

### **Mental Model Theory Analysis**

Mental model was the final theory under review. I chose to focus primarily on the ladder of inference offered from this theory, which was defined as “a common mental pathway of increasing abstraction, often leading to misguided beliefs” (Senge et al., 1994). Senge et al. surmised,

We live in a world of self-generating beliefs which remain largely untested. We adopt those beliefs because they are based on conclusions, which are inferred from what we observe, plus our past experiences. Our ability to achieve the results we truly desire is eroded by our feelings that: 1) our beliefs are *the* truth; 2) the truth is obvious; 3) our beliefs are based on real data; 4) the data we select were the real data. (p. 242)

The ladder of inference, or mental pathway, was made up of seven ladder rungs (Senge et al., 1994). Starting from the bottom rung and lopping up: 1) “Observable the ‘data’ and experiences (as a videotape might capture it)”; 2) “I select ‘data’ from what I observe”, 3) “I added meanings (cultural and personal)”; 4) “I make assumptions based on the meanings I added”; 5) “I draw conclusions”; 6) “I adopt beliefs about the world”; and 7) “I take actions based on my beliefs” (p. 243). Anna best captured this when she said:

People are the embodiment of what they think. And until they want to change, they're not going to change. Some of this has been passed on from generation to generation. It's almost instilled in us. It's etched in our hearts.

As a person made sense about another person or situation, the climb up the ladder was instantaneous, and it happened automatically for every thought, setting up. This was known as a reflexive loop, encompassing our beliefs that affected the data we selected. The two remaining themes that incorporated these concepts were male-dominated church culture and Kingdom culture debate. As described in the data analysis and results, participants made a distinction between church practice and the Kingdom purpose for the co-reigning of men and women; many noted that they were polar-opposite when it came to comparing the words spoken or actions taking place. For example, the participants offered various justifications or defenses for the church's position on female ministers, with the ladder of inference was at play. I have included one quote from each participant:

**James:** I think that again we get stuck in our religiosity, we get stuck in our theological viewpoints and ways of doing what we're doing, and we just keep doing it. We just keep repeating.

**Suzanne:** The dedication is not there like it used to be. When I was coming up, it's—our mindset was what can we do for the church? Now, the mindset is what can the church do for me?

**Yvette:** Yeah, I think it's an unconscious thing that, you know, even—let's just talk the elder group for instance. Even though they wanted you there and they could value you being there it was still like I said that good old boy kind of thing. Or when you're speaking something, they just kind of talk right over you and never realize that that's what they do because it is just engrained.

**Anna:** The mindset of a lot of men is they cannot sit under a woman pastor because of some writings that Paul did in the Book of Corinthians and I think the Book of Timothy where he addressed women in leadership authorities.

**Bill:** In my church, not a problem. They accept whatever direction I set forth. And I don't say that arrogantly—I'm 31 years, now, so they're basically going to embrace what I embrace. And those who don't, they'll go where they're comfortable.

**Cornelius:** Just based on my interpretation of the Scriptures because I will hold to the doctrine of First Timothy. He who desires the office of the bishop desires the office, it must be the husband of one wife and I just hold onto that.

**Kevin:** And so I think that people, you know, could not even say why they think a woman should or shouldn't be in a particular role, I mean because most people haven't thought about it deeply. They experience it or it comes upon, you know, in this case it came upon them, they had a visceral reaction to it and then the logical side of their brain tried to explain the visceral reaction that they were having...it's sort of a neurological, emotional explanation of human behavior.

**Marcus:** And I feel that—and not just men, there are some ladies out there that feel that they shouldn't have a woman leader.

**Michelle:** I really think if people could get—if we—if people could get away from their prejudices, we would all be the better for it. You know? I really think, like, and I guess it takes looking at things from a different perspective, because I really feel like you shoot yourself in the foot when you don't allow people to, not just only be who they are, but to help them excel and be the best that they can be.

**Antonio:** And that's where we have to try to change the mindset for people to understand. The same thing from women, you know, we know the history is what it is, but we have to wake up and find it in Scripture. If you find something in Scripture that says women cannot be in ministry then show it and produce it and then, we can go from there. But you're not going to find that.

**Diane:** Well if I feel small, I want you to feel small too. My husband always likens it to crabs in a barrel. We constantly want to pull each other down. I don't want you to get to the top because I'm at the bottom, so I'm going to make sure that you don't get any further.

**Judy:** But I don't think—I just don't think it's intentional thought, I don't think it's—there's some churches that are thinking that way but it's often times the super liberal churches, right, Episcopalians, you know, Anglicans don't even, but, you know, I know Episcopalians and Methodists and some Lutherans, you know, Presbyterians and people, you know, so I – I think – I don't know if it's – I think it's – I think it's just a lack of thought about it. You know, I just don't think – I don't think that men think about it, women think about it, but I don't think that men do and until the men do, probably, and say hey, hey, hang on, this is not right, you know.

According to Senge et al. (1994), every person will create meaning and draw conclusions based on life experiences. However, these authors also suggested that we improve the way we communicate through reflective thinking, discussing thoughts with others to get their perspectives, and garnering ideas and reasoning of others to weigh against one's thoughts. To adequately incorporate the ladder of inference within the

church organization, it requires capturing the observable data and experiences that started the loop. Then, one must check those automatic responses by communicating the reasons behind such thought. This will take practice and determination by church leaders to break mental models and assumptions that impede growth, strength, and relevance of the church in the 21st century.

### **Clergywomen and Intersectionality Between Gender, Race, and Family**

Consistent with past findings, the female participants from this study sought positions of significance, influence, and authority within the church and ensured that their voices would be heard. However, access to the pulpit was not synonymous with access to power and influence. The issue of voice in various forms was evident in both the literature and in this study. The findings demonstrated that women who were able to gain some level of access were not always granted full acceptance and participation as a community leader. The clergywomen noted incidents in which the governing body would deny them access to decision-making, voting rights, or leadership authority. These women even questioned their experiences of intolerance at times. Yvette noted an incident where she was on the board for hiring a new elder. The elder, who would be another man filling a board where she is the only woman, was highly qualified for the role, but he went out of his way to ignore her. This experience made her challenge her identity as a “fat, Black woman.” She reflected:

He had all of the qualifications: he could teach the word, he could do this, he could do that. And I wanted him -- because I knew that he would be an asset to the church... I come in and I address this man, the nominee, and he is turned like

this so he doesn't acknowledge me he doesn't want to acknowledge me. I knew it. Nobody else picked it up. They were just all clueless.

During the debrief, Yvette raised the issue of how the candidate had treated her. None of them noticed the treatment against her. Despite the subtle discrimination against her, Yvette still proceeded to vote yes. She chose to select him for his qualifications, even knowing that he did not treat her as his equal. She said,

We debriefed, and I said to them, "Did you notice that he would never look at me? He would never address me. He actually turned from me when I came in the room." And they were like, "No, no we didn't notice that." And I said, "Well, yeah he did and I didn't know whether it was because I was fat, Black or a woman." I didn't know what his issue was. So we had to, you know, either say did we want the person to go to the next level or not, and I said, "Yeah, I think he should go to the next level because he had a lot of qualifications." I felt as though whatever issue he had could be rectified once he got to know me.

The most interesting and often conflicting accounts came from the male participants. While a majority of men expressed faith in women being capable and competent in attaining the status of bishops, elders, and clergywomen, some did not believe that women should be in such positions of religious authority. These discrepancies were more evident and pervasive within church organizations. Ironically, men downplayed the marketplace accomplishments of clergywomen as credentials for leading the church. That is, men cheered the women for succeeding in business but felt that their business acumen could not translate to success within the church. These views

were only directed towards women, however. Cornelius articulated this best when he said,

Well, as a woman being president, again that's separate...the marketplace is separate from the church. I voted for Hilary, I would think she would have done a better job than Trump. If they're qualified, if they have the acumen to do the job, [then] they can do it. Some of the -- you know, you think in terms of some of the talent that women have and the mindset that they can be great CEOs, great leaders and they can do the job so I don't have a problem with that in the marketplace.

And when asked what would be his response if that same woman came over to the church feeling that there was a call on her, he responded, "Go forth. I'm not going to be a part of it, but go forth."<sup>20</sup>

Another participant stated that women could hypothetically achieve the ranks within the church leadership, but her authority and respect as a leader would not be respected nor followed. Not all men agreed. Another male participant herald his female pastor's clerical and marketplace accomplishments as one mighty achievement. In Yvette's case, the committee decided to decline on pursuing opportunities with the candidate after hearing Yvette's account. Yvette was genuinely surprised that the committee had made that decision. She noted,

And they said no. They said they would never accept anybody on the leadership team who would treat a woman and one of our own this way. I was shocked. I didn't know I had that many people in my corner. But they showed me a lot that day because I'm like, "No it's okay, you know, eventually maybe two years later

he'll accept me." And they said, "No that's not who we would want to represent us."

Regardless of the various perspectives, gender played a significant role in how women's acceptance, position, and achievements were lauded which speaks adroitly to the tenets of intersectionality.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) first coined the concept of intersectionality to describe the bias and violence against Black women. She argued that oppression was compounded where race, gender, and sexuality intersected. By that she argued that Black women faced "overlapping" discrimination exclusive to them. Crenshaw stated, "Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated," (p.140).

Crenshaw contends that Black women are chained by both their prescribed gender norms and the institutional conditions for being African American. These crosscutting forces create frustrating forces of oppression. She states,

An effort to develop an ideological explanation of gender domination in the Black community should proceed from an understanding of how crosscutting forces establish gender norms and how the conditions of Black subordination wholly frustrate access to these norms. Given this understanding, perhaps we can begin to see why Black women have been dogged by the stereotype of the pathological matriarch or why there have been those in the Black liberation movement who aspire to create institutions and to build traditions that are intentionally patriarchal. (pp.155-156)



Over the years, the sociological use of intersectionality has expanded to address multiple degrees of oppression and bias including issues of class, race, and gender. The premise of intersectionality is that there are interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage that are oppressive, marginalizing minority groups and individuals (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality was evident in my analysis.

**Bill:** Now, I will listen to female preachers, because I've done that. I will listen to a female teacher. I'll sit under their teacher. But a female pastor – somebody who has the responsibility over my soul and all of that, that's just not my personal preference.

**Anna:** It must be -- from my perspective, it must be true if folks are there. Because they remain there. Now, it maybe that they don't want to leave because this has always been their home and they tolerate it. I don't know. You know, my mother talked about our -- our pastor all the time. Well, mama, if you're not satisfied, why don't you go to another church? But that's my home church. Then, mama, then you need to be okay with it. But I'm not. You know, but she refuses to leave because that's always been her church. And she's not going to let him run her away. Those are her words. So it's a decision that we all have to make as women in the ministry.

**Michelle:** Like I didn't see them work like an actual leadership role, other than the fact that, you know, they would preach occasionally on a Sunday. Christian education was run by women, missionaries was run by a woman. Deaconess, nurse ward was run by a woman. Everything else was run by men.

**Diane:** I never saw that many women in the pulpit. It's only when I reached my 20s that the number of women began to increase in the pulpit. So because in the broader society women are filling more and more diverse roles, we come to expect that in the church. And so when that doesn't always take place, then yes then you've got conflict there. You've got conflict with women who see those changes taking place and they say what's happening here. And then you've got conflict with men who are struggling over that. And for some of them -- and again let because I'm relating this to the African American church let me put my finger on this as well. For African American men I think many of them are still wrestling over their own manhood and how the systemic racism has marginalized them since the very beginning. And because of that they struggle too with seeing women in various roles. They don't want to admit that but I think that's very prevalent and that's something that we don't talk about. We don't talk about it within the church.

**James:** One of the roles of the husband is to open up the opportunity for their wives to fully be released in their calling and destiny so that they flourish and it might mean sacrifice for the man to maybe not be able to do all the things that he wants to do. I think that's a part of our calling. And you can, you can, I think look at different marriages and different couples and you can pretty quickly tell which women are flourishing and which aren't, and I think that's, that's, a huge part of that is the man's responsibility to create the environment and the encouragement for them to be fully released in whatever it is, whether it's in the marketplace or in the ministry.

**Kevin:** Well you know, I mean -- I mean the conflict can occur and it might not necessarily always be conflict although it could be friction, it could be when there are women that have leadership gifts or teaching gifts and those are being suppressed. That that often creates some conflict and angst and so within the woman herself who might be really trying to live within the system and yet that gift just like leaks out and people are blessed by that and people are like let's have some more of that, that's -- that's good, well now I can't have more of that. Why we can't we have more of that so it creates an unnatural condition where somebody's gift is being unnecessarily suppressed. And so I think lots of conflict and angst and friction gets created and a lot of angst for women who have a gift and are with character trying to life within the framework of the system that they are in and maybe even have been taught is right and maybe even believe is right and yet there's a -- there's a dissidence there because gifting is – is not being affirmed and released in the way that it could be.

**Marcus:** Not saying that it's going to stop God's Kingdom-building, but it stops us from being where we need to be, and having the things that we should have, and our children should have and our children's children should have. That's his plan. He ain't going to win, but he just keeps throwing things out there to distract. And until they just sit down and have that relationship, they're going to keep doing what they're doing. They're going to keep on judging, and they're going to keep on staying out, and that same spirit's going to go into their kids, and they're not even realizing it. It flows.

**Antonio:** I'm like, what makes you think the way that women are, what would make them not be able to do leadership in a church? And his response was, no, because they have like family, and they have kids, and other responsibilities. And I'm like, well, don't you have family and don't you have kids? You know, as well, yourself. So does that mean that you can't do leadership, like, in the church. And he's like, "No, but women are different." And I'm like, well, men are different also. So I don't see like a valid reason why any woman would not be able to step forward and just do what needs to be done in a church.

The argument about gender inequality is no longer about competency, societal cultural acceptance, or competing for opportunities. It is the fact that both men and women are running into their own barriers of acceptance. For women, the issue relates to internalized cultural oppression. In many regards, the women in this study defied the convention by pursuing the path of the clergy. However, most expressed uncertainty and conflicts relating to their position. This could take the form of doubting their experience when confronted with oppression and fearing to speak up. Logically and rationally they know that they can lead, but they still feel inadequate. They still hold the traditional view of women as helpers who should follow the lead of their male counterparts. Men, on the other hand, felt that women should be equal, but they lacked the proper framework for an effective female leader within the church. That is, hypothetically they supported the issue but in reality they were unable to see a successful example in action that they were willing to duplicate. Any success demonstrated by a woman was the exception, not the rule.

The findings from this study further support a recent analysis from Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, and Burke (2017). The researchers explored the leadership experiences of men and women regarding selection, leadership style, performance, and development. The researchers were interested in discovering whether or not qualitative differences exist between male and female leaders. They conducted an extensive review of recent literature on gender and leadership selection, development, style, and performance and discovered that although women make-up half (51.5%) of management positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics, 2015), their representation sharply drops the higher the position (the glass ceiling effect); there was no conclusive data to support greater performance for either gender; and women had far less development opportunities. Gipson et al. argued:

Understanding gender differences when it comes to leadership is also of particular interests to practitioners especially given the increasing amount of attention paid to women in leadership positions. The current exploration into this domain found that despite a lack of significant difference in style and performance between men and women, biases against women in selection and access to developmental opportunities is abundantly clear and remains a problem. (p. 56)

According to Gipson et al, the issue of gender disparities, although unspoken, is evident in the data. While women make up half of the workforce, they are not being afforded the same opportunities as men, and work performance or leadership style cannot justify the disparate treatment. Gordon (2003) suggests that when resistance is present, understand what is occurring and how to address it. Resistance occurs knowingly and unknowing; and, when addressing resistance, be respectful. To be effective in managing

resistance Gordon recommends the most important first step is to get the resistance out in the open and be clear about the expected outcome such as name specific requests, give exact time frames, outline potential benefits, describe behaviors that need to occur or cease.

The theoretical focus on the effects of power, change, and mental model, on the subjects of leadership, gender, and church practice created the ideal working combination for this research study. My process for selecting the theoretical models was based on the outcome of the data analysis. After I identified the seven themes, I then matched the themes to theories for further analysis. Since gender was the common thread weaving the themes, feminist theory served as the overarching theory which characterized the major focus of the participants. For instance, I applied power theory to analyze the struggle for gender equality and the significance of voice; change theory to understand the gender versus competence, gender bias and discrimination, and women resisting women themes; and mental model theory to analyze how a male dominate church culture collided with Kingdom culture debate. Feminist theory can be applied to all of the themes equally.

Table 2

*Feminism and Intersectionality Theories on Power, Change, and Mental Model Theory*

<b>Power Theory</b>	<b>Change Theory</b>	<b>Mental Model Theory</b>
Gender Equality	Gender vs. Competence	Male Dominate Church Culture
Significance of Voice	Gender Bias and Discrimination Women Resisting Women	Kingdom Culture Debate

### **Limitations of the Study**

While the research sample selected was able to provide a plethora of perspectives, I estimated that a more diverse sample of respondents relating to age, seminary and marketplace experience would have provided a more expansive understanding of leadership challenges for both men and women. Participants mentioned millennial consideration. This study did not include their inputs, which would have added additional value to this project.

Additionally, there were multiple mentions of other denominations that had embraced and/or rejected the concept of appointing women to senior leadership roles within the church. The decision for or against women leadership in the church could have been explored more by speaking with representatives from those denominations.

### **Overcoming the Patriarchal System with Critical Consciousness**

Despite best efforts by both men and women, the patriarchal system still played a significant role in hampering the female clergy leaders from achieving success. This is consistent with past findings. Sociologist Cecilia Ridgeway (2009) linked the church as a symbolic representation of male patriarchy and power, and this image has not changed despite the increase in clergywomen over the recent decades. Men have traditionally benefited politically and socially from this practice. Women clergy leaders threaten to destabilize the situation. I learned that participants in my research found this type of behavior to be best defined as either discrimination or bias against their gender.

**Antonio:** You know, does that kind of tell us what kind of society we really are?

We've not been verbally saying those things, but are there still undertones and things that are suppressed, that are not talked about, that are discriminatory

against women? Yes. I would say, yes, it still exists. Can we get people to talk about it? How do we fix this? I don't know.

**Michelle:** You know what's interesting? And it was a shock to me, a real cultural shock. Is that with as many women as we have in a lot of our churches, they don't want a female

Pastor, or they still take issue with a woman being in a leadership role. Because every four years we have a general election where a Bishop is elected. And I know in the last two to three, we've had a woman run. And I think there are still some biases. You know, is that woman going to be too emotional? Education-wise, is she, I don't know, does she have enough credentials? I believe a woman has to prove herself more. I do think that there are some, like I said, with leadership, like the Bishop we have in place now, I think he's looking to change some of the stereotypes around that. Like, he is strategically putting women in leadership positions that, as long as I can remember, they were spearheaded by a guy. So --

The participants in this study noted that gender inequality and gender oppression still permeated the church halls. Michelle expressed it as a cultural shock because she saw a lot of women in the church, but people were still having issues with women leaders. Another participant, Yvette, talked about how important it was to make women feel like it is their home as well.

**Michelle:** You know what's interesting? And it was a shock to me, a real culture shock, was that, with as many women as we have in a lot of our churches, they



don't want a female pastor, or they still take issue with a woman being in a leadership role.

**Yvette:** And it's like yeah because we want the church doors to be open to everybody. You're saying that, but you have no intention of making everybody feel at home. So, my role now is to speak in and say "it's not just about having them here and we're glad you're hear and all of that and we go on with business as usual. It now has to take the turn where everybody—when we say this is your home that you feel like this is your home. That you're represented here. That we get to know you, we get to—that what you see around is reflective of what you bring.

The disproportionate number of men in the leadership position was found to be most evident within churches. Although men and women recognize oppression, most did not have a solution or a guide to overcome it. James and Kevin argue that it is only natural for women to lead the church, given the fact that God created men and women equally in His image. Though, they also acknowledge that they rarely see women occupying positions within the higher echelons of the church. Anna, on the other hand, left her old church to seek for freedom as a clergywoman, but she still experienced the gender discrimination.

**James:** Well, in some fellowships, I don't think they're any different. You know, I think there's, there's, hopefully, a shift happening in the marketplace. It's a long road, but even with all the stuff that's been going on these last few months, you know, I'm like cheerleading it, yes, go, you know, let's root out this evil. Women ought to have the same opportunities, whether their believers or not, that men do

because they, because of, it's about your theology of imageness, like the men have a different image, or more important, or better image than women. Like He made a male and female. He didn't say oh, you got a little bit of a leg up, you got a little bit more than a woman does, and so, so I would say that often times the church, a fellowship, can reflect the same mindsets as the marketplace. So, I would say here that it's shifted, that's not how we think here. From the top all the way through, and so we're always, Lord, how can we lift up the women in this church?

**Kevin:** You know, our church is very gracious and open and warm and welcoming and, you know, not really dogmatic, you know, and so I think that women always felt welcomed, embraced, empowered and there were -- there were lots of areas in which women were able to exercise leadership gifts and thrive and flourish but from the very founding of the church there -- like the elders like never really like declared kind of where the church was....And so there were not women elders. Actually women had taught from the pulpit occasionally, like once or twice but more like a guest speaker but it was very rare...a couple of times over the course of the church. And but like women led worship, and they would sometime provide little meditations in the midst of that leading worship and they'd pull from scripture and read so if you're not allowed to speak in church is it like -- is it the length of time that matters, is it like if it's five minutes leading worship that's okay, but if it's like 20 minutes as a sermon now that's not okay... most people don't know who the elders are anyway and so the fact that there weren't women elders a lot of people would have missed that.

**Anna:** Well, coming from COGIC, where women were not allowed in the pulpit at that time -- they were not allowed to wear pants or makeup or even to look feminine, you know. They -- we were not allowed to do anything that was worldly, whether it be sports or anything. Going out and getting away from that and -- and -- and going to a non-denominational church where women are more open in the offices and more welcome, and where they are able to share the pulpit, I saw that they were enlightened, coming from just the opposite, where women were not allowed to wear titles -- not that titles mean anything... But I still see that there are a lot of men in the church that will not receive women in leadership roles other than Sunday school teachers or, you know, over the children's choir. But when it comes down to leadership that will be responsible for them, they seem to not want to be a part of it. You know, all I say is Lord give them the revelation. I'm at a point in my life, I -- I -- I don't let things that I cannot change bother me. So all I say is God give them revelation. You know, allow me to speak what you want me to say and let me keep moving. So I do that. I don't let that deter me that I will question the call upon my life. And I think that -- that is what the enemy wants us to do when we hear these things is to begin to question the call upon our lives.

Paulo Freire (1968/1970) developed the concept of critical pedagogy (or critical oppression) after extensive observation of an indigenous society economically and educationally disadvantaged by the wealthy and powerful. The premise of critical pedagogy theory is that oppression exists; and, the only way people can free themselves from oppression is through transformation. He defined oppression as “any instance in

which “A” objectively exploits “B” or hinders self-affirmation” (p.55). Freire also mentioned that it is systematic, that even the oppressor is not aware that he or she is engaging in the oppression. What is critical to note is that although it is the oppressor who appears to have the ability to liberate the oppressed, it is only through the empowerment of the oppressed that both the oppressed and the oppressor can ultimately and permanently be made free.

Through training and experimentations, he learned that people possessed a “fear of freedom” which he clarified to be not just a fear of freedom but the fear of the risk associated with freedom. Paulo Freire (1968/1970) argued that men and women who have been oppressed might not be conscious of injustice or oppression in any given situation. For one to be liberated, critical consciousness and education about one’s condition are necessary. He stated,

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world. This is the tragic dilemma of the oppressed which their

education must take into account (p. 48).

This type of critical consciousness requires what he terms “praxis,” which is a reflection, critical dialogue, and then action. All three elements must be involved for the oppressed to experience self-affirmation and liberation. Freire says critical reflection is deep contemplation on the conditions of those oppressed: looking at their plight and coming to conclusions about steps that need to occur to rectify their situation. Critical dialogue entails open and genuinely transparent communication about the oppressive conditions where trust and honesty prevail. The oppressor must provide an opportunity to hear and discuss what the oppressed have experienced in their situation. Praxis also requires action, which means intentional steps taken to change. The goals of critical pedagogy are to determine the cause of oppression, then to address the subjective nature of oppression through “objective transformation of reality” (1968/1970). This process liberates the oppressed from stagnation at the individual level allowing for renewed awareness leading to positive and progressive change.

The 21st century is a historic movement for women and women leaders. Female church leaders are also breaking with the traditional patriarchal system. Norms are changing, and we need a radical and compassionate shift for both the historically oppressed (women) and the oppressors (men), we need a new stage of consciousness, a critical consciousness. Yet, women in the study confessed to feeling stuck. This is because, as Nason-Clark (1987) revealed in her research, that women’s success is contingent on the support and encouragement from her fellow churchgoers. Participants in this study expressed mixed feedback from others as they climbed the ecclesiastical ladder. Some shared occurrences of members being outright mean and critical of their

decision to accept leadership positions, causing them to question or second guess moving forward not wanting to be alienated; while other participants expressed a sense of comradely and praise from others for achieving such accomplishments. Supportive responses gave them the strength to endure when unforeseen obstacles were placed before them.

### **Empowering Clergywomen via the REFRESH Model**

To empower women, radical consciousness is necessary. By not eradicating these injustices and disruptive oppressive social norms of knowledge and power, we can dismiss the opportunity for healing our families, our churches, our communities, our nation, our world, and ourselves. Critical pedagogy is a way of learning that helps to liberate people from oppression (Freire, 1968/1970). It suggests the dawning of a new era of equality, the establishment of new social norms, and the welcoming of new traditions.

In addition to being a social science researcher, I am a conflict resolution practitioner. I am cofounder of Empower to Engage (E2E). We focus on educating both men and women on the “how to” of acquired knowledge: giving them tools and techniques to effectively apply learned information to real life situations. Our mission is to provide education, training, and consulting services for organizations primarily in the areas of conflict and workplace assessments and leadership development. We work with teams to help revitalize organizational synergy at every level. We accomplish this mission by utilizing R.E.F.R.E.S.H.<sup>TM</sup> management techniques, which enable companies to maximize organizational performance, strengthen collaboration, and establish conflict management systems. We realize this through our R.E.F.R.E.S.H.<sup>TM</sup> core values:

- **Refine:** Redefine values, goals, and vision as needed to establish organizational change that promotes a healthy work culture and environment
- **Explore:** Explore new methodologies annually that may increase job satisfaction at every level to sustain organizational vitality
- **Focus:** Focus on the needs of the employees and leaders equally – always with integrity and respect
- **Redesign:** Redesign organizational practices that reduce the value or benefits of our key stakeholders: our employees
- **Exercise:** Exercise free flowing communication at every level of the organization, and reward creativity and innovation
- **Structure:** Structure the evaluation of conflict prevention methods and training implementations of all newly incorporated organizational systems - evaluation is key
- **Help:** Help colleagues actualize their maximum potential for promotion and job satisfaction

As organizational conflict management analysts, we believe every organization can REFRESH their current way of “doing business”, both internally and externally, by using a comprehensive approach to handling conflicting interests of various kinds at every level. Our REFRESH approach to transforming management systems is a three-fold systems design: Organizational Development, Relationship Development, and Leadership Development. E2E’s three-fold system is a tailored made program designed specifically to meet the unique needs of each client through consultation and coaching, education and training, and assessments and evaluations. Churches can benefit from the

services because churches are organizations. Organizations are made up of people who work towards a common goal, vision, and mission. This program model can be used to assist church leaders who desire to transform current practices by utilizing our step by step system. This model was developed to target, address, and eliminate barriers to growth in various areas including hiring/promotion practices, toxic work and religious cultural dynamics, and resistance to change factors.

### **Organization Assessment Process**

The model employs a three-fold assessment technique that incorporates focus groups, individual interviews, and administering surveys: one or a combination of these methods can be used.

1. Climate Assessment – Gain an understanding of the work environment and corporate culture.
2. Conflict Assessment – Gain an understanding of the level and types of conflict that exist internally and externally.
3. Conflict Management System (CMS) Assessment – Consolidates climate and conflict assessments to design a CMS that is tailored to the pre-determined conflict areas that will dictate prescribed training and educational program designs.

### **The REFRESH Conflict Management Philosophy**

The REFRESH Model stresses the importance of both education and implementation of learned information. This two-pronged perspective provides opportunities for church leaders and members to gain understanding about the impacts of disparate treatment towards women as outlined in this study; and, it incorporates the



necessary steps to address these issues as it pertains to the individuals and the systems governing them. Both the men and women participants gave a plethora of examples of the changes needed within their churches to forge ahead as a relevant example in society—as suggested and intended by the doctrines and tenants of the Christian faith.

E2E subscribes to the *Ubuntu* message of the native South African people that live below the Sahara. It is the message that every person *is* because someone else is (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith, 1994, p. 3). We believe in the value of others and work to demonstrate that belief by recognizing what every person brings to an organization through their skills and their voice. Conflict can be managed by managing the way we connect and communicate with every person around us. At all times our interactions with others should be positive, empowering, and constructive.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research within the Conflict Resolution Field**

The research significance of this study had multiple implications for the field of conflict resolution. First, it provided the missing literature for future researchers interested to further advance our understanding of conflict in churches regarding the role of women in leadership. Second, the compiled literature from this project, along with my data findings, can support future endeavors for conflict practitioners who choose to work with religious organizations. Finally, I introduced relevant theories that addressed organizational conflict and proposed techniques available to help transform ideologies around utilizing women in the church, for helping church leaders understand the stakes, and for equipping women with the gifts, skills, and experience through alternative avenues of ministry. This may include ministry work within the marketplace arenas.

Possible questions to ponder around challenges women face in the church environment that may spark ideas for additional research include:

1. What should the church do with gifted, skilled, talented experienced women leaders who were sitting in the church?
2. What keeps a church from selecting leaders based on competence instead of gender? And what might be the perceived long-term ramification of such practices?
3. What were the views of church leaders, between the ages of 25-39, as it relates to the future relevance of the church in society?
4. What were the challenges within churches that keep men from readily serving with women beyond the scriptural references offered that say men should lead? How were other scriptures that suggest other do's and don'ts handled to determine proper behavior?
5. What were the personality characteristics of women who get leadership positions in the marketplace? What were the personality characteristics of women who get leadership positions in the Church? Were these women the same or different?
6. How does the definition of servant leadership help or hurt the belief that women cannot be leaders in the Church?
7. How can utilizing women in leadership strengthen the church? Compared churches who support the use of women verses churches that do not.
8. What were the church and marketplace experiences of women who were reluctant to submit to the leadership of a female pastor?

9. How does one's upbringing influence their acceptance or rejection of a female church leader?
10. What role does marketplace experience and education-level play in a person's willingness to submit to a woman leader?
11. What other religious affiliations were women seeking when they leave a church that does not embrace or promote women to leadership positions?

### **Recommendations for Family and Mental Health Fields**

Throughout the interviewing process, there was a great deal of deep uncertainty about how to address the lingering gender bias and barriers for women within the Church. Though the salient themes from the data findings did not convey the growing need to address the impact to women resulting from the decreased sense of value, nor did it address their worth and meaning in the church experience, it was mentioned enough to demand attention here. I believe there was an opening for extensive research in the areas of marriage and family as it relates to the correlation of unfulfilled aspirations to emotional and mental health challenges in the Church.

### **Implication of Findings**

Although the data collected supported the need for increasing women leadership within the church, my goal was to substantiate why women needed to consider the marketplace ministry and whether it was possible for them to seek a sense of purpose elsewhere and still adhere to the call of ministry. I argued for the need of a broader definition of ministry that church leaders could explore and incorporate outside of ministry sphere. The research participants confirmed that the meanings for both church

ministry and marketplace ministry were not the same. More importantly, the definition of marketplace ministry was not clearly understood.

The data findings outlined in this dissertation reflected the continued relevance of this field of study. More attention was needed to help practitioners provide education, training, and assistance to churches and families struggling in this area of identity and purpose. The churches' sole goal cannot be to focus primarily on the vision and mission of the local church for the sake of the whole without carefully and intentionally meeting these protracted self-actualization needs of the individuals.

The findings suggested that although women leaders were not prohibited from achieving leadership status within the ranks of the Church, the actions and traditional practices prevented women from excelling in their leadership roles. This created a false positive narrative that kept women engaged, but it stagnated their sense of accomplishment and purpose within the Church.

### **Contributions Made to the Field of Conflict Resolution and Analysis**

Conflict resolution practitioners can use the data gathered here to work with church leaders and address perceived barriers to advancing of women. They may be able to understand better how power, change, and mental model of conflict theories impact the organizational culture. This revelation had the potential of trailblazing a course adjustment from the traditional direction of the current practices of excluding women leaders to inclusion and equality. Moreover, finally, for students and professors, exercises and projects can be created/completed to provide more strategic and intentional ways of addressing identity conflict for women in various organizations through the writing of

articles and essays on church conflict effects of power, mental modeling, and change theories.

### **Conclusion**

Churches were made up of people, and these people belong to families. From the chronicled narratives of the 12 participants, we learned that they developed most of their ideological values about women from their fathers and mothers. Others learned about the role of women through seminary and church experiences. The mental mapping that each person experienced occurred at the center of the Church's current dilemma. The men and women leaders who shared their stories had taken all of who they were into their roles as leaders.

Though most agreed that men and women were equal in the eyes of God, this equality must be exemplified in churches as well. Whether people attended church or not, it was commonly expected that the church supported both the moral and spiritual compass for society. How the Church chose to handle such issues as gender bias, discrimination, and power imbalances reflected on its churchgoers and people-at-large. To do so, there was a need for a paradigm shift in what was thought, taught, and lived as it was related to the Church's receptivity and promotion of women because they were competent and qualified leaders who were called to the pulpit and who happened to be women.

If there was a bright light to be considered, it was that women could offer their gifts and calling to God whether it was within the church walls or not. The calling of God was a Kingdom calling, not a church calling. This just meant that people could use their gifts wherever they live, work, and play. To prepare Christians to serve God in this

manner, education, and equipping at the local church level was where the work must begin—sooner rather than later.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form



Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled:  
**A Biographical Narrative Qualitative Research Study on Church Ministry Experiences of Women:  
 Exploring the Conflict Between Perceptions of God's Purpose and Church Practice**

Funding Source: None  
 IRB Protocol #:

Principal Investigator:  
 Nicole L. Davis, MIM  
 9913 Lyons Mill Road  
 Owings Mills, MD 21117  
 (410) 922-1431

Co-Investigator  
 Claire Michèle Rice, Ph.D.  
 Nova Southeastern University  
 SHSS  
 3301 College Avenue  
 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314  
 (954) 262-3046

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:  
 Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)  
 Nova Southeastern University  
 (954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790  
[IRB@nsu.nova.edu](mailto:IRB@nsu.nova.edu)

**What is the study about?**

You are invited to participate in a research study. This research aims to understand how today's church members, both men and women in leadership positions, view women in leadership in the church and in the marketplace.

**Why are you asking me?**

You are invited to participate in this study because you are currently a leader in your church. This study will capture the life stories of 12 leaders from three selected church denominations. Your knowledge and church involvement may provide beneficial information related to church experiences for women leaders.

**What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?**

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You will be asked a series of questions during a face-to-face interview at an agreed upon time and location. The interview session may last approximately 120 minutes. The principal investigator will give you the opportunity to hear and respond to a list of pre-selected questions. You will be given ample time to respond. You may choose to terminate the interview at any time.



**Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study.

**Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?**

There are no payments made to you for your participation in this study; and, there are no costs associated with your participation in this study.

**How will you keep my information private?**

Each participant's information will be stored on a password-protected personal computer. Participants will be assigned an alias identifier. Neither your actual name nor the name of your church will be associated with you. The interview questions asked cannot be linked directly back to you. All audio and video recordings will be maintained in a secure space within the principal investigator's home and will not be viewed or listened to by parties who are not directly associated with this study. All data will be destroyed once the dissertation is completed after a minimum storage time of 36 months. The IRB or regulatory agencies have the right to review research records. It is the principal investigator's chief responsibility to safe guard all data, whether recorded or written, by making every attempt to limit access to the recordings as described in this paragraph.

**What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?**

You have the right to leave the study at any time. There is no penalty for terminating your participation in this interview process or research project. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you before the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

**Other Considerations:**

If the principle investigator learns any pertinent new information regarding the study which might change your mind about participating in this study, you will be notified.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Voluntary Consent by Participant:**

By signing below, you indicate that

- this study has been explained to you
- you have read this document or it has been read to you
- your questions about this research study have been answered
- you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury
- you have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights
- you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled: A Biographical Narrative Qualitative Research Study on Church Ministry Experiences of Women: Exploring the Conflict Between Perceptions of God's Purpose and Church Practice

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B: Instructions to Participants

(Instructional Email)

Good Afternoon Pastor (Name),

The Institutional Review Board has approved my research protocol, so I'm ready to begin! Attached you will find important information for the planning and scheduling of interviews.

Before the interviews begin, I will visit your church just to enjoy a church service. If possible, I'd also like to meet you and the leaders who have been/will be selected to participate in this research. Nothing fancy, just an opportunity to shake their hands and allow us to put faces with the names so that everyone was familiar with me and my role.

I'm planning to visit your church on (Date). Please let me know if you will be there and if there will be an opportunity for me to meet the leaders. If not, no worries. I will meet everyone at some point during this process. Please let me know if you have questions.

Hope to see you soon!

Nicole

(Instruction Email Attachment)

### **Research Study Steps**

There were four steps in this research process. This notice focuses on the first two.

#### **Step 1: Schedule the interview**

Site locations for the face-to-face interviews will be the three selected churches where the participants attend and serve. A room should be reserved at each church for the days and times suitable for each participant. These spaces will need to be available for an unlimited amount of time in case scheduled interviews start late or run over planned interviewing time. Upon selecting the three churches the researcher will be personally introduced to the senior pastors of each church to gain access and develop immediate rapport and trust. The researcher will visit each church during their worship services as a complete participant. The pastor for each church will help determine the best path for selecting participants either through pre-selection of leadership and church staff by the pastor, or by the pastor making a voluntary request of those leaders who were available to participate. Church size will influence the leadership criteria determined for research participation. Small churches may have less ordained leadership and may have more lay leaders who serve as administrative staff or serve in church operations.

**Step 2: Review consent forms and conduct interviews**

Once the researcher receives the list of participants from each church, she will contact the participants by phone to explain the upcoming process by reviewing the entire consent form verbatim over the phone and asking if there were any initial questions that need to be addressed during the phone conversation. At the conclusion of the call, the researcher will email the consent form to the participant for additional review. At the time of the face to face and prior to conducting the actual interview, the researcher will go over the interviewing process again and also go over the consent form verbatim once again to give participants another opportunity to ask questions face to face. The researcher will provide copies of the consent form during the interviewing session. The researcher will have each participant sign two consent forms prior to conducting our initial face to face interview. One copy will be for his/her records and the other copy will be for the researcher's records.

Interviews will be conducted with church members who have lived the experience of being a leader in a Christian church. The research participants will consist of 12 church leaders made up of six women and six men. Two men and two women leaders will be selected from three different Christian church denominations, so each church will provide four adults to be interviewed. Each person will be interviewed individually for 120 minutes. During the interviews, participants will be asked a series of questions about intrapersonal conflicts with church practice and their personal sense of God's purpose for the role of women; reconciling identity conflicts regarding ministry functions of women; personal feelings about women leaders in ministry; and, social conflicts regarding women in ministry.

Nicole Davis  
Researcher  
Nova Southeastern University

## Appendix C: Transcription Company Confidentiality Agreement



### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

This is a Confidentiality Agreement by the parties identified below to conduct transcription services and adhere to confidentiality provisions applicable to the interviewing process described in the Nova Southeastern Research Study Consent Form.

The following is understood by us (the Principal Investigator (PI) and the Service Provider), as the basis for entering into our contract to work together:

**Description of the Project:** This service relationship will encompass a one-on-one interaction, in which the Service Provider will transcribe recorded interviews obtained from PI's research participants. It is a pay-for-hire and confidential process that will focus on the transcription of recorded data.

**Expectations:**

The Principal Investigator's roles and responsibilities:

- Provide recorded data to be transcribed to the Transcriber.
- Mask all interviewees with alias identifiers.
- Adhere to the standards of conduct prescribed by Nova Southeastern University, Institutional Review Board.

The Transcriber's roles and responsibilities:

- Keep data in a secure place.
- Do not share data outside of transcription process without written authorization from PI.
- Provide transcribed material to PI and securely maintain recorded material as outlined by Company policy.

**Confidentiality** – Information shared during the service process shall remain confidential and the Service Provider will not share with parties outside of the transcription process, not including those with a need to know.

**Compensation** – The terms of this contract include compensation as agreed to by the parties. The Service Provider agrees to provide services in accordance with the terms of this contract.

**Term** – The term of this agreement becomes effective upon date of signed confidentiality agreement, and remains in effect through \_\_\_\_\_.

*Zein Hym* 5/2/18  
 Printed/Signed Name      Date  
 Transcription Co.  
*ORCA Solutions*

*Alicole Davis* 5/2/2018  
 Printed/Signed Name      Date  
 Principal Investigator

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me about yourself and how long you have been a member of this church?
2. How has the role of women evolved in this church since you've been a member?
3. In what ways do you believe the church practices a biblical perspective of using women in leadership roles?
4. How do you define leadership? Church Ministry? Marketplace ministry?
5. From your perspective, how were the rules for women holding leadership positions different at church than in the marketplace?
6. Overall, how would you describe church members' acceptance of having women in various leadership roles at church?
7. What has been your experience being led by a woman in church? In the marketplace?
8. In what ways were men and women treated differently at church? The same? In leadership?
9. What were the differences in having a male leader vs a female leader in church?
10. What were the differences in having a male leader vs a female leader in the marketplace?
11. What was your personal belief about women serving in a leadership role in the church?
12. What was your perspective of God's biblical purpose for women in the church? In the marketplace?
13. What leadership roles were prohibited to women at the church? Please explain
14. What kinds of conflicts occur in the church because of the use of women in leadership?
15. What kinds of conflicts occur in the church because of the non-use of women?
16. From your perspective does the use of women in leadership help or hinder the church? Please explain

Appendix E: Biographical Chronology

Name: James  
Participant 1

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

Personal: Male-----Married-----4 children-----Caucasian-----Age (57)

Education: College graduate, seminary graduate

Vocation/Occupation: Executive Pastor  
Corporate Executive (15 years)

Church denomination: Non-Denominational

Church leadership positions: Church staff, Executive Pastor

Church experiences:

- Didn't know anything about church growing up
- Learned about God in college after a soccer injury, started attending church services and studying the Bible
- Joined current church in 1985
- Has been a church staff member 21 years

Personal views about women in church leadership:

- I don't have a problem with it
- If she says she's called to preach, if she's called to pastor, that's between her and God
- I would not serve under a woman pastor

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Suzanne  
Participant 2

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

**Personal:** Female-----Married (2<sup>nd</sup>)-----4 children-----African American-----Age (60)

**Education:** College graduate-----Elder school

**Vocation/Occupation:** Banking Manager (25 years) Church Administrator (business operations focus, 2004-current)

**Church denomination:** Non-Denomination

**Church leadership positions:** Church Administrator, Elder, Pastor's wife

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up in a Pentecostal-type, non-traditional Baptist church, teaching adult Sunday School (age 13)
- Married first husband, joined a traditional Baptist church – later divorced
- Married second husband who was a pastor, joined a traditional Baptist church (2003-present)
- Participating in church transformation from Baptist to non-denominational in current church

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- There is not much difference in having a man or woman leader, it's about competence
- Whosoever will, the Lord will use. He has no hesitation in using a male or a female
- I like being around strong women

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Yvette  
Participant 3

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

Personal: Female.....Married.....4 children.....African American.....Age (60)

Education: Did not attend college

Vocation/Occupation: Left job, became housewife (1977)  
"Professional Volunteer" (1985-current)

Church denomination: Non-Denomination

Church leadership positions: Life Group Leader, Bible Study Teacher, Elder

Church experiences:

- Grew up in Baptist church – grandfather a Baptist preacher (1958-1985)
- Joined current church in (1985)
- Joined church leadership (2009)
- Has belonged to current church for 33 years

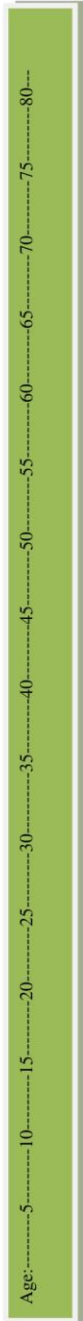
Personal views about women in church leadership:

- Women bring balance
- Women bring a different perspective
- Women are co-equal with men and should use the gifts they are given by God if they are called to lead

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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**Name: Anna  
Participant 4**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE**



**Personal:** Female-----Married-----5 children-----African American-----Age (65)

**Education:** College graduate

**Vocation/Occupation:** Federal Government Manager (30+ years)-----Retired

**Church denomination:** African Methodist Episcopal

**Church leadership positions:** Class leader, Reverend

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up in the Church of God in Christ denomination
- Joined a non-denominational church as an adult
- Served as an assistant pastor while in Korea
- Has belonged to current church for 6 years

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- If you're called, serve

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Bill  
Participant 5

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

Personal: Male Married (2<sup>nd</sup>) 4 children African American Age (63)

Education: College graduate, seminary (masters), doctorate

Vocation/Occupation: United States Post Office (1<sup>st</sup> job), minimum wage job out of seminary (3 years)  
Pastor (since 1987)

Church denomination: Non-Denominational

Church leadership positions: Pastor, Bishop

Church experiences:  

- Raised in church, had the best experience to prepare for ministry under his pastor
- Felt called to pastor during his early years in college. Pastor told him to finish school first
- Tried to find a church to pastor for 6 years (while in seminary and for 3 years after)
- Has been pastoring his church for 31 years

Personal views about women in church leadership:  

- Just like men, you have some who are sharp and some who should not be in position
- Would not want to have a woman pastor.
- If someone tells you that the Lord has called them into ministry, that's nothing to debate

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Cornelius  
Participant 6

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

Personal: Male-----Married-----2 children-----African American-----Age (52)

Education: College graduate

Vocation/Occupation: Funeral Director  
Pastor (16 years)

Church denomination: Non-Denominational

Church leadership positions: Associate Pastor, Elder

Church experiences:

- Raised in church, "church baby", attended the family church
- Did his first trial sermon at age 16
- Pastored two separate churches (8 years each)
- Has been a member of current church for 5 years

Personal views about women in church leadership:

- I don't have a problem with it
- If she says she's called to preach, if she's called to pastor, that's between her and God
- I would not serve under a woman pastor

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Kevin  
Participant 7

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

**Personal:** Male-----Married-----2 children-----Caucasian-----Age (58)

**Education:** College graduate – Seminary (MA in theology) – MBA

**Vocation/Occupation:** Ministry Youth organization (11 years), Corporate (13 years)  
Left job to become senior pastor (2006-2016)

**Church denomination:** Non-Denomination

**Church leadership positions:** Teacher, Elder, Senior pastor (currently serves as pastoral advisor as needed)

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up Roman Catholic
- Joined current church in 1993
- Became an elder in 2000 (for 6 years), became the senior pastor in 2006 (for 10 years)
- Has belonged at current church for 25 years

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- People ought to be able to serve in leadership based on their giftedness, not their gender
- Women ought to be fully released, embraced, empowered, affirmed to serve at every level according to their gifting, calling and capacity

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: **Marcus**  
Participant **8**

**BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE**

Age: 5-----10-----15-----20-----25-----30-----35-----40-----45-----50-----55-----60-----65-----70-----75-----80-----

<b>Personal:</b> Male-----Married (2 <sup>nd</sup> )-----3 children-----African American-----Age (59)
<b>Education:</b> Military Training Schools as needed for promotion
<b>Vocation/Occupation:</b> Military
<b>Church denomination:</b> African Methodist Episcopal
<b>Church leadership positions:</b> Associate Ministry, Youth Teacher, Co-Men's Ministry Leader, Reverend
<b>Church experiences:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grew up attending church at times, mom attended church mostly, but dad had a stronger faith</li> <li>• As adult started attending church after he met a young lady</li> <li>• Got heavily involved in church ministry, but still did not have a bond with God</li> <li>• God called out him out of his church to go help with the start of a new ministry (2003)</li> <li>• Has belonged to current church for 15 years</li> </ul>
<b>Personal views about women in church leadership:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They do an outstanding job</li> <li>• They are good leaders</li> <li>• They have the same spiritual gifts as men</li> </ul>

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Michelle  
Participant 9

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5.....10.....15.....20.....25.....30.....35.....40.....45.....50.....55.....60.....65.....70.....75.....80---

**Personal:** Female.....Single.....1 child.....African American.....Age (44)

**Education:** Some college, did not graduate

**Vocation/Occupation:** Non-profit organization and another company (early adult years)  
Church administrative assistant (current)

**Church denomination:** African Methodist Episcopal

**Church leadership positions:** Administrative assistant, women's ministry co-leader, Buds of Promise Superintendent, Elder

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up a family church
- Heavily involved in church activities until went away to college (dark years)
- Rededicated life to God in mid-20s (resumed involvement in church)
- Released from 1<sup>st</sup> church to join a newly starting church with current pastor (15 years)

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- Go for it!
- If the Lord tell you to do it, do it.

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Antonio  
Participant 10

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

**Personal:** Male-----Married-----4 children-----African American-----Age (51)

**Education:** College graduate

**Vocation/Occupation:** Works for federal government

**Church denomination:** African Methodist Episcopal

**Church leadership positions:** Stewart, Class Leader, Evangelism, all other assigned duties

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up in Baptist church – family was strongly rooted in church
- Joined wife’s church after marriage, stayed there for 9 years
- Joined current church in 2007
- Has belonged to current church for 12 years

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- Believes women should be in ministry
- Believes people should be able to pursue what God has called them to do
- Men’s role and the Church should make sure that the pathway is clear so that there are no barriers to interfere with women being leaders

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Diane  
Participant 11

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

Personal: Female.....Married.....2 children.....African American.....Age (68)

Education: College graduate

Vocation/Occupation: Public School teacher..... (retired 2011)

Church denomination: Baptist/Non-Denomination

Church leadership positions: Co-leader of Christian education, Evangelism, Elder

Church experiences:

- Grew up in Baptist church – father was a preacher (had personal encounter with God at age 22 after the death of both parents within a 2-year period)
- Was a member of various churches over the years – experienced burnout from serving as a church volunteer for 9 years – left church in 1999
- Joined current church in (1999)
- Joined church leadership (2001), became an elder in (2016)
- Has belonged to current church for 20 years

Personal views about women in church leadership:

- Women make up the creative center in the church
- Women can do anything that the Lord empowers them to do
- Women are nurturers and can see the broader picture: they know what needs to be accomplished.
- Women are willing to do the work

Y.ear: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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Name: Judy  
Participant 12

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Age: 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80

**Personal:** Female.....Married.....4 children.....Caucasian.....Age (57)

**Education:** College graduate - dance and theater major (wanted to be a ballerina)

**Vocation/Occupation:** Dancer & Dance Teacher (Retired).....(2017)  
Joined church staff (2009)

**Church denomination:** Non-Denomination

**Church leadership positions:** Praise and Worship, Marriage Ministry, Care Ministry, Elder, Pastoral Leadership Team, Pastor of Life Groups

**Church experiences:**

- Grew up in Presbyterian church (1969 through college)
- Joined current church in (1987)
- Joined church leadership (2009)
- Has belonged to one church for 33 years

**Personal views about women in church leadership:**

- Without women in leadership positions in the church we are lopsided
- We are not able to represent the heart of God fully

Year: 1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
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## Appendix F: Poem entitled, O Man Hear the Heart of a Woman Poem



## Appendix G: Expanded Global Analysis

### **Interview Sessions**

Before I sat down with each participant for the interview, I scheduled a time to speak with them to introduce myself and go over the consent form, answering any questions they had about the process prior to us meeting face to face. During that time, we also agreed to make plans to schedule the interview within the next month after the holidays and to meet for the interviews at their respective churches. I followed up with each participant by contacting them the first week of the new year with 2-3 possible dates to schedule the interview. Communication was done via phone, text or emails as preferred by the participants.

### **Participant 1 - James**

James served as the contact person for selecting church leaders and scheduling a date for me to visit the church to observe a Sunday service. He accompanied me during the service to answer questions and to facilitate leadership introductions. Communication with James occurred by phone, text and email. Some church information was also received through James' assistant, who provided necessary information throughout the process. James was accommodating, knowledgeable, and eager to assist however needed. Scheduling the interview with James was easy, however, when I called to confirm the meeting time on the day the interview was scheduled, participant 1 had forgotten about the interview time. Although I was in route to the church, an offer was made to reschedule. James assured me he would make it on time and did not need to reschedule. The interview occurred in a small conference room which was very comfortable. There was a couch and chairs in the room, as well as a small conference

table. The interview took place at the table. James wore a black sweater and jeans with his coffee and phone in front of him at the table. His approach to answering the research questions at times felt like listening to a mini sermonette or mini theology lecture. He was passionate about the subject matter and offered supporting Scriptures for the arguments he was making. Throughout the interview he excitedly assured me that all subsequent interviews with the leaders he had selected would prove beneficial for this research topic. The interview lasted a little more than 90 minutes. The information provided was substantial enough that there was no need for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant 2 - Suzanne**

Suzanne is the contact person for her church and worked closely with me. She personally selected the leaders from her church for this study. I have known Suzanne for over 15 years. Because she was preparing for a heavy travel itinerary in the coming weeks, followed by a tight work schedule upon her return to the church, she made an impromptu request to stop by my home to complete the interview the same day the interview took place. Suzanne explained she was in the neighborhood and wanted to stop by because she was not sure when she might be available for a future date and did not want me to wait for participant 2 to get an opening in her calendar. The interview was conducted in my home office behind closed doors. Suzanne was casually dressed in sweater and slacks. Although we have a personal relationship, the interview was conducted in a professional manner adhering to the interviewing process as designed. No short-cuts were taken, nor leeway given in answering the questions. The interview lasted one hour. The interview session gave me an opportunity to learn facets about Suzanne that they had never discussed. This observation was important because it demonstrated

the trust in the process she held. All questions were answered thoroughly, therefore, there was no need to request a follow up interview.

### **Participant 3 - Yvette**

I initially met Yvette during a visit to her church as a participant observer. I sat with her and James during their Sunday service. Setting up the interview was quick and easy. The interview was scheduled within the same week of contacting her. We agreed to meet late afternoon in a church conference room. The day of the interview, Yvette requested a one-hour time change, so we met later than originally scheduled. Since we met on a Saturday, there were very few people in the church staff offices area. Yvette was casually dressed in earth tone colors. She wore a shirt with a stylish necklace and layered it with an insulated vest. She was already in the conference room meeting with someone else before I arrived. Yvette greeted me with a smile and was friendly. The interview lasted a little over 90 minutes. All questions were answered thoroughly, therefore, there was no need for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant 4 - Anna**

My initial interaction with Anna was a very emotional encounter. She had recently suffered the loss of one of her children and was still grieving. She was honest and transparent regarding the kind of day she was having, and I listened intently. Being sensitive and concerned that it may not be ideal to have Anna involved in the study, I suggested this may not be a good time to participate in a research study. Anna assured me that she looked forward to the discussion and wanted to participate. We spent more time discussing life before moving to scheduling a date to go over the process and scheduling the interview session. Selecting the interview date was not difficult. As a

retiree, Anna's schedule was flexible, and she was quite accommodating. When we met, Anna arrived first and was able to meet me at the door. She was dressed nicely in a white blouse and slacks. I was a bit tentative in determining the best approach to starting the interview session, having some background of what was presently occurring in her life, but it was not necessary. She was ready to get started. After a few minutes of niceties, I was able to assess that Anna was ready and focused for the task at hand. The interview lasted 90 minutes. Anna opened up quickly about her views of "churchy" rhetoric in church and proceeded to lay out her case regarding her disappointment in what has been occurring. She was forthcoming and direct in her approach providing thorough responses to the interview questions. There was no need for a follow-up interview.

#### **Participant 5 - Bill**

Originally, I was slated to meet with a different leader from this church. After multiple failed attempts to connect with him, it was determined another leader needed to be chosen. Bill, a Bishop and the Pastor of the church was gracious enough to accept the invitation to interview with me. I have known Bill and his wife for many years and I believe my good rapport with this couple and church was influential in securing this interview. The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Bill joined me in a small classroom-size space on the second floor of the church. The room looked to serve as a classroom for children as well as a conference space for meetings. There were children's workbooks, crayons, and extra folding chairs in the room. We sat at a long table for the interview. He wore a black and beige argyle-type print sweater and slacks. I was excited about this conversation because Bill also heads multiple committees and church conferences that exist beyond his local church, so his breadth of knowledge would span

many years and many spheres. I walked away from this interview with a deeper appreciation for the work that needs to be done in her research area. Ingrained mindsets, ideologies, and philosophies about women and ministry seemed almost archaic and unrealistic. Bill provided a wealth of insight that will serve well in further study on this topic. All questions were answered thoroughly, and there was no need for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant 6 - Cornelius**

The only challenge for getting our interview scheduled was the weather. We were forced to reschedule our original date which pushed us back an additional week. Weather-watching became a game of chance, but we prevailed. We met in the same small room used to meet Bill earlier the same day. Cornelius was wearing a black fleece jacket and a grey t-shirt underneath. The interview was brief. We concluded close to the 45-minute mark. Cornelius was very stoic and succinct in his responses. I surmised his occupation, in the funeral service industry, may contribute to his demeanor and mannerism. It was obvious he came to handle the business at hand and provided thorough responses to fulfill his obligation. He did just that. There was no need for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant 7 - Kevin**

It only took a couple attempts to connect with Kevin to schedule a meeting date. When we met, he was friendly and quite the jokester during the one-hour interview. He was dressed casually in jeans, a button-down shirt with a pullover zippered mock sweater. We met in an office. Not sure if it was his office. We sat in two chairs facing one another with a small table next to me that was only large enough to hold a few

magazines and little items such as a canister for candy and our cell phones. I found this interview to be quite enlightening since Kevin had gone from being a Sunday service attendee with his family, to ultimately becoming the senior pastor of this church. The information shared was captivating and sad as he shared revelations and pain of a major transition he led the church through during his time as pastor. No longer carrying those responsibilities, Kevin openly shared what went well and what did not go so well. It wasn't until the end of the interview that I learned the video recorder had stopped recording half way through the session. Thankfully, the audio recorder captured the entire interview. My questions were answered thoroughly. There was no need for a follow-up interview.

#### **Participant 8 - Marcus**

Scheduling this interview took some effort. Between missed text messages, and my need to reschedule, it took about four weeks to finally get a date locked in for the meeting. Marcus was pleasant and quite easy going. I thought he was a younger man because he kept referring to me as ma'am in his text messages. When I finally met the gentleman at the church, I was surprised to see he was an older gentleman. Marcus offered a big smile and warm greeting. I assumed his respectful mannerism was a result of his upbringing. He was also very jovial throughout the interview and laughed often as he spoke. The interview was held in a room in the basement of the church. The space was noticeably warmer than the hallway of the church. It was brightly lit from the outside day light. There were multiple round tables with chairs, so we chose to sit at a table near the door. The room also looked to serve as a multi-purpose room. There was an organ, a podium, and a reversable wooden flip board like something reminiscent of

grade school. Marcus wore a full suit, dress shirt with tie. The interview lasted shortly less than an hour. During that time, he shared many personal stories, Bible stories, and scenarios to make his points about the differences between men and women and good and bad leadership. Marcus spoke with passion and was delightfully demonstrative with his hands as he spoke. His experiences were very insightful and provided ample information needed for this study. A follow-up interview was not required.

### **Participant 9 - Michelle**

From the beginning, Michelle was extremely friendly and exuberant. Her text messages were always upbeat and filled with a sense of happiness. I could hear a smile in every correspondence. We were able to get the interview scheduled within three weeks of my initial contact. I had to reschedule the first date and the participant was accommodating. When I arrived at the church for the evening meeting, Michelle was already there to greet her. She was dressed in business casual attire accessorized with a scarf. We met in the same room as the other participants from this church. It was night time when we met, and the room was well lit. We sat at a different table although this was the same room used to meet with the other participants from this church. Other activities were going on in the church, yet we were able to meet with no interruptions. The interview lasted about 90 minutes. Initially Michelle was a little nervous and jokingly asked about the level of pain that would be associated with the interview as she confided she had never been involved in anything like this. With reassurance from me, Michelle became more and more comfortable and by the end of the session had cracked jokes, laughed heartily at her own responses, and provide animated reenactments of past conversations and experiences. She was somewhat comedic in her approach to the



interview accept in moments of apparent deep thought before responding to a question or in marveling at her experiences in church, or with God. The interview questions were answered thoroughly, and a follow-up interview was not required.

#### **Participant 10 - Antonio**

It took several attempts over a two-week period to connect with Antonio to get possible dates for the interview. Antonio gave explicit instructions about when to contact him, but each attempt was unsuccessful. I had to solicit the help of the senior pastor of the church to coordinate the connection. We were finally able to settle on a weekday evening meeting at the church. The interview was approximately 90 minutes. I met Antonio in the same room scheduled with the other leaders. He was dressed in a black dress shirt buttoned to the top and dark gray slacks. My interactions with Antonio had been pleasant, so I expected the interview to be the same. He was open, candid, engaged, and provided an interesting perspective on various aspects of church, ministry, leadership, and women. I appreciated his analytical view point and unique perspective on the research topic. He offered many thought-provoking questions relating to outdated church policies, bylaws, and traditions which he saw as hinderances to gaining consistent forward momentum in church and community work. All research questions were answered thoroughly, and there was no need for a follow-up interview.

#### **Participant 11 - Diane**

We spoke during the first week of the new year, however, scheduling was somewhat challenging. Between weather conditions and ensuring the church would be unlocked for our meeting, it took us about six weeks to settle on a date. When we finally met at the church, we were the only ones in the entire building, so we were able to sit out

in the main common area that also serves as a conference room. There was a large table in the middle of the room with multiple chairs in the space. Some chairs were around the table and there were also chairs and benches lining all four walls of the space. Diane was casually dressed in a sweater, slacks, and matching earrings. She was pleasant and eager to get started. I was a bit concerned about not being in a private room, but Diane was confident we would be alone based on the church schedule. The interview lasted a little over two hours. Diane shared many stories and spoke from a macro perspective providing examples from American, Black, and church history as she has experienced them. I was fascinated by the comparisons offered regarding men and women, in relation to generational differences and the slave history of Blacks. It was obvious that a teacher was speaking. I had been told in advance that Diane was a good candidate for the study, so there were high expectations to receive viable information. Diane did not disappoint. There were times it was obvious that she was not sure if she should disclose what was in her heart regarding the questions being asked. At a couple of points, she took long, calculated moments to choose her words carefully. One pause lasted 43 seconds. During those seconds she played with her cell phone, and her eyes shifted back and forth from me to the table. It appeared there was some internal conflict about how to respond to one specific question. Initially she wanted me to just move on to the next question, but then chose to go ahead and expound further on the question being asked. Before speaking, she requested that the video recording be stopped, although the audio recording continued. She needed reassurance in the confidentiality nature of how the information would be used. After I provided reassurance, the interview continued. Diane provided extensive

insight and responded thoroughly to all research questions. There was no need for a follow-up interview.

### **Participant 12 - Judy**

Judy was very accommodating, however, at various times, for different reasons, we both needed to reschedule the interview. It took us seven weeks to finally sit down together. Judy's interview was the hardest to schedule by far. We agreed to meet in her office at the church as she had another meeting following ours. We sat in a comfortable sitting area in two armchairs facing one another. She was dressed casually in sweater and slacks. The interviewer was looking forward to this interview for a couple of reasons: 1) Judy was the church member that the other leaders all spoke highly of as it relates to her being able to provide good information about her experience as one of the first women elders in the church; and, 2) Judy was my last interview of the 12 participants. The interview lasted almost 90 minutes. Judy was quite transparent with her delivery of her narrative as she relived some of the joys, pains, and disappointments of her church experience as a leader. She delivered an even-toned, yet emotional account of the past several decades of church involvement. Some of the salient themes were the influence her upbringing had on her belief that she should be a leader, women are necessary in leadership, and the self-doubt that often plagued her decisions to be a leader. There was visible internal conflict that seemed to arise within her as she discussed the firestorm created by the pastor and the all-male elders' group to include women on the elder board. My first impression was that Judy was extremely strong and resolute about who she was and what she could offer, and yet, the experience seemed to leave her still longing for affirmation, validation, and acceptance by her male peers. I believe the interview went

well overall. Much information was gathered beyond the interview protocol prepared.

There was no need for a follow-up interview.

## Appendix H: Participants' Salient Themes

**Participant 1 - James**

Mom did her best. She was going through her own challenges, and so I didn't have good strong, healthy women role models growing up, so I probably was confused about all that. And didn't have somebody talking about the imageness and who women are and their value and so, before Christ, you know, it was about being with women and so then, after Christ, it was like it shifted, like something shifted in my spirit.

Theme 1 – *"I probably was confused about all that."* The participant sharing his

background experiences and being uncertain about how to perceive women.

So, I understand that people come to it from a different perspective with the Scriptures and I respect and honor them, but just for me personally, and then for, I believe for us, since we went forward, we changed.

Theme 2 – *"we changed"* is the positioning of the church respective to how women

would be involved in leadership.

Yea, so when we, when we made that transition, we lost about somewhere between 4 and 600 people left, so it was a significant decision.

Theme 3 – *"it was a significant decision"* describes the magnitude of lost when the

church chose to ordain women elders at the church.

We've had a few that have asked us about it. I think those that are, the Spirit might be drawing them to think more about this way. I think they're afraid. I think they, they get right up to the edge, and they realize what could possible happen, which is what happened here.

Theme 4 – *"I think they're afraid."* His response to the question about whether churches

are curious or asking questions about their shift regarding their stance on women.

I would want them to be fully unleashed. I want them to be recognized. I want them to be affirmed. I want them to be drawn forth. I want them to be challenged in those so there could be a full unleashing of every aspect of their gifts, talents, abilities, all of it.

Theme 5 – *"fully unleashed"* is the term to describe what he wants for his daughters as it

relates to them being free to go after their dreams and aspirations.

I was part of that, a little bit, kind of encouraging it, because I felt like we were inconsistent. We, not I, we were, we felt that we were inconsistent in what our beliefs were and what our practice was and so that wasn't, we need to get that cleared up one way or the other.

Theme 6 – “*we were inconsistent*” were the thoughts about how women were being utilized in the church which started the conversation amongst leadership to do an in-depth study of the Scriptures on this topic to make a concrete decision about women in leadership.

**Participant 2 - Suzanne**

So that’s where I’ve been up until this time. Now, when I married my husband, who grew up traditional Baptist—I mean deeply rooted in the Baptist traditions—he married someone who was—well, I just say, somebody that had a broader view on the Gospel and on ministry than he had been exposed to.

Theme 1 – “*a broader view of the gospel*” is what she brought to her new church and new role as the pastor’s wife.

So our marriage has been more than a marriage between a man and a woman. It’s been a marriage and bringing together Baptist, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ, all of the—roads that we had traveled that had never intersected. It was bringing all that together.

Theme 2 – “*It was bringing all that together.*” Described the various church experiences she had had throughout her life that she was adding to her husband’s experiences.

...the church that my husband pastors which used to be Baptist is now non-denominational and has brought in a lot of the Pentecostal doctrine, the apostolic doctrine, to the point that he was probably one of the very few Baptist bishops—or he—he wasn’t Baptist when he was consecrated bishop, but he was from that tradition.

Theme 3 – “*he was from that tradition*” speaking of her husband’s church background.

So the whole thing has been explosive. It’s been bigger than I ever thought it would be. I was just marrying the man and—that the Lord had sent to me, that the Lord had allowed to find me. And it was so much bigger than that in the Kingdom. It was so much bigger than that.

Theme 4 – “*it was so much bigger than that in the Kingdom*” is how she described the impact her union with her husband is having on the changes occurring within pastors and within their church’s denomination and sphere of influence.

An air traffic controller. That's where I sit. I'm like the air traffic controller. I have to see this one works well with that, and this one works well with him or her. And that's not going to fit right, you know. And I have to try to mesh all these powerful people together for the sake of the ministry.

Theme 5 – *“I'm like the air traffic controller.”* This was the symbolism she used to describe the leadership role she plays at church.

So I pretty much did then what I'm doing now in the church. And I had to deal with all kinds of personalities, all kind of da da da. Well, people come to church, everybody has another—their own agenda. Okay. Everybody looks at that position as a powerful position.

Theme 6 – *“a powerful position”* denotes the weight of her responsibilities as she sees it.

### **Participant 3 - Yvette**

I had an extensive reading love at that time for all things Christ and ministry and how to do it. So those were the books that actually disciplined me so I didn't have anybody to plug into that even was familiar or even wanted to kind of meet my hunger need to know the things of God in a way that I could receive Him.

Theme 1 – *“those were the books that actually disciplined me”* describes how she learned about God and ministry. She considers herself a voracious reader.

I went home and said to John I found the place that we're going to be. And he came the next Sunday and we've been here ever since.

Theme 2 – *“I found the place that we're going to be.”* She whole-heartedly believes still that the church where they attend is their assigned church after 33 years of attending.

I was sitting in the room. Just sitting in the room listening, observing and saying I don't know why I'm here. I still don't know why I'm here.

Theme 3 – *“I don't know why I'm here.”* She explained this was a phrase she repeatedly stated for over 6 years as she sat on the elder's board not knowing why God had placed her there.

But I felt like it was something that God wanted me to do and I wanted to see what He was going to do with it. But I also told my family that I trusted the voice of God and if it wasn't for me He would tell me emphatically and I would shut it down.

Theme 4 – *“I trusted the voice of God”* was a prevailing sentiment as she was challenged, berated, and judged by church members and family alike for accepting a seat on the elder's board.

Nobody said when it was going to happen so we weren't prepared for any of it. But what do you mean they're our new elders? And I'm like oh my gosh so that's when it all started. That's when it all started. And people were just blindsided. They felt like they were blindsided.

Theme 5 – *“we weren't prepared”* she states was the undeniable reality for church leadership regarding the role out of adding women to the elder's board.

This is the first time they had tissues in the elder room because we were women we needed it. And it was a lot of emotions. It was a lot of eye-opening issues that they hadn't quite thought through but they supported us. I mean from the nasty things that were said about us and to our faces, they actually stood in the gap for us. In that respect they came through in a huge way for us so...

Theme 6 – *“they supported us”* was how she experienced life and leadership with the men on the elder's board, no matter what the women elders faced through the transition.

#### **Participant 4 - Anna**

And that was my transformative life, being under his ministry, beginning to understand the Word of God, as it is written and its intent. And getting away from what I've always been a part of—churchy. No scripture backing, but it sounds churchy, so, it must be the Word of God.

Theme 1 – “churchy” – was a term she often used as she explained the incorrect use of language in church that has no biblical support.

She displayed the love of Christ that I have never ever seen before. That's what marketplace ministry does. It's the Ms. Rose effect to me. And I saw this. And of all the people, she's the one that touched me the most.

Theme 2 – “Ms. Rose effect” describes the impact one woman had on her and the Christian example she set for others.

See we still have that—that issue. My husband's barber, who is Baptist, will not sit under—he will sit under a missionary. He will listen to a missionary. He may



listen to an evangelist, not in the pulpit on the floor. But he will not submit himself to a woman. And that's what they believe.

Theme 3 – “that issue” is how she described the position men still take of not being willing to be under a woman leader in church.

So, I don't think it's so much gender, as it is more leadership. Because I happen to be female. I think a lot of people that haven't got the revelation that God is not a respecter of person because we all look like Him. He does not look like us. That we can't get past the fact that God has ordained pastors who happen to be females.

Theme 4 – “*I happen to be female.*” This is her position on accepting women as leaders regardless of their gender.

So, her being a pastor—a female doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is her proclamations. Do they line up with the Word of God? Is she feeding the flock as God would have her? Does she see about the members of her flock? Does she truly walk in the office of a pastor? And she does. The concern she has about the Body, the sacrifices she makes that fulfills the purpose that God has called, the sacrifice that her husband gives daily that make sure that she fulfills what God has called her to do, those are the things that I look at, not the fact that her gender happens to be a female.

Theme 5 – “*those are the things that I look at*” are the qualifications she outlined to measure her pastors' qualifications to serve in this capacity.

### **Participant 5 - Bill**

And the pastor was very sincere, very committed to that 50. And because of that, I'd like to think I got the best of him and the best of that experience, to the point that it created and positioned me to acknowledge my call in ministry, and that's very important for me, because if I had not gotten that, I don't know where my life would be.

Theme 1 – “*I got the best of him*” describes his thoughts about his church experience and the impact of his pastor growing up.”

My undergraduate degree is in chemistry and biology, so I had thought about pursuing a direction there. But everything came together. Everything came together, and death just kind of put me in a state of mental coma. What do you do? It was clear to me—I can either go up or down.

Theme 2 – “*But everything came together*” after the death of both his father and mother in his late teenage years.

And that was pretty much the extent of it, which is still a whole lot for a traditional Baptist church in that era; because the mindset was God didn't call women in ministry.

Theme 3 – “*the mindset*” as a traditional Baptist was the backdrop for his beginning years in ministry as a pastor.

Seminary liberated me. And it was done simplistically. Prior to going to seminary, what fortified my understanding of women not being in ministry was that when I heard a woman preach, she sounded like a man, and I knew that wasn't right.

Okay. You're a woman. How are you going to sound like a man? And so that was a complete turnoff for me, and it validated for me what my pastor told me.

Theme 4 – “*Seminary liberated me*” was the beginning of a new way of thinking about women pastors.

I would not have a woman pastor. That's just my personal view. As I don't like root beer soda. Okay. I like grape soda. There's nothing wrong with it, because I would be the last person to tell a woman that God didn't call her to pastor, but my preference would not be that, because I believe—and, I might be a little old school in that regards—I believe that God was very clear in giving a male set responsibilities, and he was very clear in giving a female set responsibilities, and I'm caught up in those things.

Theme 5 – “*my preference*” explains his stance for not wanting a woman to be his pastor.

### **Participant 6 - Cornelius**

So, from preaching for them you go preaching for them and once the people like the preaching, if they like it they bring you back for the interview then there was a series of you will preach for us for a month, do Bible study for a month and it's—it's a courting process. And from there they call you to pastor.

Theme 1 – “*it's a courting process*” to become a pastor within the Baptist church.

So we would always butt heads that I respect the office of the woman, if she says she's called to preach, if she's called the pastor that is between her and God. It's not my role to say, no, so I would respect the woman pastor and or the woman preacher.

Theme 2 – “*it's not my role*” was stated often in reference to women who believe they should lead in church.

In terms of leadership they can lead, in terms of providing guidance they can guide. I am not one who personally would sit under a woman pastor because it's just my preference, but I don't have a problem with a woman pastor.

Theme 3 – “*my preference*” was his rebuttal when defending his stance to not sit under a woman pastor.

I still struggle with all those because even with men because I now that we are so caught up today in, you know, it goes from, you know, the office of bishop, pastor, teacher is the same but we get so into the bishop, the archbishop, the apostle and I struggle with all of that.

Theme 4 – *“I still struggle”* explains him reconciling Scriptures in the Bible and how they are utilized in the church today.

As a matter of fact, most of our churches would not be what they are without women. Thank God for women being in the church and it’s just a matter of, I guess my wife would say sometimes that I’m chauvinistic and some of that comes through that, being chauvinistic.

Theme 5 – *“I’m chauvinistic”* is how his wife describes him and he accepts this characterization.

### **Participant 7 - Kevin**

...so the elders came and asked me if I’d be willing to leave my job and become the pastor of the church and I wasn’t really" ambitious to do that, but I didn’t want to end up like Jonah and be in the belly of a whale so I said yes again...

Theme 1 – *“I wasn’t really ambitious to do that”* is how he felt as he was asked to take on each leadership role in his church.

I went to the elders and I said it’s time for us to start looking for the next pastor. And initially they didn’t feel like that was the right thing but I said I really want you to think about that and ultimately they did—and so I stayed onboard until the new pastor came and then passed the baton to him and he’s doing an awesome job and I am still a member of the church...

Theme 2 – *“passed the baton”* is the metaphor he used repeatedly to describe his philosophy on leadership and working with the leadership team at the church. He believes everyone has a role to play for a specific leg of the race.

So when I became the pastor I came to the elders and asked us to like—I wanted to know what the boundaries were, you know, and I’d say well, I wanted women to participate at a greater level, it wasn’t coming from an activist or like I wasn’t like trying to make a change or anything.

Theme 3 – *“I wanted to know what the boundaries were”* is the question that sparked the journey towards ordaining women to be elders at the church

I can’t say that there didn’t get to be some tension once in a while when there was some disagreements but we did get to a place of unity and peace and I’d say that, you know, our process in elder team is that we don’t debate, we don’t argue, we don’t vote, we discern. And so our question is what is the Lord saying to us. And

we believe that the Lord is going to speak through the unity and the peace of the elders.

Theme 4 – “*unity and peace*” was the barometer for gauging the direction of the church when the leaders needed to make decisions. This was important to participant 7.

### **Participant 8 - Marcus**

I started going to church, but I still didn’t have that bond with God. And it was like—I guess everybody just don’t get that bond. It’s like—even though they are—and I’m not judging anyone—but it’s like sometimes when we’re in church, we still just don’t have that bond with God, and really have that understanding how much He loves us.

Theme 1 – “*that bond*” is what he struggled getting with God initially, but finally was able to accomplish.

And I was like—and I had to talk about that thing; because, even though I never discriminated against ladies being leaders or pastors—but in my mind, I was like—she can’t lead me.

Theme 2 – “*she can’t lead me*” were his initial thoughts when he was debating attending his current church that’s lead by a female pastor.

So once I went and I did what I was supposed to do—and then, like Pastor [name] is just like my mother in Christ now. She’s—not only my mother in Christ, she’s a friend. Because, it’s like when I really got to know her, all these things I was thinking and I saw, I was like, how—I’m asking myself. It was just like the racetrack—How did I see that? Or, what did I see? Or, why was I seeing that?

Theme 3 – “*I really got to know her*” explains his change of heart towards his pastor.

They got—same gifts. You’ve got the gift of evangelism, teaching, pastoring, prophet. It’s like it’s the same thing, and it goes back from time. It’s like—back in the Bible...

Theme 4 – “*same gifts*” is how he compares men and women leaders in the church.

We still—we got certain positions that we’ll put ladies in, or we think they should be in, and in our little pea brain, there are certain positions that they shouldn’t be in. And, like I said, I don’t judge them, because I had that same experience when I was telling you about when I first came to this church.

Theme 5 – “*little pea brain*” is a phrase he often used when describing the mind of a man and his thinking about women.

### **Participant 9 - Michelle**

Sometimes, it’s been attack from family, because they don’t understand the calling on my life. And I remember, early on, the Holy Spirit saying to me, ‘They’re not going to understand.’ Because it was frustrating, to some degree, because I was, like, why can’t you see it? Like, why don’t you understand?

Theme 1 – “*the calling*” was in reference to her response of obedience to God’s desire

for her to be set apart, not doing what everyone else does.

And on the Episcopal level. You know, just because, I think, they see the type of leader that Pastor [name] is and the solid structure that’s provided. So then, when we go out, like, they know.

Theme 2 – “*the solid structure*” was often mentioned in various ways to demonstrate the

foundation she has received being connected to her current pastor who is a woman.

And I say that because, thankfully, the person’s leadership, like whether it’s a presiding elder or a Bishop, like they look at it, like there is no bias. No, let me not say that. There is some bias. Because in 2018, I don’t know that there’s any woman pastor who is head of, like, a major church or district. And we only have one female Bishop. So, I don’t know that it’s necessarily different from what’s out there.

Theme 3 – “*there is some bias*” became revelatory to the participant the more she spoke

about the lack of women leaders and their needed influence within her denomination.

### **Participant 10 - Antonio**

But my grandfather, the patriarch of my family, really instilled strong values, as far as, going to church, follow what the Bible says, being respectful to women, being respectful to your neighbors.

Theme 1 – “*being respectful to women*” was a mantra he lives by based on his

upbringing. He weighed heavily what he learned from his grandfather, and what he

believes is important to God where women are concerned.

And I’m thinking that those same people are probably thinking the same thing, in regard to, like, in ministry. They are probably thinking, oh, no she absolutely does not belong. But I don’t know. Are these the same people? Or do some people just think that women shouldn’t be in leadership in ministry, or do they think that women shouldn’t be in leadership, period, across the board?

Theme 2 – “*some people*” was mentioned often as he grappled with why people think the way they do about various topics of today: especially women, women in church leadership, and women leadership in church versus the marketplace. He carefully weighed the views of both sides.

I made the arguments and I said, okay, I’ll rewrite it, if no one wants to. But nothing really changed, and partly, because I didn’t really push it.

Theme 3 – “*I’ll rewrite it.*” Antonio spoke of various instances where he did not agree or like the way something was being done and would often offer his services to see the needed change take place by revising mission statements, bylaws, polices, or programs at church.

You know, and God talks about well he gives—the Holy Spirit allows Him to use whoever He wants, He can use anybody, He can use a rock if He wants to. He can and He did. He used women. If you read throughout Scripture, there are women used. He didn’t tell them, no, can’t use you, woman, no.

Theme 4 – “*He used women.*” He gave various arguments and examples of God working through women as leaders in the church.

### **Participant 11 - Diane**

The God that I had denied. The God that I said wasn’t there. The God that didn’t care. Here I am shaking my fist in his face and telling him that I would strike you if I could get to you and his response is, ‘Lo I am with you always even to the very end.’ And that was the beginning—that was my beginning of my turning to the Lord.

Theme 1 – “*that was my beginning of my turning to the Lord.*” describes the moment she realized God was real. It occurred at the age of 22 after the expected death of her father resulting from a long illness, and the untimely death of her mother just two years later.

Anyway I set there and then I said let me get up, I know I’ve got to get up, I can’t set here any longer.

Theme 2 – “*I’ve got to get up*” she realized and accepted she needed to belong to a church, so she joined.

I walk into the church and the pastor looks at me and says, ‘okay you’re going to do Christian education.’ I said, ‘I’m going to do what?’ He said ‘yeah, yeah, yeah,

you can do Christian education. You're going to be my minister of Christian education' Okay and so that was the beginning of that.

Theme 3 – *"I'm going to do what?"* the question that started her long nine-year stint of doing ministry work after spending years of thinking she was just supposed to sit in church. She later confided she didn't realize she could have said, no to so many church responsibilities.

Saturday we were downtown with our outreach to the homeless and one of the things that we really, really, stress and I beg for this all the time we need men, we need men, we need men to go with us. I've seen women take on more and more of the responsibility and I've seen women more and more in the forefront.

Theme 4 – *"we need men"* is a desperate plea of hers over the many years of being in church ministry.

Hillary Clinton—one of the reasons why she lost the election was that there are people who just cannot see themselves voting for a woman I don't care who she is. So, I think all of that—the church doesn't live in a vacuum. The church is impacted by what's going on in the broader society and truth be known we drag that in and that has an impact on how we view women, how we view young girls, how we view their role and how far they can and cannot go.

Theme 5 – *"I don't care who she is."* She believes the plight of women being marginalized is the same both in church and the marketplace simply because of gender.

And maybe I'm overreacting to this but sometimes you kind of feel like when those circumstances—and it's rare it's not all the time now because I'm usually up there every Sunday, you kind of feel kind of like a stepchild.

Theme 6 – *"feel kind of like a stepchild"* is how she describes Sundays when she believes certain male pastors may not agree with women on the pulpit, so the women leaders are told to sit elsewhere.

### **Participant 12 - Judy**

Because I think in some way and this is probably not right, I do think we actually need men to cheerlead us. Like my dad was a cheerleader for me.

Theme 1 – *"my dad"* was a recurring statement made by her. She believed he was a strong but tender man who heavily influenced and encouraged her by his words of

support throughout her life. He believed in her ability to lead and felt she had a special gift to do so.

So and it was much more about that than it was about being a voice for the women or even though I feel like at the table if there are not women at the table a whole voice, the voice is missing, you know. The nurturing voice, the tender voice, the, you know, the strength of women is not at the table.

Theme 2 – “*the voice*” was stated over a dozen times by her. She recalled times when she did not feel like she had a voice and the overwhelming sense of loss it provoked. She also described the different types of voices that she’s had or are needed from women such as mature, strident, nurturing, tender, and young voices. She also talked about the damaging effect of listening to other voices that were harmful to her and intensifying feelings of doubt for accepting a leadership role in church.

I don’t think it’s personal, I don’t think it’s intentional, I just think it’s a thoughtless - we’re doing just fine why add another voice - kind of thing.

Theme 3 – “*I don’t think it’s personal*” was a major theme. She offered this phrase as she reminisced about the hateful, rude, insensitive, or dismissive comments fellow church members and male leaders have made during the transition the church has experienced over the past 10 years.

Then I think once he saw the benefits of having women at the table he was more comforted by that.

Theme 4 – “*at the table*” means that’s where women should be. She believes women make processes better and things go smoother.

I’m not thriving and I told them why and I really felt like, for awhile I thought, you know, instead of being frustrated I might just need to resign and find a place to serve where I’m using my gifts because it’s frustrating, you know.

Theme 5 – “*it’s frustrating*” carried much weight in her life story as she expressed not currently having the ability to speak into the direction of the church.



## Appendix I: Supplemental Research Findings

### List of Substantial Supplementary findings:

1. Some denominations have embraced women leadership while others have not.
2. Church tradition supersedes one's ability, congregant's needs, or cultural relevance as it relates to having woman in leadership.
3. Many believe there is no scriptural basis to support not having women in leadership.
4. The women participants embrace women serving in the highest leadership positions in church.
5. Many believe adding women as leaders in church is a major change that many churches are afraid to make.
6. Church practice is not consistent with the dogmatic assertions made using Scriptures about why women should not lead men.
7. The challenge to establish support for placing women in leadership positions requires addressing resistance found by both men and women who do not want women in church leadership positions.
8. There is a clear separation in opinions about a woman's ability to lead based on the environment: church vs. marketplace.
9. Some did not see the skills and abilities of women as transferable from the marketplace to church.
10. Not a single participants' definition of leadership listed gender as a distinguishing factor
11. Ideologies about women was learned during childhood, in seminary, or at church.
12. Many acknowledge that although women in leadership is slowly being embraced in the Church, there are still not enough women leaders being ordained to higher level leadership positions in church.
13. Many believe if space and opportunity are not created for women to lead in church women will begin to leave the church in greater numbers.

## Appendix J: Biographical Sketch

Nicole Davis has a passion for family, women, and leadership development which has evolved and strengthened over many decades. As a wife of almost three decades, and the mother of two adult sons, family enrichment has been her number one priority. Her passion for the topic of *leadership* started during her years in the United States Navy. From there, she has provided education and training to leaders in several arenas and on various levels including collegiate, non-profits, corporate, government, and church.

Nicole's doctorate degree from Nova Southeastern University, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, is in the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution with an emphasis in Organizational Conflict. She also holds a master's degree in International Management from the University of Maryland, and a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Morgan State University. She is a certified mediator, facilitator, conflict coach, Christian life coach and a certified marriage trainer.

As a marketplace leader Nicole has been employed by various governmental agencies. She has worked as a federal mediator for both the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS). And, as a church leader, Nicole has served in multiple capacities to strengthen and develop ministries and programs. She has gained affection by couples, women, and leaders for her teaching and leadership style for being loving, firm, but fair.

Along with her husband, Tony, she has co-authored multiple books which include: the 3-book DONE RIGHT SERIES: (1) *Parenting Done Right is Hard Work But It's Worth It*, (2) *Marriage Done Right is Hard Work But It's Worth It*, and, (3) *Leadership Done Right is Hard Work But It's Worth It*, to bring voice to what God is speaking regarding FAMILY dynamics and the conduct of the individuals within them. She is also a co-author in two anthologies: SPEAK TO THE MOUNTAINS! and JUNIA ARISE: APOSTOLIC WOMEN ON THE FRONTLINES.

Tony and Nicole have co-founded *Empower to Engage*, an organization that focuses on enhancing marriages, families, and organizations. They equip men, women, and leaders with tools and techniques essential for effective and godly leadership in their spheres of societal influence. They also have a reality show entitled, Family Futures Today. Visit their websites [www.empowertoengage.com](http://www.empowertoengage.com) and [www.familyfuturestoday.tv](http://www.familyfuturestoday.tv).