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Shattering Stained Glass: Empowering Christian Women to Lead Equitably in the Church and Society

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EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN TO LEAD EQUITABLY IN THE
CHURCH AND SOCIETY

"SHATTERING STAINED GLASS"

KAILA CATALINA MATERNE CREAMER ALVAREZ

SEATTLE PACIFIC SEMINARY

SHATTERING STAINED GLASS: EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN
TO LEAD EQUITABLY IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

KAILA CATALINA MATERNE CREAMER ALVAREZ

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE
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Approved by _*Brenda Salter McNeil*_   Date: May 14, 2020

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Dean of the School of Theology OR
Associate Dean of Seattle Pacific Seminary

DEDICATION

A special thank you to my mom, Janice Creamer and grandmother, Catalina Materne for teaching me how to powerfully and passionately express my strength as a woman of color.

To Yvette Silva: Thank you for showing me God's awe and wonder in the midst of chaos and confusion.

To Tiffany Kemppainen: A special thank you for being the friend who always listened, for being the family that had my back, and being the mentor to show me by potential.

To My Mentors: Brenda Salter McNeil & Julaine Smith, who invested and poured into me when no one else would, and who saw, believed, and called forth the identity, gifting, and calling within me.

To my husband, Sam Alvarez: Thank you for fearlessly walking this journey with me, for supporting me, for believing in me, for not being afraid of the strength within me, and for not holding me to a standard created by the world but instead always doing everything in your power to help me be who God called me to be.

To all the people who have a learning disability, this work is for all of us. As a person who was told I would never graduate high school, I stand here today as a testament of perseverance and hard work. The world may not think like you. They may not understand you. They may say your learning style is "wrong," but do not listen. You are so smart; just go show the world the diverse embodiment of what smart "looks like."

And Lastly,

To the countless named and unnamed women over the centuries who have fought to be seen, heard, and loved.

I hear you. I see you. I love you. God loves you more than words can say.

This is for _**you**_.

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ABSTRACT

In today's American[1] Christian culture, it has been my observation that women are still feeling the repercussions of Christian traditions and theologies that have an elongated history of neglecting their authority and leadership. After having a decade and a half of experience working within different Christian communities, there has been an overwhelming amount of evidence to support that there is a strong disconnect between the theology of women's leadership and the physical, practical, and systematic action of engaging them as leaders. Among these narratives is my own. After having served in a leadership role within an evangelical mega church for over a decade, I have experienced the systematic realities and hurdles many women face in a white, male, dominated community. Within my research, I have concluded that while a church may preach from the pulpit the authority and theological justification of women in leadership, there can easily remain systems and methods that keep them from actually embodying those positions. As a result, these women, who feel called to leadership have been overlooked, underequipped, and have failed to have access to fundamental resources to equip them in their calling as leaders.

This thesis project will seek to examine the ways in which the church can and should be an advocate for female leadership and contribute to the reconciling of a patriarchal dominated culture. We accomplish this by first specifically naming how Christian communities have failed in aiding female leaders in their *identity*, *calling*, and *gifting*. It is this thesis writer's conviction that if we are to "fix" an issue, we must be willing to "face" the issue. Therefore, this thesis will spend a considerable amount of time diagnosing the obstacles of female leadership from women's point of view.

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[1] The term "American" is shortened from Americans from the United States. However, this thesis acknowledges the wide variety of Americans from both North America, Central America, and South America.

In summary what our findings will conclude is that there is a large population of female leaders who face systematic inequality. Consequently, this has resulted in many women questioning their imago dei, their purpose, and their ability to engage in the leadership to which they are called. As a result, it has led women to not only give up on their pursuits of leadership, but it has also caused psychological and emotional harm. Consequently, women have not only reported leaving the church, but they have unfortunately learned to normalize their pain and suffering. Therefore, this thesis will also name how a continual negation of engaging their needs only perpetuates a culture that marginalizes them.

Thanks to the contribution of many marginalized theologies, such as feminist, black, and mujerista, we now have a theological framework that suggest that the church can no longer stand idly by as the people within their communities feel oppressed, marginalized, and neglected. Therefore, the next portion of this thesis will be centered around articulating a theological disposition that justifies the inclusivity of women and the equitable empowerment to see women participate as part of the Body of Christ. We will do this by specifically looking at Ubuntu theology and Incarnational Theology, which articulates the Churches theological necessity to participate in the reconciliatory actions of Christ. Thereby, negating any culturally justified actions that ignore the systematic negation of female leadership.

As a result, the purpose of our question is to reconcile the disconnect between a Christian communities which claims female leadership but practically fails in embodying this equality in the day-to-day practice of their communities. By addressing this severed connection between theory and practice, we are left with a clearer understanding of the elements needed to empower the women within the Church to be the leaders they believe God has divinely called, identified, and enabled them to be. The goal of this thesis is to leave us with a framework to help Christian communities reconcile the female/male leadership disparities within our churches and society. To that

end, this thesis will seek to answer, *"Will a praxis of engaging women's identity, gifting, and calling aid women in their leadership and will it contribute to reconciling the female/male disparities within our Christian communities so that women are empowered and released to fully lead in Church and society?"* By establishing a theology of reconciliation that calls us into a narrative of aiding and equipping female leadership, I will conclude this thesis by offering a theological and systematic praxis and by examining if this praxis ultimately contributes to the church becoming an advocate for female leadership and contribute to the reconciliation of a patriarchally dominated culture.

Chapter 1

Systemic & Cultural Disparities Inhibiting Female Leaders

In order to diagnose a liberative praxis for Christian women perusing leadership, this thesis must first begin by specifically naming how Christian communities have failed in aiding female leaders in their identity, calling, and gifting. By naming the suffrage, hardships, and obstacles that Christian women are facing in leadership, we inherently must also name the elements constructing the problem. It is a form of reciprocal knowing, where the oppression of another gives light to the actions of the oppressor. According to Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil, a specialist in reconciliation, reciprocal knowing is a, "psychological term [that] is used to describe a process that occurs between people, which involves knowing and being known. This is achieved through reciprocal self-disclosure and acceptance of what one discovers in the knowing process about others."[2] As a result, it is this thesis writers contention to look internally to see where the church stands on women's leadership and how a woman's being is connected, shaped, and informed by those the Church seeks to reconcile with.[3] Just as one would need to look at themselves in order to unearth their connection to another in a relationship, likewise, the Church must look to its own identity in order to understand its relationship to women who feel called to lead.

Therefore, the action of reciprocal knowing is fundamental to our reconciliatory work. Consequently, it is the contention of this thesis, that the Church cannot liberate a people unless it comes to see what enslaves them. Likewise, the Church cannot adequately serve a people until it knows what their needs are; and the Church cannot bring justice to a people unless it

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[2] Brenda Salter McNeil, "Reciprocal Knowing Self Awareness" (THEO 6512 Power Point presentation, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 21 November 2016); slide 6

[3] Adaptation of McNeil's notion of interdependence. Brenda Salter McNeil, "Reconciliation" (THEO 6512 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, January 2016)

understands what injustices have been imposed upon them. As a result, this thesis will examine different epistemologies, cultural nuances, and theological postures and its intersectionality with female leadership. By examining these elements, we are able to offer solutions where women have been left unheard, unseen, and unloved by the community they believe is called to be the very embodiment of Christ on earth.

In light of this, John Swinton, author of *Practical theology and Qualitative Research*, advocates that in order to create growth, one must understand one's own epistemology; how we know things and why we believe them.[4] Whether consciously or unconsciously, people behave based on what they perceive to be true. Actions mirrors the mindsets, values and beliefs we have about the world that we inhabit. However, because Christianity has been intertwined with various hegemonic systems,[5] much of the Christian narrative has been claimed from the voice and reality of the empowered.[6] Historically, those with power have been white, men. Therefore, the narrative of white men has ultimately laid the foundation for many of our Christian communities' value systems and beliefs.

This often leads church communities to have a false understanding of their own identity as it pertains to female leadership. Although a churches historical claim to close the disparities for woman may be true, they are often one sided. As this thesis will soon discuss, systematic oppression contributes to whose voices get heard, how they are heard, and how seriously their voices are taken. For example, data suggest that when women voice an issue, they are statistically perceived by men as being, "emotional, irrational and

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[4] Swinton, J., and Mowat, Harriet. Practical theology and qualitative research Second ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 32

[5] Dvora Lederman-Daniely, "Revealing Miriam's Prophecy," in *Feminist Theology* 25 (September 2016): 10, doi:10.1177/0966735016657704.

[6] Adaptation from Isasi-Diaz idea that, "power always rests with those who define the norm." Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), EBL edition, chapter 1.

sensitive."[7] Their experience is automatically discredited because of social cultural norms that suggest women are inherently more emotional than men and therefore do not act of rationality and logically, but emotionally. However, data by Victoria Brescoll called, "Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leadership," provides evidence contrary to the previous statement.[8]

For that reason, this thesis will advocate from a place where the disempowered have the ability to be *self-defining* and *self-determining*.[9] The notion of self-defining and self-determining is centered upon the idea that humanity has a right to define for themselves, who they wish to be in the world. It means allowing people to speak first handedly of their own experiences, understanding of the self, and how they chose to define their identity. As a result, this praxis takes seriously how the use of "narrative" is a means of justifiable evidence.[10] This thesis intentionally takes this approach because achieving "validity" in a woman's narrative is an undeniable issue for women seeking leadership within the church.[11] This, therefore, remains an essential part of our analysis of the disparities that propel the disengagement of female leadership.

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[7] Victoria L. Brescoll, ''Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders," The Leadership Quarterly 27 (2016): 416, doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2016.02.005

[9] It is important to note that an individual does not have full power to simply just claim who they are. Individuals must hold the tension between how others perceive you, how the world classifies you, and how you chose to identify. In many cases, identity is fluid, and varies depending upon context. However, this thesis is attempting to advocate the idea that many women fail to understand that they have the power to bring their own opinions of themselves to the table. Inspired by: Bantum, Brian "*Participation.*" THEO 6060 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, Winter 2019

[10] The term narrative is synonymous with the idea of one's "testimony, experience, story, or life journey."

[11] Victoria L. Brescoll, ''Leading with their hearts? How gender stereotypes of emotion lead to biased evaluations of female leaders," The Leadership Quarterly 27 (2016): 416, doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2016.02.005

Reclaiming a New Narrative

The #MeToo Movement is a prime example of creating a new narrative and culture for women. For years, individual women have attempted to blow the whistle on sexual mistreatment around the world. However, the individualized experience of women has been easily dismissed. Nevertheless, by having accessibility to the power of technology, the MeToo Movement was able to rally millions of voices around the nation to speak and shed light on an individualized sexual assault experience. This also served to address a cultural commonality among a wide population. Subsequently, this moved the sexualized experience from being an individualized experience to now a cultural and communal experience of the many. The unified testimonies of the women ultimately gave a new understanding of aggressive male sexuality and power. Unfortunately, like the #MeToo Movement, it often takes the collective gathering of the many in order for a woman's experience to be taken seriously.

The same can be true when helping the Church construct a more holistic narrative of itself. Like the #MeToo Movement, women seeking leadership within the Church suffer from what the systematic theologian, Father Robert J. Schreiter calls, "the narrative of the lie."[12] The narrative of the lie is described as the intentional action to, "negate the truth of a people's own narratives," and to, "destroy the narratives that sustain people's identities and substitute narratives of its own."[13] Schreiter notes that this act of manipulating one's narrative is an act of violence.[14] It is labeled as an act of violent because by discrediting someone's narrative, the oppressor not only destroys a sense of the victim's identity but it also simultaneously reinforces the oppressor's own narrative and agenda.

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[12] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation : Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Orbis Books ; Boston Theological Institute, 1992), p.34
[13] Schreiter, Reconciliation, 34
[14] ibd

In order to combating these false narratives, this thesis advocates for women to have space to tell their own narrative and to communicate their own experience, perspective, and interpretation of the issue. This information can then be categorized as a kind of ideographic truth. Therefore, I agree with the work of narrative qualitative research, which is defined by John Swinton, as "the telling of stories and the accurate recording, transcription, and analysis of [narrative] data."[15] Unfortunately, this often remains a criticized approach for qualitative research, especially among post-Enlightenment Westernized cultures who have a bias towards, "hard science."[16] To some people, narrative research is often considered a "soft truth," where the truth is only true on a small and personal scale.[17] While there may be truth to the fact that narrative research is a personal account, it is my conviction that when you add these narratives together, they also speak to a larger truth; a truth often ignored, belittled, and in some cases intentionally suppressed. Therefore, statistical evidence alone remains insufficient for our analysis of the disparities inhibiting female leadership because the statistics alone ignore the systemic and cultural realities that contribute to those outcomes.[18]

A More Holistic Narrative

As part of our analysis, this thesis must take seriously the voices of the marginalized because of its direct connection to the identity of women. As a result, this thesis stands on the conviction that narrative research is imperative to the church's ability for self-understanding. Therefore, this praxis is by women and for women. As a woman myself, who has spent half of my life navigating these institutions, I believe it is important to take

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[15] Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 39

[16] Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 40

[17] Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 39

[18] It is important to note that while doing research for this thesis, it was evident that numerical, statistical, data was inefficient. Please see footnotes for details.

seriously the voices, needs, and concerns of these women who have been sidelined in the Church. While many of these experiences by women are not precisely replicable, they provide a form of an idiographic knowledge. Swinton explains this as the idea that "knowledge can be discovered in unique, non-replicable experience."[19] As a result, this thesis must take an honest account of the identity and actions of the local church from a female perspective. This will require an action to claim a history, a reality, a narrative and an embodiment of the Church through an underrepresented and more holistic narrative of who the church is and how it functions. We do this not as a means of discrediting what the Church has done, but as a way to be honest, humble, and offer a solution to be the Body of Christ. Without an honest account of who we are, the Church can never truly name the steps necessary to propel women leaders to be who they are called to become.[20]

Although the Christian community has made lengthy strides towards overcoming its female/male disparities in the last few decades, the irrepressible number of under equipped and unreleased women within our communities suggest that something within the Church's praxis is deeply amiss. Countless women are not only continuously surpassed for "promotions" and "positions", but they are ultimately denied the opportunity to learn, experience, and glean from the leadership resources within their churches. Therefore, when it comes to equipping women for leadership, there is often well-intended methodologies that have severe repercussions for the disempowered. Among the greatest of these consequences is the reality of unequal access, underrepresentation, and the exploitation of women's labor which has a direct impact on women's identity, calling and utilization of their gift set.

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[19] Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 43
[20] Adaptation of Salter McNeil's notion of identity development lecture exercise. Brenda Salter McNeil, "Introduction" (THEO 6512 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, January 2016)

This has led to the desperate need for women to seek training and empowerment outside of local church. After attending a conference called Propel, by Christine Caine, a forerunner of female leadership within the Pentecostal, mega-church, modernist Christian culture, this thesis writer was overwhelmed by the strong commonality of experiences among women at this denominationally diverse gathering. Since there are so few conferences tailored to female leadership, Christine's Propel Conference gathers leaders from all spectrums of the Christian community. Women from Neo-Orthodox, Mennonites, to Pentecostal non-denominational and liberal believers gathered from all over the country. They came seeking the same thing—help. Repeatedly, women from diverse backgrounds reported experiencing the same form of neglect, pertaining to pursuing their identity, calling and gifting for leadership. The most commonly reported problems experienced by women within in their local church where the following:

1. My church believes in women in ministry, but they never hire us for anything except children's ministry or women's ministry.
2. The only women who are hired on staff are married to a pastor.
3. I am a pastor but there is no one who understands the kind of oppression and microaggressions I endure.
4. I feel called to lead but there is no path towards leadership.
5. I want to lead but no one will train me. They only train the men.
6. I am told that if God wanted me to lead, He would open the door.
7. I help run the whole church, but I always get overlooked for a role that has power.
8. They always want my help, but they are never willing to pay me and when I asked to be paid, I am considered too driven.
9. I am angry for how I am treated but I am told my anger is not of God and I need to change my attitude.
10. I am burned out and tired, if I can't lead here in the church I should give up. [21]

These stories are all too familiar among the larger female population in today's Christian churches. Time after time, women report that no matter how hard they work, no matter how faithful they are, nothing they do seems

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[21] Christine Cane, Propel Conference 2019

to justify their promotion into leadership. This disparity has not only been detrimental to the overall success of engaging female leaders, but it also has severe consequences for how women view and value their own identity. As a woman who has over 15 years of hands on experience with Christian women perusing leadership, this mentality more often than not, leads to women giving up, and believing the lie that, "because there is no clear path for them, they must not be called to lead." Many of these experiences by women in the Church can be narrowed down to three different experiences: the inability to have equal access, the lack of representation to help pave the way, and the cultural justification of exploiting women's labors.

Unequal Access & Negating Identity

According to research done by Pew Forum, a sample size from Evangelical Protestants community was taken, and concluded that 55% of the people attending church were women in comparison with only 45% being male.[22] In addition, the survey also showed that out of all the people surveyed 59% of the woman claimed religion was very important but men were only listed at 47%. Likewise, when asked if they attended a religious service at least once a week, only 31% of men claimed they did but in comparison, women ranked higher at 40%. Then when asked about their prayer life, 64% of women claimed they pray at least daily and men were found to only by at 46%.

Contrastingly, in a study by Barna, they showed that while most mainline denominations are accepting of female leadership, only 9% of Evangelical churches actually have a female pastor.[23] This is consistent with my experience in a non-denominational congregation, which is comprised of

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[22] Pew Research Center, Religious & Public Life, *Gender Composition*; doi https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/gender-composition/
[23] Barna, *What Americans Think About Women in Power*, March 2017, doi: https://www.barna.com/research/americans-think-women-power/

roughly 8,000 people.[24] In this context, there are six preaching pastors, two of which are female. However, among the 54 weeks within the year, the women only preach at our main weekend services once or twice a year. Thus, their presence adds to a statistical contribution but lacks complete equitable representation in their participation. In addition, there are dozens of male and female "pastors" at the church, but the men are often the only ones officially hired in a pastoral role. However, if a female pastor is hired, she often remains hired only part time and her accessibility to preach and teach from prominent platforms is minimal to that of the men. Overall, this action of hiring men for key leadership positions relegates women to honorary stations; being verbally told they are key leaders but never paid or officially hired. Instead, they often are placed in administrative roles, or something to the equivalent.[25] Although lacking the organizationally authority they deserve, these women are at the base of our church's leadership and remain a strong presence. They are often serving in the volunteer roles that practically make the worship services function and lead more effective, healthy, and larger groups than many of their male counterparts.

The Development of Leadership

This congregational example corroborates the overall research evidence that suggests women tend to engage in religious practices more than men do but men are overwhelmingly provided with more paths toward leadership. It may also speak to a reality that women have colluded with the church on some level by being overwhelmingly present, more involved, and/or more intimately connected to its practices.[26] So why the disparity between

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[24] 8,000 people who come to Churchome services in person. Churchome's online community currently receives a participation fluctuation of over 100,000-1,000,000 people.

[25] This in no way seeks to discredit the validity and importance of women in administration. Instead, this statement is to clarify that women are often LIMITED to stereotypical roles like hospitality, administration, etc.

[26] This idea of *colluding* speaks to the idea that women have learned to accept the social constructs of their environment; that my participating in the normalization of their high volunteerism and low hire, they contribute to socially justifying this disparity (consciously or unconsciously).

their commitment and their lack of representation and access? In order to answer this, we must examine the current systematic development of leadership and its contribution to accessibility.

In a consolidated study by the Harvard Business Review, Joanne Barsh and Lareina Yee with McKinsey & Company, a global management-consulting firm, discovered a direct correlation between an increase of job ranking and a steady downfall of female representation.[27] Their findings are seen in the table below:

IN TOTAL
325,000
WOMEN HAD ENTRY-LEVEL POSITIONS
150,000
HAD MADE IT TO MIDDLE MANAGEMENT
7,000
HAD MADE IT TO VICE PRESIDENT, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, OR CEO

ON AVERAGE WOMEN MADE UP
53% OF ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES
40% OF MANAGERS
35% OF DIRECTORS
27% OF VICE PRESIDENTS
24% OF SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS
19% OF EXECUTIVES IN THE C-SUITE [28]

The data here displays that the higher the job level, the lower percentage women present within those positions. Although women are said to make up 51% of the professional and managerial employment of the world, a staggering underrepresentation of 14% of women make up the executive office.[29] Even more disparagingly, research provided Pamela Stone, at the 2013 Harvard Business School, showed that among the top Fortune 500 firms, only 8% is comprised of women.[30] Unfortunately, in recent data provided by Catalyst, women in 2020 now only comprise 4.9% of all Fortunte

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[27] Harvard Business Review, *Women in the Workplace: A Research Roundup*, September 2013, doi: https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-in-the-workplace-a-research-roundup
[28] Images provided by ibd
[29] ibd
[30] Stone, Pamela. "Opting Out: Challenging Stereotypes and Creating Real Options for Women in the Professions," Paper presented at Harvard Business School Research Symposium: Challenging Conventional Wisdom & Gender Work, Boston, MA, 2013, doi: https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/conferences/2013-w50-research-symposium/Documents/stone.pdf

500 companies and only 2% of S&P 500 companies.[31] Likewise, according to research done by Zenger Folman, a global leadership development research firm, the evidence across the board confirms that women as a whole scored higher in every category for exemplifying sixteen of the top 16 competencies desired among leaders.[32] This suggests that while women are more qualified, they still seem to face an under addressed bias within the leadership ladder.

This research has also shown that there is a disproportionate number of women, who are not only longing to lead but also are able to assume leadership. However, very few of these women actually inhabit leadership positions. While some people may have thought the reason for this difference is because, "women are leaving their careers to care for their families," the evidence proves otherwise.[33] Pamela Stone's study, *"Gender & Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom,"* states that 90% of the women who left the work place did not leave because of motherhood but because of problems they encountered in the workplace.[34] This is of no surprise because the workplace is statistically proven to be a sea of despair. For example, in a 10 year, 200,000 person, study on managers and their employees, the evidence confirmed a staggering 79% of people simply quit their jobs due to a "lack of appreciation."[35] In another study, by Deloitte University Leadership Center for Inclusion reported that 61% of all employees surveyed felt like they had to "cover" a portion of their identities in some capacity.[36] However this statistic is even high for women, with the results being 66%, and for women of color it

[31] Catalyst, *Pyramid: Women in S&P 500 Companies* (January 15, 2020)

[32] Harvard Business Review, Research: Women Score Higher Than Men in Most Leadership Skills, June 2019, doi: https://hbr.org/2019/06/research-women-score-higher-than-men-in-most-leadership-skills

[33] HBR, *Women in the Workplace: A Research Roundup*, doi: https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-in-the-workplace-a-research-roundup

[34] Stone, "Gender & Work: Challenging Conventional Wisdom," 6

[35] O.C. Tanner Learning Group, "Performance: Accelerated - A New Benchmark for Initiating Employee Engagement, Retention and Results," O.C. Tanner Learning Co, doi: https://www.octanner.com/content/dam/oc-tanner/documents/global-research/White_Paper_Performance_Accelerated.pdf

[36] Kenji Yoshino and Christie Smith. "Uncovering talent A new model of inclusion," Deloitte University Leadership Center for Inclusion, (December 2013): doi: https://www.lcldnet.org/media/uploads/resource/Uncovering_Talent_Deloitte.pdf, 5

is an elevated 67%.This is also not a surprise due to studies like those done by sociology professors Shelly Correll, Stephen Benard and In Paik in the Harvard Business Review. These researchers discovered that among our present society there is still a lingering status-based discrimination among women, especially mothers.[37] Their findings concluded that mothers were not only significantly less likely to be considered for hire but they were also offered $11,000 less than the average salary of women without children.[38] However, in comparison, men experience no such penalization for being a father.[39] Their research concluded that the disparity between hiring mothers and fathers remains a gendered bias whereas fathers are able to work more competently and committedly than mothers are.

With this in mind, it would be ill advised to assume that these statistics do not parallel the same hurdles and biases found within the Church. As the Pew and Barna research study revealed, woman are not only seeing the marginalization of their leadership in the workplace but are also experiencing this in their churches. In some cases, they actually experience a higher degree of disparity in the church than in the general American population.[40] While the general population sees about 24% of women leading, the Christian Church is at a staggering 9%.

Reflect back to the top ten issues addressed at the multi-denominational Propel Conference, almost 75% of the concerns raised are directly related to unequal access. Until the accessibility to leadership changes for women in the Church, women will continue to be underrepresented in our leadership. Therefore, we must not only investigate

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[37] Correll, Shelley J.. "Minimizing the Motherhood Penalty," (Paper presented at Harvard Business School Research Symposium: Challenging Conventional Wisdom- Gender & Work, Boston, WA, 2013) doi: https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/conferences/2013-w50-research-symposium/Documents/correll.pdf ,4-5
[38] ibd
[39] ibd
[40] See comparative general population's percentage of women leading at Grant Thornton, Women in Business: Beyond Policy to Progress (2018), doi: https://www.grantthornton.co.ke/globalassets/1.-member-firms/kenya/insights/pdf/grant-thornton-women-in-business-2018-report-edited-web.pdf, 6 and HBR, *Women in the Workplace: A Research Roundup*, September 2013

the statistically proven disparities female leaders face in the workplace, but we must also specifically identify what those traits are within the Church. One of the contributing factors to the unequal access of female leadership within the church relates to a social construct that perpetuates the churches *epistemology*. This term refers to the investigation of what it means to know something and fundamentally how human beings distinguish justified belief from opinion, or as Swinton would state, epistemology is, "how we know things and why we believe them."[41] For much of the Christian community, their epistemology centers on a combination of theology and tradition.[42] That is to say that the embodiment of our theology and tradition are byproducts of different forms of discipleship. We know our theology because believers, who have come before us, have taught and interpreted these insights for us.[43]

Similarly, our traditions have been taught to us because they have been modeled by the congregations that have embodied them. While many Christians believe that theology stands as the epicenter of our epistemological praxis within the church, research has proven otherwise. According to Dr. Paul Yost, a specialist in Applied Learning and Development, most pastors and church leaders do not have strong reflective knowledge.[44] As a result, his research indicates that because most pastors lack the skills for inductive reasoning and reflective knowledge, these leaders do not have the skill-set to name the convictions, ethics, or theological reasoning behind why they do what they do.[45] This indicates that most pastors learn their leadership by inheriting or mimicking the things that have been displayed and embodied before them, instead of utilizing inductive reasoning or theological understanding. This is commonly known as

[41] Swinton, *Practical theology and Qualitative Research*, 32

[42] Richard B. Steele, "Traditions of Piety" (THEO 6001 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, September 2016)

[43] Newbigin, Leslie. *Proper Confidence : Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995) EBL, chapter 6

[44] Paul Yost, "Introduction to Leadership Development" (THEO 6744 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA January 2018)

[45] ibd

observational learning. However, if these mimicking practices go untethered from their theological source, the actions themselves are nothing more than inherited cultural norms. Resulting in a reality where our churches simply, follow "tradition," arguing "that is the way things have always been," and not because they uphold a sound theological conviction to support them. This creates a standard within the church that assumes it can do things simply for "cultures" sake or because, "this is just the way things are." Consequently, many of the oppressive cultures and convictions within our churches are only supported by what has been modeled through mimicking ecclesiological practices. Psychologists understand this as the "bandwagon or crowd effect." This describes having a cognitive bias about something simply because other people perceive the same thing likewise.

Unfortunately, this "mimicking" epistemology has had detrimental side effects on many female leaders. After a decade's worth of investigating women's disparities, *church culture and tradition* has been one of the leading causes of their oppression. Many women report that their communities do not engage systems that promote them because it stands in opposition to their Christian traditions or church culture. While the theological claim in favor of female leadership may exists in these churches, the implementation of new structures for their flourishing often stands in opposition with traditional norms. Therefore, many of these church communities suffer from a culture that negates any action towards reflective knowledge or theological research that could lead to the flourishing of female leadership. However, to do so would cause members to reevaluate their notion of tradition, which could lead to a more liberative praxis.

Culturally Conditioned Leadership Practices

One of the cultural norms impairing female leadership is, none other than, "The Billy Graham Rule." Due to the missional nature of Christianity,

discipleship is a fundamental element to its methodology.[46] However, the way discipleship is embodied can remain profoundly different from context to context. What seems to be a consensus among many Christian communities is the socialized practice of organizing discipleship according to gender. This is a historical footprint of a culture and society that has constructed social norms according to a highly gendered and sexualized ethos. Looking back on the last half century, one of the largest influencers to speak into the navigation of this gendered reality was, none other than, Rev. Billy Graham.

During his time, Billy Graham's social influence within the evangelical community created a standard rule between men and women, known as the "Billy Graham Rule." To protect himself from the appearance of any impropriety, Graham established a rule that he would never be alone with a woman behind a closed door, other than his wife. In a well-intended effort, this became a rule for other male leaders to follow as a means of preserving their sexual integrity. However, another essential element of The Rule was the power of perception. While The Rule stood as a personal barrier for sexual temptation, it also created a social barrier for male leaders to never be alone with a woman in any potentially questionable context.

Due to Rev. Billy Graham's unprecedented platform, protecting one's credibility was essential to his ministry and his Christian identity. Any false accusations would be detrimental to him and would carry severe repercussions to his image and to the entirety of Christianity, for which he had become a global symbol. Although the rule was well intended, its actions have had unintended consequences on the equipping and releasing of female leaders and has contributed to stifling the accessibility of women. The initial intent to preserve one's sexual intimacy for their spouse is honorable, but the

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[46] Livingston, J. Kevin (*A Missiology of the Road : Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism.* Havertown: James Clarke Company, Limited, 2014) Accessed April 30, 2020, EBL ProQuest Ebook Central, 64, also see Livingstons original reference to Bosch: Bosch, *"An Emerging Paradigm for Mission,"* 492– 95.

natural outcome has been an unnecessary sexualization of women. This rule assumes a woman, no matter who she is, has the power to affect a man's social and sexual well-being. It causes women to be categorized as "the temptress." It also causes men to negate the internal problem of self-control and ultimately places the sexual responsibility on the woman not to divert men.

We continue to see the weight of this gendered boundary in today's society. A common methodology for pastoral apprenticeship in 2020 is provided on an educational level, as well as, on a personal one where these pastors, leaders, and teachers use personal relationships as a methodology for "training" others on what pastoral/leadership looks like. They invite the disciples in as their followers; they are welcomed into their homes, into their world, into their travels, and ultimately into their experience as a leader. Their mode of life becomes the very means by which one develops into an educated disciple, and even a qualified pastor/leader. Therefore, in order to understand what it means to be a leader, a person must graft onto the life of that pastor or leader. Hence, the vision and training for a position is not only "taught" but, in many ways, it is also "caught."

Having seen, served, and worked firsthand with many of today's "Billy Graham Mega Church Preachers," I know how they lead. Their personal small groups—those who get to travel with them and learn the "ins and outs" of their lives—come over whenever they want, text and call with whatever is on their heart, are always people of their same gender. In many equity circles, this gets critiqued as the development of a "boys club." When you intersect this kind of "teaching" and "equipping" of leadership with the statistical evidence that 91% of all evangelical pastors are male, you get an undeniable natural systematic bias towards men receiving pastoral and executive leadership skills.[47] This, likewise, perpetually excludes women

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[47] Barna, *What Americans Think About Women in Power*, March 2017, doi: https://www.barna.com/research/americans-think-women-power/

from entering into that leadership process. Therefore, a woman who wishes to pursue leadership does not have accessibility to executives simply because of her gender and the socialized norm of developing a leadership process with a "boy club" structure. In fact, a study by InHerSight, surveyed 1,500 working women and concluded that a resounding 64.3% of those women missed out on a professional opportunity due to inaccessibility of conversations that took place inside the "boy club."[48]

When it comes to the many traditions within the Church, The Billy Graham Rule has created a similar "boys club," where woman within the Church cannot connect with a male (who is not her spouse) in any non-public manner. It is considered inappropriate for a woman to inhabit those spaces that are afforded to men.[49] It is deemed unacceptable or "unwise" for a woman to text, travel or routinely meet privately with a lead male pastor or even join his male dominated discipleship group. Her presence is considered a "threat" to the atmosphere. To be alone with her, places a man's sexual and personal intimacy at "risk." In addition, her mere presence in male dominated spaces challenges the social dynamics of the group. Consequently, her exclusion is culturally vindicated because it would "cost too much" to include her. It is easier to exclude her and allow the power, accessibility, and opportunity to remain within the closed community of men.

Inclusion Does Not Insure Accessibility

After investigating communities that have women on staff, my research shows that inclusion does not implicitly provide an opportunity for accessibility. Although a church may have a woman on staff, many women continually observe there are inhibiting factors that contribute to her

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[48] Emily McCray-Ruiz-Esparza, "The Boys' Club Culture Is More Common Than You May Think: How antiquated ideas of gender are crippling 50 percent of the population in the workplace," InHerSignt (June 2019), doi: https://www.inhersight.com/research/boys-club-culture-more-common-you-may-think?_n=84239728#

[49] Evidence provided by narrative data collected from hundreds of women over the last decade

leadership remaining unsuccessful. The first is that women are cut off from having first-hand experience of female leadership development opportunities. As a result, women have to witness leadership from a passive point of view. This results in many women being underdeveloped in the psychological and unpublicized characteristics of leadership. Consequently, even if she were to beat the odds and make it into a leadership role, a woman is at a disadvantage because she has an incomplete depiction and tool set needed to flourish in her role. This could potentially be a personal hardship for her and it can also be detrimental for the individuals (especially other women) inheriting the shortcomings of her leadership. However, it is imperative to note that the fault is not her own but rather the system that failed to provide accessibility to support and equip that female leader. Unfortunately, this often creates a perpetual broken system, which continues to hinder women to have unequal access to stronger leadership models.

Secondly, my research found that while some woman may be in places of leadership, the overwhelming number of other women who seek their time speaks to the irrefutable number of women seeking mentoring in leadership verses men. After working with my female mentors, each has continually attested to a world where their inboxes are overflowing with countless women needing their time.[50] Each email is another woman longing to learn from their experience, to confide in someone who understands their reality, and find someone to help them pursue their passion and call for leadership. As a result, these female leaders have had to create systems to identify and select the few women they are able to mentor. This often results in a reality in which only the financially secure receive mentorship, thus creating a reoccurring effect where only the most privileged of women are receiving mentorship and the most marginalized in society suffer the most. Simply put,

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[50] Information provided by conversations with Brenda Salter McNeil – Author of Roadmap to Reconciliation, preaching pastor of Quest Church and professor at Seattle Pacific University, Julaine Smith – previous CFO of AT&T ,CEO of Arise Business Solutions and creator of Loving God and Making Money Podcast, Joanne Ramos- preaching pastor at Churchome and missions pastor at Churchome.

there just is not enough female leaders to meet the demand for women desiring to grow in their leadership. This suggests that a woman's influence as a role model is only as strong as her accessibility to the community in which she is representing and likewise, the success of a potential female leader is only as successful as their availability to a mentor.

As the author of this thesis, I can attest to this reality. After having searched for 10 years for a female leader, I know firsthand the detrimental repercussions of this disproportionate need. The first is the psychological damage that is done when women are continually looked over and neglected. Due to Christianity's culture of a strong prophetic witness, some of the women interviewed for this thesis have attested to teachings within the Church that, "if God called them, God would confirm their calling through prophetic words and signs." As a result, women who do not have the support from their leadership, often conclude that they must not be called to lead since the Church, and by implication—God, won't affirm their leadership ability. The byproduct of this compounded systematic negation by both women, men, and "God," can leave leaders with the allusion of unworthiness. It should be assumed that the denial of a woman's opportunity is correlated to her sense of self and worth because she has been taught that the Church is an extension of Christ himself. Therefore, if the people within the Church cannot affirm one's leadership, God by default is likewise "confirming through leadership and closed doors," that she is unworthy to be a leader.

Connecting Representation and Power

At the heart of representation comes the issue of power. When it comes to the Church, women are hired or given places of "leadership," but are often undercut by not having the privileges of power and authority. Since men lead an overwhelming majority of churches, they have the power to undermine

any position, opinion, or issue that women may face.[51] In this dynamic, it seems women are expected to be grateful for any position they receive and to assimilate into the existing system. This is communicated directly or indirectly through statements like, "If you want to move up and do what you really want to do, you have to pay your dues or play the game." In addition, woman report being told if they want a place in ministry, they need to, "follow the leading of the senior pastor." Therefore leaving many women to deny their own gift set and visions, and simply give in to their male leaders vision.

While many organizations and communities use this top down model of leadership as a means of structuring efficiency, it has detrimental side effects. Within the church, the byproduct of a lack of diverse representation among executive leaders creates unexamined similarity on the leadership team. Unfortunately, uniformity is often perceived as a positive attribute because it gives the illusion that all people get along and are going in the same direction. However, by creating an executive team that see all things similarly, a system of self-justification naturally results. When a homogeneous leadership team engage with congregants who have differing opinions or cultural perspectives, the leadership team views the congregants as being divisive. Often these members are labeled as "unfaithful" and are seen as untrustworthy. Worst of all, they are told they do not belong. Many women face this reality if they do not conform to the male dominated culture in the church. They are labeled dangerous, unfaithful, and are ultimately pushed out of the church they seek to serve. Therefore, if a woman does not count the cost, she is more obliged to conform to a system of male dominated leadership to promote and propel her to positions of honor and authority. Thus, they are told to conform to the systems and realities asked of them if they want to have a place of leadership in the church.

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[51] Barna, *What Americans Think About Women in Power*, March 2017

For this reason, the topic of "tokenizing" must be addressed. The term "tokenism" refers to the idea of, "taking action that result in pretending to give advantage to those groups in society who are often treated unfairly, in order to give the appearance of fairness."[52] Many well-meaning people attempt to engage the process of diversity and inclusion, but fail to see this requires much more than a having a person be the "face" to affirm their efforts. In churches, this results in men hiring women who they view as "like mined" or those who understand "the churches leadership style and mission." In these moments, women are narrowed down to nothing more than a female face for the extension of her male counterpart's mission. This produces a culture where a woman is welcome, but are forced to obey the rules, the constructs and the values of the men in power.

Ultimately, these normalized systems of assimilation are byproducts of patriarchal power. They prey upon the disheartened to fill roles in a way that undercuts the voice, power, authority, and experience of a woman's own identity, calling and gift set. Many women have attested to falling victim to this false sense of hope for leadership; and its has been profoundly damaging for them. One of the greatest disparities is that tokenizing has led to misappropriating a woman's body against another woman. This happens when a man uses a tokenized woman to prove to another woman that women's needs are represented. However, what many men fail to realize is when they hire women who represent the agenda of the patriarchy, the tokenized woman lacks the capability to authentically represent the needs of other woman.

In fact, there seems to be a consensus among many justice-oriented theologians, that a false notion of solidarity leads to a passive notion of what it means to be an advocate. Isasi-Dias speaks to this distortion of solidarity in her work, *Mujerista Theology*. In it, she says the majority of people who

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[52] Cambridge University, *tokenism*, doi: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/tokenism

perceive themselves as advocates, who stand in solidarity, actually have a false notion of solidarity.[53] She asserts that culture has interpreted "solidarity" to mean "agreement with" or to have "sympathy for the poor and oppressed," but is ultimately disconnected from engaging an actual liberative praxis for those we have sympathy for.[54] This misinterpreted notion of solidarity has led to a cultural embodiment where one may empathize but one does not have to act.

Therefore, not all female leadership truly characterizes real representation simply because they are women. Instead, real representation requires true solidarity and advocacy for a particular people group.[55] As a result, it is challenging to find women in leadership who fully represents the needs of those in marginalized communities and, thus, it remains the largest hinderance pertains to female representation. As a result, disinherited female leaders confirm that they continue to witness that the people who have the power are making decisions that uphold their comfortable ideals of their leadership. Resulting in the nonconforming women being sidelined and perpetuating a cycle where the knowledge for change continues to lay outside the confines of power.

Until men are willing to empower women to lead and provide opportunities of accessibility for themselves, women are only being represented by a secondary account, which lacks first-hand experience and understanding of the issue. That's why the praxis proposed in this thesis, in chapter 4, is not solely focused on aiding women in their leadership, but it is also about creating ally-ship. To break the cycle, men must trust that the knowledge of a marginalized woman is credible and therefore leading men to be willing to relinquish control. Until those with power are willing to share power, nothing more than a false sense of mutuality will result. Again, Isasi

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[53] Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology : A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996) EBL , chapter 5
[54] ibd
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Dias states that, "Mutuality asks us to give serious consideration to what the other is saying, not only to respect it but to be willing to accept it as good for all." [56] It means affording someone the same credibility, opportunity, and understanding that we give ourselves. It requires trusting others and their particularities, to lead in the fullness of who they are because no one person holds the keys to everything. Thus, the best individuals to represent the oppressed female leader's needs, is an individual who is engage in the struggle themselves.[57] It is, through the suffering and "weight of alienation, [that the oppressed] can conceive a different project of hope and provide dynamism to a new way of organizing human life for all."[58]

This is why equity becomes essential to the notion of representation. Equity speaks of value and ownership. An outsider cannot fully advocate for the needs of a people whom they do not fully understand. This is the key to the power of representation. Representation of the people and by the people equates to the value and worth of those being represented. To assume that a woman cannot and should not represent her own reality is to project an image of incapability. To reference the Harvard Business Review study by Stone again, the author noted that one of the greatest gender bias myths is that women are disqualified to lead because they're not competent or ambitious enough.[59] When compared to a Christianized community, women seem to face this kind of stereotyping to an even higher degree. This may be due to fact that many churches still use a patriarchal system as a defaulting framework for structuring Christian communities.

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[56] Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology,* EBL, chapter 1
[57] Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology,* EBL, introduction
[58] Dias referencing the work of José Miguez Bonino, "Nueva tendencias en teología," Pasos no. 9 (1987): 22. Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology,* EBL, chapter 5
[59] Stone, Pamela. "Opting Out: Challenging Stereotypes and Creating Real Options for Women in the Professions," 6

Exploiting Women's Labors

Women uphold over 50% of church congregations but their needs are underrepresented within these communities. Much of this can be linked to the power dynamics that have been discussed earlier in this thesis. Since women are rendered powerless and fail to have positions of authority, they lack the autonomy or opportunity to self-define and assert their desires in these institutions. As a result, this has led to a system, where their bodies are used to fulfill the desires, ambitions, and values of male leaders. This is the power of exploitation, by which one exercises their power and influence to get others to labor for another's benefit.[60]

This is an all too familiar narrative in hopes that one day things will change. Women are often quoted a distorted portion of scripture from Psalm 75:6-7 and Luke 16:12 saying that, "all promotion is from the Lord and that if you are faithful with what another man gives you, will not God give you your own?" Interwoven within this notion is another idea that, "God sees what you do and that is all that matters. Your reward is in heaven. To serve is to look like Jesus. We are to trust in those who have authority over us." A cheap articulation of these theological convictions has led to a narrow understanding of Christ identity as a servant. This view inadvertently justifies the exploitation of women's bodies, time and dreams, all in the name of emulating Christ. Often aspiring women leaders are told to, "Lay down your life for the gospel. This is the Lord's work. As Christ has given his own body, we likewise should give up ours."

Therefore, the roles they have been asked to fulfill are likewise not to be questioned. The moment women vocalize their frustrations, they are told they are selfish and to desire more for themselves is to be prideful and is equivalent to desiring the "things of this world." Scriptures are used to indoctrinate women to deny who they are because, "if God wanted them to

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[60] Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology,* EBL, chapter 6

hold those positions of leadership, God would open the doors." Likewise, they are told repeatedly to pray; because, "God hears our cries." Many women report that they give, serve, work, and strive all in the name of faithfulness. They are taught to discount the cost and wear on their bodies and to negate their feelings of insecurity, pain, or of being used. This sacrifice is rationalized as God's work, thus perpetuating a culture among women that condones being exploited for their labors.

In a work called, "Stand Your Ground," by Kelly Douglas Brown, she articulates this same form of justified abuse as it pertained to black bodies. She states, "Natural law theory in the hands of subjugating power can become a dangerous tool. For it serves to justify unjust structures, and thus it sanctifies an oppressive status quo. We will see how this is the case with regard to the black body as chattel."[61] In her argument she uncovers how natural law theory ultimately justified the social normativity of exploiting "others" bodies. Unfortunately, this language and rational is similar to the exploitation of women's bodies throughout history. Due to a woman's anatomy, many cultures throughout history have treated women as currency. Women are bartered as possessions to acquire wealth, land, and resources for their family's inheritance. Even in today's society, there are more women forced into sex slavery than at any other point in history.[62] Their bodies are literally auctioned, sold, and beaten into sexual submission. While this form of dehumanization may seem like an extreme or rare case, the unfortunate truth is that women across the United States experience verbal, sexual, and emotional abuse at an extremely alarming rate.[63]

While these examples may seem extreme, over a decade's worth of female pastoral-ship has educated this thesis writer that this all too common

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[61] Brown, Kelly Douglas. *Stand Your Ground; Black Bodies and the Justice of God* . (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.) chapter 2
[62] A21, "Human Trafficking," https://www.a21.org/content/human-trafficking/gnjb89
[63] National Sexual Violence Resource Center, doi: https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual -violence_0.pdf

forms of abuse have a strong impact on a woman's understanding of leadership. According to my research, these forms of exploitation have taught women that their bodies are not their own. Women have been inherently taught to always think of others at the expense of their own being. Psychologically, it creates an identity where women lack the skills and strength for self-advocacy. It perpetuates a culture of submission, self-neglect, and insecurity. This results in a normalized social reality where the church justifies the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of female leader's bodies. In the words of Brian Bantum, author of *"The Death of Race,"* he states, "We are the ones whose bodies are bruised and beaten in the name of other people's faithfulness, crying out to be heard by God."[64]

Unfortunately, I have witnessed women continue to stay and serve in congregational settings that undervalue them. They stay because the church has rendered their pain normative. Since there has been so little progress of women's empowerment, they have unfortunately learned to bite their lip and tolerate, survive, endure, and accept the "trials." On the side of the spectrum, an unprecedented number of women have walked away from the Church. Women come to a point where they simply cannot endure the demands of their congregation's needs. By forcing women into positions, actions, and roles that do not align with what God has called them to do, the church becomes a part of the system that leads them away. Women learned to negate personal calling by subjugating it to a local congregation's mission. Many Church communities just simply lacked the ability to hold the two in tandem. They believed the lie that the individual calling and communal mission stand in contradiction to one another.

In this thesis project, I propose a movement towards a reality where the Kingdom of God requires both. Based on an Ubuntu theology of Christ, the church can learn how to enter into a Kingdom mission as ambassadors of

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[64] Adapted from Bantum's notion of the exploitation of black bodies - Brian Bantum. *The Death of Race : Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016) EBL, 70

reconciliation. As Christians, we are called into a life where we live into the fullness of one another. This is counter to a culture that perpetuates the negation, exploitation, and rejection of women. Instead, women are indeed called and gifted, to lead in the church and the larger society. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to develop a framework to help Christian communities reconcile the female/male leadership disparities within churches and society. To that end, this thesis will seek to answer the question, "Will a praxis of engaging women's identity, gifting, and calling aid their leadership and contribute to reconciling the female/male disparities within Christian communities so that women are empowered and released to fully lead in Church and society?" By establishing a theology of reconciliation that calls us into a narrative of aiding and equipping female leadership, this thesis will offer a systematic praxis to enable the local church to become an advocate for female leadership and contribute to the reconciliation of a patriarchal dominated culture.

Chapter 2
A Theology of Gender Equity and Inclusion

There has been overwhelming evidence presented in the previous chapter to support that women are experiencing the repercussions of systematic and cultural norms that perpetuate the negation of female leadership in the Church. These actions often stem from unhealthy cultural norms and toxic theologies that are prevalent within Christian culture. According to women interviewed for this thesis project, their churches have often suppressed female leadership due to their disembodied theology which limits them from embodying the actions of Christ within their own selves. Therefore, it is a limited belief of what it means to look, act, and be like Jesus. However, the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's on *Ubuntu Theology*, stands in opposition to this faulty belief as it emphasizes the Church's call to be the unified Body of Christ. In summary, Ubuntu Theology will depict how gender is not a justifiable element to limit women to be leaders. Instead, Ubuntu Theology will articulate that because of the reconciliatory work of Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[65] In addition, Kathryn Tanner's work called, *Christ the Key*, takes this notion further by arguing that because we are *in-Christ*, humanity has an obligation to embody Christs nature by living out Christ's life within our own lives. Therefore, this chapter will focus on how Ubuntu Theology enables the Church to participate in the "re-enfleshing" of the Word of God. It is there, this thesis will argue, that the Body of Christ, the Church, finds wholeness. Then from this place of wholeness and unity, this thesis will discover a liberating praxis for women's leadership in the church that is rooted in the truth of Ubuntu theology.

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[65] Galatians 3:28 ESV

Ubuntu Theology

Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa, has been an outspoken public advocate of Ubuntu Theology, which declares, "I am because you are."[66] Within this iconic declaration stands a deep theological conviction that all of humanity is called into a deep interdependence with one another based on scriptures that affirm that all people are made in the *imago dei* (image of God).[67] In Ubuntu Theology, all are welcome because each person houses a uniqueness of the image of God. Similar to puzzle pieces, everyone reflects an aspect of a larger image. No individual piece/person holds the whole image. Instead, each piece/person is uniquely fashioned with extensions and gaps. The piece/person is created to attach itself to other pieces so that it may not only be made whole by other pieces/people, but it was created with extensions so that it may fill the voids in others as well.

We see this worked out theologically when the Apostle Paul writes that as the Body of Christ, we are all one in the Spirit (v.13). Each portion of the body plays a particular part in the whole (v.15-20) and no individual part plays a more honorable role than another (v.21-25). This results in a harmonious interdependency where God places each member in the body as one unified organism. Therefore, if one part suffers, all suffer and if one portion if honored, all are honored (v.26).[68] What is highlighted within the scripture is the notion of humanities singular plurality. It is singular in and that each member of the Body is unique and individualized, but each person carries a plurality because we have been united together in Christ as the one Body.

This rhythm of singular plurality speaks to God's creative order of interdependency.[69] According to the metaphorical language in 1 Cor 12, Paul

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[66] Desmond Tutu

[67] "So God created mankind in his own image," Genesis 1:27, ESV

[68] Paraphrasing from 1 Cor 12:12-26 ESV

[69] David Nienhuis, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6240, lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, June 12, 2020)

asserts that no human is capable of imaging the fulness of the God. Instead, it takes the unification of our differences as individuals to create what Paul calls, The Body of Christ.[70] Similarly, Desmond Tutu argues, "The only way we can be people is together;"[71] meaning that by uniting as The Body of Christ, we in-fact can start to image God the way in which humanity was created. As a result, Tutu's Ubuntu theology asserts that here is no longer a mentality of "us" or "them," but instead, there is only Christ.[72] As the very Body of Christ, one's identity as a Christian cannot be separated from Christ.[73] Likewise, the very idea of being a Christian is derived from the Greek word, *christianos*, which translates as *"follower of Christ."*[74] However, the idea of "following" is not limited to the physical action of walking behind someone, but it metaphorically expresses the idea that as a follower, you live into the same rhythm as the one you are following. There is a unity, harmony, and similarity in actions or being.

This idea is further expressed in 2 Cor 5:20, when Paul states to the Corinthians that they are "ambassadors of Christ."[75] In the same way the Hellenistic Jewish culture would have understood the term ambassador, the role of today's ambassadors is to stand as a representative. Therefore, as an ambassador of Christ, your job is to be a vessel where God is working through you. To be Christian means to emulate Christ and to stand as an extension of Christ himself. This should result in an interdependency where the life of a Christian directly correlated to the life of Christ, in whom they find their identity in. As a result, we must look at the entire incarnational life of Christ.

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[70] 1 Cor 12, Romans 12:4-5, Eph 1:20-23,4:16, 5:23-30, Col 3:14-16, ESV

[71] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1997), 67.

[72] Galatians 3:28 ESV, Battle, Michael. *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2009, 113

[73] 1 Cor 12:27, Gal 2:20

[74] Thayer's Greek Lexicon, "Χριστιανός – Strong's G5546," Blue Letter Bible, doi: https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g5546

[75] 2 Cor 5:20, ESV

By looking at the entire life of Christ, and his reconciliatory work, this praxis will learn what it means to enter into the rhythms of love for another person; in the same manner Christ laid down his life for humanity. Resulting in a theology that creates a liberative pathway for more Christian women to equitably lead. As proven in chapter one, there has been an overwhelming amount of evidence to support the suffering of female leadership and the cultural normativity of negating healing this suffering within the confines of their churches. The disconnect, of physically, practically, and systemically neglecting women as leaders can be traced to a theological disconnect where the Church no longer sees itself as an extension of Christ. Instead, individuals have limited Christ to be nothing more than a moral influencer, a payment for humanities debt towards sin, or name we must confess in order to be saved.[76] Therefore, this thesis seeks to highlight a theology that truly understands the connection between academic theology and its ability for its hermeneutical knowledge to transcends from its pages and manifest itself into the lives of those who put their faith in it, as the living, breathing, Word of God. The only way the Church is able to do this is by looking to Christ, who is the Word made flesh. Therefore, leading us to examine International Theology.

Incarnational Theology

Incarnational Theology teaches us that Christ is the full embodiment of a living theology. Scripture declares that the Word was made flesh.[77] Therefore, there is no greater example of theology than Christ himself. It is here the work of Kathryn Tanner, becomes essential to our theological disposition. While Tanner goes to great lengths to outline the how Christ

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[76] Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key. Current Issues in Theology* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), EBL, chapter 6: Death and Sacrifice
[77] John 1:14, ESV

becomes the key to reconciling all of humanity by his incarnation, this thesis will summarize her work as the following.

Kathryn Tanner, author of *Christ the Key*, argues that because Christ is both human and divine, Christ's life conveys not only who God is, but what humanities relationship should be in light of our creator. [78] Due to the fact that scripture claims that Christ knew no sin, Jesus is the perfect embodiment of what it means to be human.[79] Therefore, what is modeled within Christ, is to therefore be modeled within the rest of humanity.[80] That rhythm of living into Christ's likeness, is what Kathryn Tanner believes makes us human.[81] The more we deviate from this, the less "human" we become. In many ways, Tanner describes the definition of sin as this action of moving away from our humanity, or/and likewise moving away from our interdependency with God.[82]

However, humanity is incapable of living into this Christlikeness on their own because of our imperfection. Therefore, we receive the weight of sin, which is death.[83] However, God did not design humanity for death, but rather for life; a life where God is in relationship with God's own creation. Therefore, humanity needed a reconciler, that being Christ. Christ becomes our reconciler because Christs humanity provides a way for humans to live a life in perfect relationship to God.

In summary, what Tanner argues is that because of the hypostatic union of Christ, meaning that Christ is both fully divine and fully human, Christs own body unified humanity back to perfect relationship with God. Therefore, when Christ entered into his birth, his ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension, Christ's own body brought God and

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[78] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 240
[79] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 239
[80] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 10
[81] The language of rhythm is derived from Brian Bantum's idea of participatory relationality with God. See bib for details. Bantum, Brian "*Participation.*" THEO 6060 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, Winter 2019
[82] Tanner, *Christ the Key,* 67
[83] Romans 6:23, ESV

humanity together. As a result, there is no place where God cannot be in relationship with humanity. Therefore, showing how Christ reconciled the world through himself.

While we are hidden in Christ,[84] it is important to remember, Tanner's argument of what it means to be human. It means to live into the same rhythm and relationality to God, as found in Jesus. The goal of humanity is to not be hidden in Christ, but it is to be in relationship with Christ, our creator. Therefore, an incarnational theology suggest that to live, to be Christ's followers, means to enter into Christ's whole birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and assentation because it provides a path in which humanity can participate fully.[85] Incarnational theology requires us to embrace and participate in the entirety of who Christ is and manifest it within our own lives.[86] This not only includes resembling Christ in his death and sacrifice, but it also means living into his birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension.[87] This requires Christians to attach themselves to the very mission, vision, and purposes of Christ.

While Tanner's work goes into great lengths on the details of Chris's mission, vision, and purpose, this thesis will summarize her theological argument by concluding that the ultimate mission of Christ was to provide a path so that humanity could live in relationship with God.[88] The way this is done is by Christ choosing to enter into humanity so that relationships could be restored. Therefore, the very action of reconciliation, is Christ choosing to be incarnated. His action of being incarnated, is an example of God's deep, profound, love for humanity. Therefore, when humanity looks to its purpose, and mission, it looks to a God who reconciled the world through radical love;

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[84] Col 3:3
[85] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 13
[86] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 109,232, 169
[87] David Nienhuis, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6240, lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, June 12, 2020)
[88] Tanner, *Christ the Key*, 2

by taking on the likeness of those God wished to reconcile God's-self to. Therefore, when 2 Cor 5 states that we have been reconciled with Christ and are therefore given the ministry of reconciliation, this thesis would argue that in order for humanity to participate in reconciliation, it must embody the same incarnational rhythms that we see in Christ.

Both Tanner and Tutu would contend that when we look at Christ, we see how God who continuously chooses to enter into the lives of others and therefore, as ambassadors of Christ, we must also embrace one another. This negates the idea that the Church has a choice to fully embrace others. Ubuntu Theology declares that one's own individual wellbeing—body, soul, and spirit—is divinely interwoven into the reality and lives of those around us. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. so accurately described, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."[89].

According to Desmond Tutu, this unity in Christ does not mean the "I" loses its own autonomy. Instead, in Tutu's theology, each person, each society, each culture and each race must authentically come as they are. Their diversity enacts a holistic picture of Christ. Apart from that, our image and understanding of Christ is one-dimensional. Therefore, in order to embrace Christ, we must also in return embrace others instead of advocating for a Church culture that demands assimilation, in the name of faithfulness. In fact, Tutu described the church like this, "The miracle of the church is that everyone- the poor, the rich, the free, the slave, male, and female, black, white - can find one identity in Christ."[90]

Ubuntu Theology equips the Church to convey an invitation from Christ to participate in the wellbeing and lives of all people as Christ demonstrated for us. It is a call to action, truth and to reclaiming our

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[89] Marin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," The Atlantic,(2018) doi: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/letter-from-a-birmingham-jail/552461/
[90] Battle, 91

narrative as conduits of God's love and hope to the world. As Reverend William Barber III, a public theologian, pastor, and human rights activist, stated, "The job of a pastor is to touch people where they are hurting and to do what is possible to bind up their wounds,"[91]   He continued by saying that Christians should do this, "No matter what the injustice, it matters because people matter. Every single one of them was created in the image of God."[92]

If we apply this concept to the lives of the women studied for this thesis project, we must realize that each person, gender and particular story has an intricate part to play in the Kingdom of God. This diminishes any justifiable cause for the Church to continually dismiss the needs and desires of these women to fully participate as leaders in the local church. On the contrary, both Ubuntu and Incarnation theology suggests that leaders in the church must realize that by limiting women, they ultimately limit their own potential to thrive and function holistically. Therefore, the rest of this chapter is dedicated to analyzing specific theological practices that have hindered women from being fully embraced in the Church. By doing so, we can correct these actions and in return, strive towards a unified image as depicted through Christ and Ubuntu Theology.

Gendered Readings of Scripture

Within the Christian world, a patriarchal interpretation of scripture can often be read in tandem with a gender equality reading of scripture. Due to the historical, systematic, gendered bias of male dominated interpretations of scripture, there are many patriarchal understandings of what it means to be the Body of Christ.[93] These theologies stand in opposition to this inclusivity narrative for women. They argue that while scripture indicates

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[91] Barber, William J., and Wilson-Hartgrove, Jonathan. *The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2016) EBL, 95
[92] Barber, *The Third Reconstruction*, 5
[93] Lederman-Daniely, Dvora. "Revealing Miriam's Prophecy." *Feminist Theology* 25, no. 1 (September 2016): 8–28. doi:10.1177/0966735016657704.

the unity and equality of each part of the body, the functions and roles of the Body of Christ are gender specific. Therefore, churches are not theologically called to advocate for women to function in the same roles as men. In fact, according to the many female leaders studied for this thesis, they report that while their church communities may articulate a theological endorsement for female leadership, they also assert that God has a natural order or placement for males and females.

The theological justification for a natural order is often constructed from particular interpretations of Genesis 1-3, where God designs a hierarchy blueprint for all of creation. In many white, male, hermeneutical interpretations of the text, churches have concluded that because God created *'adam* (man) (Gen 1:26) before he created *'ishshah* (woman) (Gen 2:18), man must be more superior than a woman because he was made first. Likewise, some women reported that their churches believe that because a woman was created second, her needs come second. This ideology is then reinforced by another misreading of the Hebrew word "*ezer*," (Genesis 2:18,20) where people read the interpretation of *helper* as an "aid, support, servant" or someone of a subordinate role.[94] As a result of these patriarchally encultured theologies, it has been normalized for believers to assume that a man's place is as the head of the household. When one believes that God has created a man to lead the house, and to be the ultimate authority, it naturally creates a byproduct that a woman's voice is secondary. Therefore, this indoctrination naturally leads adherents being suspicious of a woman's choices and words. Consequently, it is not uncommon for men to devalue the ideas, insights and leadership of women but to also justify the suppression of their voices by replacing it with a man's.

However, in a lecture given by Dr. David Nienhuis, a New Testament professor at Seattle Pacific University, he explored the scriptural

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[94] Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, De Gruchy, John W, and Bax, Douglas S. *Creation and Fall : A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1-3.(* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 99

characterization of God to make sense of humanity's own character. Specifically, he demonstrates the way scripture uses singularity and plurality to describe humanity.[95] This also mirrors the way God is described throughout scripture. For example, in Genesis 1:26, it states, "*God* said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness: and let them have dominion over…" First, God is translated in the Masoretic Hebrew Text as, "*Elohim*," which is plural.[96] However, when we examine how God *created*, the term created is singular. Then the text goes on to state, "Let us" (plural), "make man" (singular), "after our likeness" (plural) and "let them have dominion" (plural), "over the fish of the sea…" Similarly, when reading Gen. 1:27, there is a mixed use of singularity and plurality again. "God" (plural), "created him" (singular), "in his own image in the image of God" (plural), "created male and female" (plural).

According to this in-depth analysis, Nienhuis concludes that there is a necessary mixed use of singularity and plurality to describe God and humanity as well.[97] Both identities function in a singular-plurality where individualism is reciprocally reinforced by a dependency on the "other. This implies that our individual identity is known best through its communal understanding of the whole. This is identical to Tutu's Ubuntu theology. Nienhuis suggests the importance of how a singular notion of one's self cannot be disconnected from a corporate identity found with others.

This suggests that what it really means to be human is only made possible by our ability to be one with each other.[98] It is a kind of *unity without uniformity,* like God, Jesus and the Spirit are distinctive but not indivisible. According to this interpretation, man is actually incomplete as an

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[95] David Nienhuis, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6240, lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, June 12, 2020)
[96] Jewish Publication Society of America. The Torah, Torah the Five Books of Moses. 1st Ed., 2d Impression. ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963. EBL via Logos
[97] David Nienhuis, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6240, lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, June 12, 2020)
[98] Tanner, p.143

image bearer without a woman—that which is different from himself. As a result, a woman cannot be inferior to man, but rather the completing element to what man is. In other words, man is not man without woman. In fact, we even see that God does not bless humanity nor say that creation is very good and complete until both man and woman are present within creation. (Gen 1:31).

Unfortunately, while some people might believe the previous to be true, patriarchal supporters would argue that it still does not account for the fact that God clearly states in Genesis 2:18,20, that a woman is indeed called to be a helper, an "ezer" to man. As previously noted many people read helper as an "aid, support, servant," or someone of a subordinate role. However, when studied, out of the 21x *ezer* is used within scripture, 17 are in no such way related to a subordinate form of help.[99] Instead, it speaks to a kind of wholeness, completeness, or fulfillment. It invokes a notion of dependency, mutuality or ally-ship towards one another. This is much like the reciprocal identity argument proposed by Dr. Nienhuis. This view requires an understanding of our own human limitations and therefore a mutual dependency upon another, thus painting a new narrative of possibilities for women within the Church.

This is extremely relevant because marginalized female leaders have attested that they are often told that they can hold power and authority as long as it is over children or other women. However, when they are among men, their word becomes void. This posture naturally presumes that women are inferior and thus incompetent to deal with the tasks of a church with the same proficiency as a man. This creates a theologically supported bias suggesting that executive leadership is best suited for men. Unfortunately, the byproduct of this also means that women are taught to question their own voices. It leads to women subjecting themselves to the counsel of men.

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[99] Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall : A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1-3, 99*

This often occurs regardless of a woman's qualification and man's disqualification. This perpetuates a reality where men do little to inherit their power, voices, and influence over others. While women can never do enough to justify their value and worth.

According to Isasi-Dias's, a Mujerista Theologian, she claims this form of marginalization is easily considered the most dangerous mode of oppression against women.[100] It is extremely harmful because as the church continues to marginalize the voices of women and deprive them from contributing, the Church adds to a woman's implied sense of uselessness. The destructive result of this message is that women, who are oppressed, will begin to see themselves as useless as well.[101]

This connects with the work of Father Robert J. Schrieter, who articulates a concept called the "*narrative of the lie*." According to Schrieter, this is a false narrative imposed on an oppressed community. It is a kind of propaganda where the voices of those in power use their authority to force a false narrative on a disempowered community of people so they no longer able to claim their own identity and story. He says, "What is at issue here is the fact that we humans cannot survive without a narrative of identity. Without some narrative, we slide into a chaos that is death for animals without instincts. That is why narratives—any narratives— are better than no narratives at all."[102]

The insertion of a false gendered narrative, results in a world where many women lose their identity and take comfort in the patriarchal roles that define them. Consequently, both men and women within the Church have work to do. We must fight to redeem _our_ narrative because as Schrieter rightly observes, "It is only when we discover and embrace a redeeming

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[100] Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996) EBL, 1634
[101] Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, EBL 1640
[102] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation : Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Orbis Books; Boston Theological Institute, 1992) 36-38

narrative that we can be liberated from the lie's seductive and cunning power."[103] The words of the Church are powerful. They have the power to create life and to destroy it. As Proverbs 25:18 states, "telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow." This is why liberative theologies are pivotal in reconciling the marginalization and suppression of women seeking leadership. These theologies, often led by marginalized communities, give space for a new narrative to emerge in contrast to the patriarchal narratives offered through the church. This provides Christians with alternate options for a non-patriarchal reading of Genesis, where women are able to determine for themselves, who they are according to scripture.[104]

The Church's Radical Call

These theological interpretations make it clear that women are essential to the Church. Our churches and our communities are lacking and incomplete without women's engagement. Therefore, this declares to women there is room for them and calls men to make room to include their female counterparts. This will require engaging difference and involving those who are seen as the "other." For the Church, this entails not just hiring a woman based on gender (tokenizing), but out of a sincere need for diversity and change. Reverend William Barber takes it one step further and states that in order for the Church to authentically be a force of reconciliation, it must learn to unite the divide so a friendship can develop between the oppressor and the oppressed.[105] In other words, friendship is a mark of what it means to be God's chosen people and likewise is an evidence of our reconciliation.

In order to get to a place of friendship, the Church must realize its call towards radical love. Christ says the two greatest commandments are to,

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[103] Schreiter, *Reconciliation,* 36
[104] Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 34-35
[105] Barber, *The Third Reconstruction*, 24,67

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"[106] According to these scriptures, love causes us to realize that our humanity is bound to the humanity of others. We can only love others as much as we love ourselves. The converse is also true, how we love others demonstrates how much we truly love ourselves. Therefore, male leaders in the church, must understand that a female leader's body, being and calling are just as important as their own.

Loving is hard and takes work, but it is a manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we enter love and authentic friendship by being honest with our confession of how someone's wrong doings have affected our misunderstanding of ourselves. Therefore, love becomes an action for the Church to confess the disparities facing women. The Church must act in love to restore its friendship with those who they have displaced. It must be humble enough to ask for forgiveness and make reparations for its wrongs.

The Church cannot ignore the systemic issues that perpetuate the marginalization of female leaders because to do so is evidence that the Church does not love all people. Instead, the radical call of the Church to love involves restoring the identity and calling of each person. Therefore, the Church must make space for women pursuing leadership to "rediscover" and embrace the entirety of their calling as image bearers of God. The Church can actively participate in the reconciliatory action of engaging female leaders by practicing Ubuntu Theology. This will require a deep understanding that a win for women is a win for the whole Church. This unity that results in the Body of Christ is stated beautifully in the following words of Bishop Desmond Tutu, *"If it was only one person it would be all right. But it is glorious when it is a harmony, a harmony of different voices. Glorious. God is smart. God says,*

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[106] Luke 10:25, 10:25-28, Mt 22:34-40, Mk 12:28-31 ESV

"It is precisely our diversity that makes for our unity. It is precisely because you are you and I am me that [God] says, 'you hold on together.'"[107]

Chapter 3

Diversity Matters: Reorienting the Church's Mindset

As more scholars analyze the impact of diversity within society, it has been determined that by increasing the diversity of a community, it becomes a stronger, more efficient, and a more profitable force.[108] Although the evangelical church is comprised of roughly 55% women, a study by Barna, a leading research firm focused on faith and culture, reveals that only 9% of those women are in executive leadership positions.[109] Therefore, in order to articulate a liberative praxis for female leaders in the Church, this chapter will analyze the unconscious cultural norms that hinder the Church from embracing greater diversity and propose a reconciliation process of acceptance and change. Although this often feels destabilizing and overwhelming, research indicates that diversity has an extensive influence on a community's viability and productivity. Therefore, in order to strengthen the Churches sustainability, it must engage in healing the continual systematic dismissal of women which hinders the Church from functioning at its highest capacity.

To reconcile the disparity between male and female leadership, it will require a process of learning and unlearning in the Church. Therefore, in order to assist this process, this thesis will propose a particular methodology outlined by Dr. Brenda Salter-McNeil, a national reconciliation leader and author of The Roadmap to Reconciliation. This model provides sufficient tools and a clear process for faith communities to identify where they are in the

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[107] Battle, *Reconciliation, 67*

[108] Hays-Thomas, Rosemary. *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. EBL, 13-16

[109] Barna, *What Americans Think About Women in Power*, March 2017, doi: https://www.barna.com/research/americans-think-women-power/

reconciliation process. In addition, it describes how to move people towards a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable community.[110] Subsequently, this chapter will dissect each phase of this model and its intersectionality with different social structures that influence the churches adaptability regarding gender diversity. This blueprint for systemic change is illustrated in the following diagram:

[111]

Preservation/Isolation:

It is important to begin this journey by acknowledging that most people are prone to isolate themselves with people who are safe and familiar to them. Salter-McNeil classifies this phase as the space of comfortability, where individuals are surrounded by people who look, act, and perceive the

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[110] Brenda Salter McNeil, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6512 Power Point presentation, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 2016); slide 4
[111] Image provided by McNeil, Brenda Salter. "*Roadmap to Reconciliation*: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness, and Justice." (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015.) Seattle Pacific University EBL, 37

world in a similar fashion as they do.[112] People often default to this phase as a byproduct of an impulse towards self-preservation. As the diagram indicates, isolation keeps people from entering into a process of reconciliation, which requires a reorientation of one's own paradigm. Therefore, if someone is unwilling to be challenged or changed, the natural default is to remain isolated and preserve what is familiar to them.

This helps to explain why the Church has such strong hesitancies towards acclimating to a culture that strives towards gender diversity. After interviewing countless woman on the issue, an overwhelming majority expressed that when confronting their congregations on the lack of gender inclusivity, their church simply dismissed, belittled, or even completely ignored their argument. This is the result of an isolation from gender diversity in the Church, which leads to the negation of the problem at hand.

Ethnocentric perspective of the other

The Self

The Other

Our Own Paradigm

The Goal of understanding difference

Ourselves

The Other

[113]

This form of preservation or isolation is connected to a failure to accept another person's world view. This is best understood as *ethnocentrism*.[114] An ethnocentristic paradigm believes that we perceive ourselves as the center of our own reasoning. It means that unless another individual's needs,
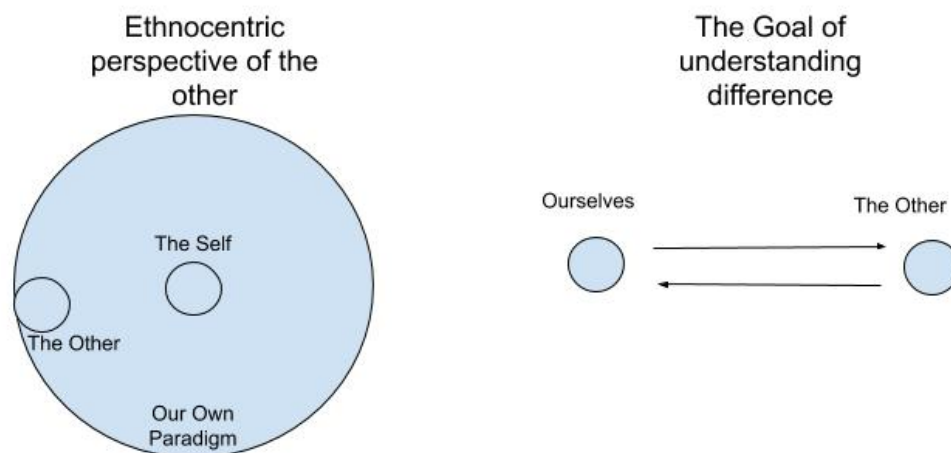
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[112] Brenda Salter McNeil, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6512 Power Point presentation, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 2016); slide 5
[113] Inspired by Bantum, Brian "Intensity and Ethnocentrism of the Self ." (THEO 6510 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, Spring 2018)
[114] ibd

convictions, values and problems align with our own rationale, then their perception of life is unjustifiable. This results in the inability to hear and understand why another person's position could also be valid. Instead, those in power uphold their own world view as the epicenter by which things are determined to be logical. Consequently, this strong ethnocentric posture has led many male leaders to ignore the problem of gender segregation in the Church. By ignoring women's testimonies there is no path towards a mutual goal of understanding and embracing differences. In addition, dismissing their truths, impedes the ability to resolve the tension and increases the sense of isolation and division. Therefore, ethnocentrism is a justification that perpetuates the lack of women's leadership an creates a culture where their time and resources are deemed unnecessary.

For many women, who are disheartened in their pursuits for diverse leadership, this act of "disengagement" is all too common. In my research, women convey that when they raise the issue of inequality in the church, the immediate reaction of male leadership is to suggest that she is exaggerating, is too sensitive, or "doesn't fully understand," the issue at hand. This sustains the preservation and isolation that perpetuates gender inequality within the church.

Catalytic Event

In order for the Church to move out of isolation and preservation, Salter-McNeil suggests a catalytic event is necessary. This is the spark which ignites a reorientation from our comfort zones and allows us to be open to receive new information, people, and/or processes. This will result in a new frame of mind that has the potential to propel groups towards a genuine reconciliation process.[115] More often than not, these catalytic events are unplanned and happen when an individual is confronted by a reality they

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[115] Brenda Salter McNeil, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6512 Power Point presentation, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 2016); slide 6

were previously unaware of. In the corporate world, this could be something like being confronted by the statistics that a 72% of black women feel like executive leadership is a hostile environment, whereas only 44% of white women felt that way.[116] Perhaps the disparity between those numbers could raise a conviction of injustice and create an urgency to address an issue never previously questioned or realized before.

However, a catalytic event could also be "invasive" or "abrupt." A prime example could be a staff walk-out, where female employees refuse to work because they learned that that an estimated 30 million women are forced into contracts with confidential arbitration clauses.[117] This means that, if they were to report sexual harassment in the workplace, they are forced to peruse legal damages privately; leaving the employer unscathed from public damages. In these kinds of catalytic events, communities can either enter into a process of learning, listening's, and changing or they can continue down a path of isolation and preservation.

In truth, experiencing a catalytic event is no easy task. Dr. Hee-Sun Cheon, a specialist in Family and Marriage Therapy, who focuses on diversity issues, states that, "change often feels like a destabilization of the self."[118] It feels threatening because it causes us to have to reevaluate, reinterpret our own paradigms in light of another individuals reality. Dr. Brene Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston, would agree when she states that "Most of us live our lives hiding in our armor and try to protect ourselves."[119] Humans inherently resist pathways of destabilization because

[116]Pooja Jain-Link, Julia Taylor Kennedy and Trudy Bourgeois, *5 Strategies for Creating an Inclusive Workplace* (Harvard Business Review, January 2020) doi: https://hbr.org/2020/01/5-strategies-for-creating-an-inclusive-workplace

[117] Colvin, Alexander J.S. "The growing use of mandatory arbitration." Economic Policy Institute (2017). Doi: https://www.epi.org/publication/the-growing-use-of-mandatory-arbitration/

[118] Cheon, Hee-Sun. "Multicultural Issues in Family Therapy- Issues of self-identity." MFT 6210 Power lecture, Seattle Pacific Unversity, Seattle, WA Autumn 2017

[119] Brené Brown, "There is no courage without vulnerability," The Science of Success Podcast. Success Podcast 27, June 2019, https://www.successpodcast.com/show-notes/2019/6/26/dr-bren-brown-the-cant-miss-interview-on-shame-self-worth-empathy-amp-living-a-courageous-life

we have a natural bias towards self-preservation. She attributes this action of self-preservation to the fear of shame and vulnerability. Likewise, within in the United States, there is a culturally inherited norm to negate all things that make us uncomfortable. Therefore, in the Christian church, people have interpreted discomfort with sinfulness, insufficient planning, and weakness. Consequently, there is a culture within the Church that justifies that the struggle to find equitable gender leadership is an indicator that those individuals are therefore not called by God. Likewise, male leaders think that, to enter into a "messy situation" is not good for the well-being of all. They think it is too much work, cost too much, and is therefore better left ignored. This in turn has resulted in a strong denial culture among Christianity that seeks to dismiss the narratives of many women, who experience oppression and marginalization.

This denial culture in turn leads people away from embracing "catalytic events" and ultimately causes individuals to re-enter a place of preservation and isolation. This therefore proves that for individuals in the catalytic event stage, an acceptance and willingness to accept one's own instability is necessary in order to proceed towards the next phase of reconciliation.

Realization

According to Dr. Salter McNeil, "Realization is more than intellectual awareness or cognitive understanding. It is the visceral awareness of reality and a sense of one's relatedness to it."[120] Accepting these newfound realities can feel unsettling due to its propensity to challenge our own sense of self-preservation. Consequently, it may feel unnatural for people or groups to enter into this process of change and realization. Therefore, the Church has a responsibility to reexamine its own sense of self because historically, its

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[120] Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, p.57

action of self-preservation has led to remaining detached, unaware, and ignorant of the many hardship's women face. Dr. Jennifer Harvey, author of *Dear White Christians*, would agree when she states, "reconciliation implies a need to bring the whole self to the table if we are to be in authentic relationship with other selves. But such holistic authenticity is nothing short of impossible if one or more of the parties involved have no clear sense of self."[121]

In fact, until the Church realizes its own failures, faults, and biases, studies suggest that its own future viability is in question. A recent study by the Pew Forum reveals that the United States has one again seen another regressing decade in church attendance. With a compounding 12% decline in numbers, the USA is now only roughly comprised of 65% Christians; a stark contrast to the 78% of those who identified as Christian in 2007.[122] Furthermore, Lifeway Research Firm, concluded that the top five reasons why young people, ages 23-30, are leaving the church are as follows: 1) Once they moved away or were on their own, they had no priority to make church a part of their life. 2) They saw the church as a place of judgement and hypocrisy. 3) They felt disconnected from the people within the church. 4) Work life remained a higher priority than church attendance. 5) They disagreed with church's stance on political and social issues. This suggest that there is a growing gap and trend among the younger generation (Millennials & Gen X), for the Church to be a "primary source of support to those who have been discriminated against."[123] Among those political and social issues is the concern for equitable treatment of women and their full inclusion in leadership.

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[121] Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 45

[122] Religion & Public Life. "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An update on America's changing religious landscape." (Pew Research Center: 17, October 2019), doi: https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/

[123] Barna, 22% of Practicing Christians Feel Responsibility to Help Those Facing Discrimination, January 2020, doi: https://www.barna.com/research/discrimination/

Subsequently, in order for the Church to maintain its own viability and potential, it must realize and embrace a pathway to reconciling its disparities against gender diversity. After pastoring, mentoring and consulting hundreds of women, the number one reason why these women left the Church was due to the profound disempowerment they experienced by the church's leadership. Women are tired of being unseen, unheard, and underequipped by their church communities. They are tired having their identities, their calling, and their giftsets ignored and therefore join the large migration of individuals leaving the Church. This can only be corrected by realizing and embracing a more holistic understanding of who the Church is.

Identification

The next phase of the reconciliation process is the identification phase. Within this segment, people transition from a place of isolation and individualism to that of collaboration and togetherness. According to Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil, identification is the movement and action whereby, "Your people become my people."[124] Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, would refer to the identification phase as a process called Ubuntu. This concept affirms that as human beings our own identity is bound up in the identity of another. This collaborative and collective social structure stands at odds with the culturally favored norm of individualism. Most individualistic societies believe that independence is a strength while the latter, a collective society, is a mark of weakness and unhealthy dependency. However, this thesis would propose that by moving into a more collectivist mentality, the Church would be able to enter into a process of identification with women. This would therefore enable the Church to move society forward in reconciling the gender gap disparities for women.

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[124] Brenda Salter McNeil, "Introduction to Reconciliation" (THEO 6512 Power Point presentation, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 2016); slide 9

Combating these deep-rooted value systems of individualism is no easy task. This ideology has been ingrained into the framework of our society in such a complex way that it can often be hard to isolate and understand. Therefore, communities must recognize the origin of its individualism and how continued adherence to it only further endorses a segregated and marginalized society.

In the United States of American individualism can be traced to its strong colonial foundation. During the colonization process, the rich "virgin" lands of the North and South American continents provided opportunity for European citizens of lower social status to build a new life. As the growing migration of dreamers established themselves here, people's loyalty to a kingdom and society began to sever. This resulted in the foundational elements that build a philosophical notion called The American Dream. This long-standing ideology advocates that if people put their mind to it, they can do anything. What the American Dream negates is the reality that all people do not start at the same place in society. Likewise, it fails to address the systematic biases and privileges some people inherit. As Bill and Melinda Gates, of the Gates Foundation state, "the world may distribute gifting and talent equally, but the world does not distribute opportunity equally."[125] The following graft illustrates the impact of this reality on women and girls and their ability to achieve success.

[125] Bill and Melinda Gates, "Examining Inequality: How geography and gender stack the deck for (or against) you." (The Goalkeepers Report 2019) doi: https://www.gatesfoundation.org/goalkeepers/report/2019-report/#ExaminingInequality
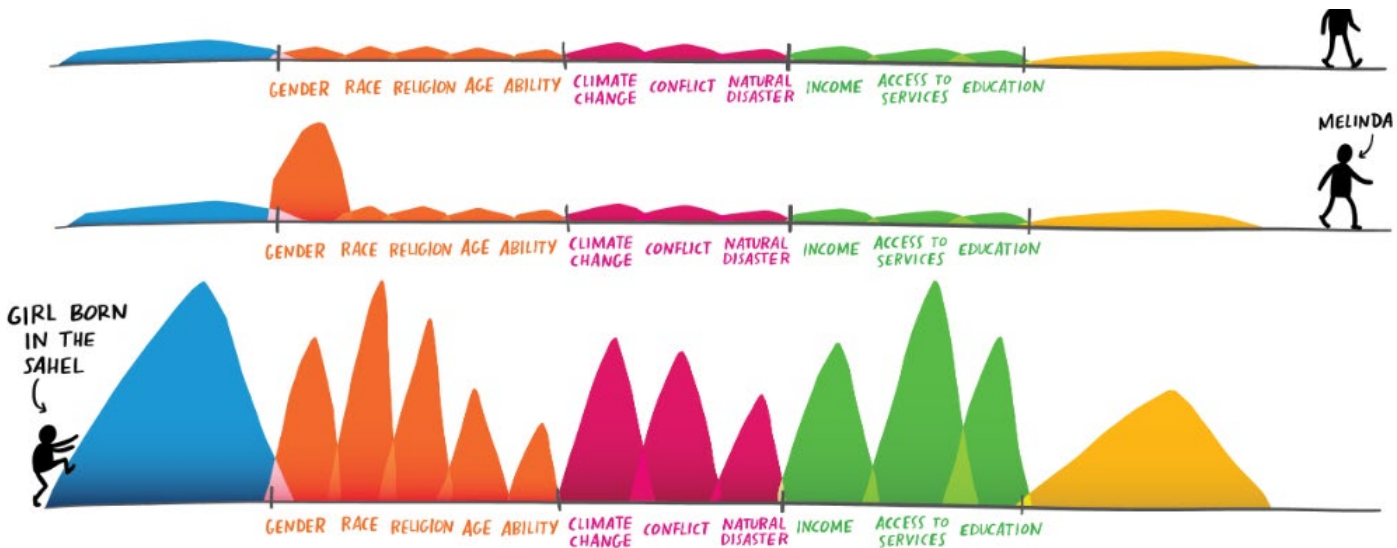
The facade of the American Dream and individualized success does not acknowledge that most underrepresented communities, including women, do not inherit the same privileges and power as their white, male counterparts.[127] It is, therefore, my contention that men negate the just and equitable representation of women in leadership, because their privilege allows them to ignore its inadequacies. This leads to a profound lack of support and advocacy for gender diversity, which results in a phenomenon this thesis writer refers to as, *"privileged disengagement."* This term suggests that those who are privileged have the opportunity to disengage with another person's suffering. It is my assertion that the origin of this type of disengagement stems from a deep-rooted sense of individualism. This leads to a detached disposition regarding other people's problems. Consequently, this

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[126] Image provided by, ibd

[127] Although Emerson uses American history to defend a racialized society, the effects of negating systemic injustices works for both racism and sexism. Smith, Christian; Emerson, Michael O., and Smith, Christian. *Divided by Faith : Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2000) EBL, 1075-1076

communicates that, "your problems are your problems and my problems are my own." We assume because each person holds the key to their own future, we as a larger society lack the innate responsibility to another individual's success or failures.

Sociologically, this creates a culture where the suffering of another person is not our responsibility but projects that this person holds the key to their own liberation. In addition, if someone is suffering, it is assumed to be because they have brought it upon themselves or are simply not doing enough to get themselves out of the situation. By the very nature of being independent, one no longer becomes dependent. This promotes a sense of self-sufficiency that suggests a person is ultimately afforded the luxury to disconnect from their dependency of another. Paired with the American Dream, this belief results in the interpretation that dependency is bad because our success should not be determined by another individual's action. Therefore, many individuals often ask questions like, "What's in it for me or why is it my responsibility to help you?" The privilege of independence has afforded a person to have a false notion that the suffering of another is not their concern and ultimately is not their burden to carry.

The consequence of this belief systems is that, one may conclude that because the suffering of another does not directly affect them, there is no real cost to them if others suffer or not. This disconnection is the fundamental reason for social disengagement. The privilege of not being directly affected by the suffering of another results in a culture where people are less likely to act until they are personally affected.

In order to propel people from a place of disengagement, communities must embark on a cultural shift of interdependency and mutuality. By doing so, they can create infrastructures to support a stronger identification with one another. This also can create an authentic appreciation and need for female representation within Church communities. This type of interdependency is essential to equitable male and female leadership and has

the potential to mend the power disparities that limit women's concerns from being championed. Through interdependency and identification with one another, people in the Church are able to move into a reconciliation process as one unified body.

Preparation

Moving forward in the reconciliation process, the preparation phase centers on acknowledging structural variables that are necessary for holistic change.[128] It requires skillful and critical analysis of historical realities, present infrastructures, and the need for strong foresight. These elements must be methodically addressed in linear order. While vision casting and movement forward seems like a logical next step, this action will be in vain if past systemic injustices remain unaddressed. This form of analysis is an aid to constructing an action plan for what Dr. Salter McNeil calls, first and second order change.[129] First order change is best described as the paliminary change necessary to bring about increased diversity. Second order change, on the other hand, is the systematized process needed to bring about structural and systemic change throughout the organization.

This distinction is illustrated in the following example. A congregation recently realized that there is an inefficient number of female leaders to pastor the growing number of young ladies attending their church. In a desperate attempt to reconcile this disparity (first order change), the church quickly hired as many women as they could. However, the church failed to realize that the women hired were ill-equipped for the work due to their inaccessibility to pastoral leadership (second order change). Therefore, the young women became directly affected by the instable leadership team put in place to guide them. This resulted in a plummeting decline in female attendance rates. However, if the church were to prepare and critically

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[128] McNeil, Brenda Salter. "*Roadmap to Reconciliation*: iGuide" Presented during Apprenticeship for Salter McNeil and Associates, 2019) EBL, 40

[129] Salter McNeil, *iGuide*, 40-42

construct a holistic process, the outcome may have been different. In this case, the failure to address the second order changes necessary resulted in the church doing nothing more than a "quick fix."

Unfortunately, these "quick fix's" can cause more damage than good; especially for women in the Church because they provide a false senses of progress. Quick fixes often achieve initial results but lack creating the infrastructure needed for longevity and sustainability. According to Father Robert Schreiter, "If the sources of conflict are not named, examined, and taken away, reconciliation will not come about."[130] In other words, if we do not dismantle the divisive structural realities, moving forward will only act as a band-aid to a deeply infected wound. This type of superficial change gives an allusion from the outside that everything is fine, but internally, the Church may still be deeply wounded.

Subsequently, if the goal of the Church is to bring about equitable gender leadership for women, it must be able to name its intended second order change process. This is crucial because the Church must identify its past and present realities that have contributed to its own divisiveness. However, naming these elements will not produce systemic change unless equitable representation is taken seriously. Therefore, when engaging the preparation phase, it is important to consider whose voices and experiences are being heard and represented.

In this phase, each person brings their own paradigms to the table and when one's individual paradigm is challenged, it can lead to three very

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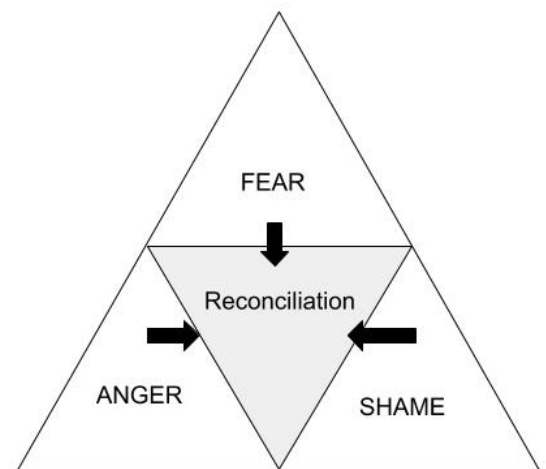
[130] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation : Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Cambridge, Mass.: Orbis Books; Boston Theological Institute, 2000), 23

common response: fear, shame or anger. [131] Fear is a normalized response because people are often afraid of what is within them. They may also fear letting go of what has been comfortable. Secondly, people are susceptible to anger because reconciliation work often feels threatening or invasive, especially if having one's identity questioned is unfamiliar. Lastly, people succumb to shame because they may feel guilty for the privileges they didn't earn, or they realize how unfair the world is. In any case, fear, shame, or anger is unproductive in the preparation phase. These response cause people to move back towards isolation and preservation, which pushes churches away from reconciliation.

To help aid in the construction of a safe environment where people can come out of the corners of shame, fear, and anger, Dr. Salter McNeil advocates for setting "ground rules" to help guide churches through the preparation process. The following are her four key ground rules used to facilitate reconciliation: 1. Use "I" statements 2. Maintain confidentiality 3. No interrupting 4. Be present: mind body and soul.[132] While it is agreed that these ground rules are helpful, it is also important to seek the collective wisdom of the group to gain any additional ground rules that may be beneficial to one's specific community. This is necessary because a safe space creates an environment of equality and provides the opportunity for creativity, authenticity, and innovation. Likewise, it effectively creates space within the Church for all parties to contribute to naming the second and first order changes needed to progress through the preparation stage.

Activation:

The activation phase is the point where a community experiences transformation. This phase entails collectively diving into repairing the

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[131] Salter McNeil, Brenda "Introduction." THEO 6512 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, January 2016
[132] Salter McNeil, *iGuide*, 10-11

broken systems that once segregated us.[133] When engaging the gender disparities for women in the Church, it is important to note that repairing requires analytical and systemic change, as well as relational integrity. This is important because it ensures a process where we lower the probably of leaving anyone behind at the expense of achieving previously set goals. Where many people get lost in the activation phase is when the *process* of reconciliation is placed before the *people* we are actually trying to reconcile with. While this process of continual analysis can seem inefficient, it's actually fundamental to creating sustainable systems. By continually engaging the process as well as the people, we create a stronger and more equitably diverse community. This is not only beneficial to women but also to the whole Church.

According to robust studies like those done by Rosemary Hays-Thomas, called, *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective,* research states that a dozen positive factors are a result of embracing diversity in the workplace and within a diverse management. While a large majority of diversity work has been centered around the public workforce, its fundamental arguments easily translate to nonprofit, 501(c)(3),and religious corporations like the Christian Church. Beneath, is a summary of Hays-Thomas's findings and a general translation as to how we see these elements correspond to the Church.[134]

1. **Marketing Strategy**: A diverse community ultimately provides an ability to expand its customer/client bases because it has the skills to understand, connect, and engage with its diverse audience on an authentic and personal level. Within the Church, this best translates to "reaching people." As a missional community which strives to, "go

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[133] Salter McNeil, *iGuide*, 48

[134] Hays-Thomas, Rosemary. *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. EBL, 13-16

and make disciples in all nations," (Matthew 28:19-20), the church has a necessity to connect, understand, and relate to people and therefore requires a kind of "marketing strategy" in to build that connection.

2. **Resource Acquisition**: If a community has a reputation for being a hostile environment to a certain demographic (race, gender, etc.), that community is less likely to give of their skills to that community.[135] Consequently, this means talented individuals are more likely to accept positions with communities that have a reputation for being diversity friendly. This is evidenced by its ability to produce a safer and inclusive environment for them to thrive in. When it comes to the Church, we saw this inability to retain female talent in our study with women at the Propel Conference. Women who felt unvalued, left the church and used their skills elsewhere. Unfortunately, watching people relocate to new churches who "understand" them, is nothing new. However, what seems to be a growing trend among underutilized female leaders, is a growing exodus of women who leave the Church completely.

3. **Better Problem Solving:** Statistically, a more diverse array of people leads to a wider variety of experience, knowledge, and skill sets. This has been proven to lead to a more robust critical analysis. Unfortunately, the Church is most understood in its desire for homogeneity. Many churches desire leadership with the same "faith" or "DNA", resulting in a leadership that often looks, acts, and think similarly. The consequence of this uniformity results in a lack of diverse thinking and more opportunities for problem solving. Therefore, Churches have grown accustom to not having answers and believe that "waiting on God" would be a easier solution than looking for diverse people who may be able to answer their problems.

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[135] Hays-Thomas, *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion, 14*

4. **Increased Creativity and Innovation:** When there is a a more diverse group of thinkers, one gets more diverse solutions. However, this is only made possible if we manage a diverse community in a way that gives space for innovation and creativity to flourish. For the Church, this is a great asset as long as creativity and innovation are welcomed. In places that uphold traditions as a key element of their identity, creativity and innovation could feel hostile and invasive. Nevertheless, every church has their issues and therefore creativity will always be a valuable asset to solving those realities (i.e. fundraising, growing small groups, finding analogies for sermons, etc).

5. **Greater System Flexibility:** As an organization becomes more diverse, it acquires the skills of adaptability. Therefore, as culture, markets, laws, or systems change, the diverse community is more likely to efficiently adapt to these changes than a community that is known for uniformity and systematized processes. This is an essential skill for a Church because it is always having to adapt to a shift in leadership, volunteers, tithe/income, social experiences and more. Without the ability to adapt, churches will fail.

6. **Lowers Employers Cost:** By referencing Taylor H. Cox and Stacy Blake's work, *Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness*, Hays-Thomas states that "well-managed organization diversity can reduce an employer's cost," in specific ways.

    a. It lowers turnover and absenteeism: an inclusive environment fosters a sense of commitment and attentiveness. This increases results and productivity, which contributes to profit. Likewise, corporations spend less time training and investing, without losing retention of personnel.

    b. Reduces Barriers to Communication and produces efficient and effective means of communication. A higher communication

results in a higher productivity and lowers the possibilities for
mistakes.

c. Diversity lowers the probability for discrimination lawsuits.

d. Diversity impacts profitability. In a 24-page report by McKinsey
& Company, analyzing information from 366 companies, they
reported that companies that had a higher evaluation for gender
diversity were 15% more likely to, "have financial returns that
were above their national industry median."[136]

While most churches fear conversations around money, the truth is,
they have an ethical responsibility to steward their money well. Therefore, by
intentionally providing efficient infrastructures, it can provide a more
resourceful way to utilize its finances. Although, the Church is distinctive
from the workplace because it prioritizes people over profit and most for-
profit companies are driven by the bottom line, research indicates that
diversity has an extensive influence on a community's viability and
productivity. Therefore, in order to propel the Church's sustainability, it must
engage and "activate" new methods and create structures that heal the
continual systematic dismissal of women. By doing so, it not only ensures
equitable practices for women, but it also increases the wellbeing and
sustainability of the Church. This is the work that must be done in the
activation phase.

Restoration:

One of the leading problems reconcilers face is the issue of burn-out. As a
woman who has been in the industry for over 30 years, Brenda has become a
leading expert in creating a reconciliation process that not only leads to
sustainability but also longevity. The key to longevity is intentional actions of

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[136] https://assets.mckinsey.com/~/media/857F440109AA4D13A54D9C496D86ED58.ashx Vivian Hunt,
Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince. "Diversity Matters," (McKinsey & Company, 2 February 2015), 3

restoration. Restoration not only serves marginalized populations like, women, but it also become beneficial to majority populations, like white men, who are experiencing the weight of reconciliation for the very first time.[137]

Restoration will look different person to person, context to context. For many minority cultures, restoration is a crucial element to withstanding forced assimilation or deterioration. Within the Roadmap to Reconciliation Curriculum, Salter-McNeil correlated restoration with the need for socially constructed gatherings like, Isolation Circles, Black Student Unions or Woman's Collectives, because of their ability to provide comradery, unity, and united understanding on social experience.[138] Unfortunately, the action of restoration is often motivated by a majority cultures failure to accept, make room, and provide a safe space for minority cultures to flourish. Therefore, preservation is paradoxically a byproduct of a majority cultures default towards isolation. Therefore, in order to specifically aid women for the work of reconciliation, the following three concepts should be considered.[139]

> **Renew**: It is vital for ministries to provide institutional support that allows those who are weary from the ongoing battle of working for reconciliation to have rest and opportunities for self-care, solitude, prayer, and lament. This allows them to be replenished, refilled, and made whole again. An example of this might be to host a sacred time of lament in your ministry after a racial tragedy where people can gather and hold each other in prayer and renew their hope.

> **Recharge**: The physical and emotional toll of living and working in a gendered society is debilitating and exhausting for women. Therefore, it is necessary for the intentional creation of life-giving environments that address these needs by providing opportunities to be strengthened,

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[137] Salter McNeil, *iGuide*, 18

[138] ibd

[139] Original concept produced in a paper by Kaila Alvarez and Sarah K. "Roadmap to Reconciliation Facilitation Guide," Paper presented at Reconciliation THEO 6512, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, 2016

nurtured, and replenished. This may include gathering spaces for women to meet regularly with each other or a retreat for the purpose of being refilled.

Reconnect: For women in male dominant leaderships, it is necessary to affirm the need to connect with other women. This provides a safe space to be understood and to reconnect with God and others in culturally familiar ways. This ability to step away from "the battle" enables women to refocus their thoughts and recommit to their purpose and desire to engage in reconciliation. To help facilitate this gathering, a ministry may want to dedicate a specific space where women can reconnect with their ethnic identity through artifacts, music, and other resources that are culturally relevant and affirming.

Chapter 4
Reconciling Gender Inequity

In order to reconcile the systemic disparities women are facing within their Christian communities, the following section is dedicated to outlining a praxis to aid efforts towards increased female leadership in the Church. This methodology has been designed as a two-part process, with the first phase being centered on leadership development and the second being the evolution of the larger community. It is this thesis writer's contention that both must be equally and holistically addressed. While this praxis takes great lengths to name a detailed methodology for Christian communities, it is imperative that each community understand that this process will require prayerful discernment and adjustments to suit its own specific needs and goals. In addition, there are specific actions steps noted throughout the praxis that are needed in order to build a foundation for leadership development in the broader community. These will be highlighted as *ProActive Points*, which will enhance the effectiveness of this process. The following is an outline of each phase and its particular steps for implementation. It is also suggested that this process not be done independently, but instead would include a partnership with a consultant, like myself, to work alongside these communities to develop their process. Consulting would include offering extra theological insight, materials, and strategy development.

Phase 1: Executive Leadership Development

Step 1: Realization
This step is designed to help communities dismantle old paradigms to make space for a new communal culture to emerge. This often entails a process of learning and unlearning to confront one's own biases, insecurities, and failures. It also means learning how to pave a new path for the community. It gives leaders the fuel, the direction, and the key to a destination where all people feel seen, heard, and valued. Therefore, in order to effectively move forward in creating a culture that promotes women in leadership, the core team will need to spend some time educating themselves on the fundamentals of women's marginalization. Keep in mind that this is an ever-going process where there is no "arrival." Instead, it is a journey. It is a practical action of understanding your female colleagues/community without having to burden them with all the teaching.

PRO<u>ACTIVE</u> POINT: While the realization phase is crucial to your community's success, it is important to note who we are getting our information from. In this stage, it is not uncommon for leaders to rely on the women in their community to give insight, ideas, or knowledge about their experiences or context. However, we must be careful when asking this of women because it can often be burdensome and overwhelming. Often times, this can make women feel like test subjects, experiments, or data banks for people's exploitation. Therefore, in order to help liberate women from carrying the full weight of their community, we suggest that your team learn from other external resources.

As a part of this assessment process, there are 5-10 topics that are pertinent to the community's success and development. The following is a list of different resources and topics that should be considered.

- Resources:
  - *Examining Inequality,* The Goalkeepers Report 2019 by The Gates Foundation.
  - *Diversity Matters* by McKinsey & Company
  - *Blaze Your Own Trail* by Rebekah Bastian
  - *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order* by Robert Schreiter
  - *Roadmap to Reconciliation* by Brenda Salter McNeil
  - *Mujerista Theology* by Ada Maria Isasi-Dia
  - *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader* edited by Mitizi J. Smith
  - *Christ The Key* by Kathryn Tanner
  - *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* by Soong-Chan Rah
  - *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* by Christena Cleveland
- Other Topics: microaggressions, power dynamics, gender and race, trauma of marginalization, oppression, studies of women in the work force,

Surveys & Assessments:
Taking different surveys and assessments provide important data to help aid one's community to determine where they are in the reconciliation process. Therefore, this section will require the leaders to work with their Human Resources (HR) department or larger teams to construct holistic surveys that gather metrics and analytical data. Once the information has been gathered, a report of the finding should be created and distributed among a designated reconciliation team. Some information that should be inquired is the following:

- Community Self-Assessments:
  - Ratio of men to women in all tiers of leadership
  - The kind of roles each gender holds
  - Each gender's educational background and correlation to qualification with job position/role
  - Mentorship-to-hire correlations
  - Gender ratios of leadership and volunteer teams
  - Gender and its correlation to the number of years it takes to lead
  - Overall cultural makeup (specifically noting trends relating to races/socioeconomic/personalities.)
- Implicit Bias Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/[140]
- Gender Bias Test & Testimonies:
  - Women's Narrative Chart by Kaila A. – see Phase 2, Section 2
  - See consultant for list of gender bias recommended test and programs that fit your communities specific needs.

Accurately collecting this information is imperative because it establishes the building blocks for the rest of the reconciliation process. It also clarifies the current atmosphere and culture that must be addressed to foster a community that embraces gender reconciliation.

STEP 2: Identification
While the advancement of women's leadership is a communal endeavor, the keystone to their success fundamentally remains in the hands of the executive leadership team (ELT). Like a house, if the pillars and foundation are not structurally sound, the house risks collapse or implosion. Therefore, buy-in, endorsement, and the commitment of the ELT becomes a necessary requirement to effectively reconcile women's leadership within their communities. This is due the fact that the ELT holds the power, resources, and opportunities necessary to create an equitable infrastructure to support women in leadership.

Therefore, identification is the step where key leaders are brought together to help develop a reconciliation process for the broader community. This team will function as microcosm of the reconciliation process that is to be implemented throughout the rest of the church. The women and men selected to serve in this capacity should be key leaders who represent the community being served, are people with power and influence, have access to important information, and are available to be a part of the implementation process. The following identifies the various components of the identification process.

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[140] Harvard Education, Project Implicit, (2011). doi: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

How to Identify Key Leaders
- Executive Leadership: This includes Chief Executive Leaders (C-Suit) level leaders, stakeholders, elder boards, key pastoral staff, etc.
- Women Already Leading: If a community does not have at least a few women in executive leadership roles, invite a select group of women who have leadership potential, or influence in your community to join. They are an essential part of your process because they hold insider knowledge on women's experiences and thought processes.
- Senior Human Relations (HR) Leader: This process can act as a great guide for HR to learn and develop new methods for their department. Likewise, they can offer statistics, analysis, and insight that the executive team may not be privy to.

The ELT should initially start with leaders in the community because they will help implement the change throughout the rest of the church. Not only does this create a strong pipeline for women's leadership, it also allows for clear communication on where the community stands about the topic of women's leaders. The more the leadership team can grow together, the stronger their stance will be in leading the church on the topic of reconciliation.

Leadership Preparation
Much like a map, if you want to get somewhere, one must first understand where to start. Therefore, this stage will equip the key leaders with resources to help their community assess where they are in terms of developing an equitable and empowering system for women to lead effectively. By engaging in these exercises, the community will not only have a fuller understanding of their current processes, but it will also aid each of the team members with valuable insight into who they are as leaders and their impact on others.

However, this praxis acknowledges that not everyone processes in the same manner and some individuals might even refuse to participate or engage in this conversation. Each person comes with their own background, experience, and ideas of gender reconciliation and what it entails. According to Dr. Shirley Davis, a keynote speaker, corporate executive president, and global workforce management expert, there are four different tiers that companies engage Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.[141] Each tier was designed to build upon the previous. These are outlined in the following chart.

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[141] Adaptation from Davis's four tiers of DEI. She does not include the word, "reconciliation" in her lecture. Reconciliation has been added and adapted to fit this thesis's theological mission. Shirley Davis, "Why Inclusive Leadership" (lecture on LinkedIn Leaning: Inclusive Leadership, Online Platform, 11, March 2018)

The goal of this process is to prepare the larger community to engage the work of reconciliation as noted in fourth tier. Often times, when talking about reconciliation, people have a sense of fear, anxiety, and shame. However, as a facilitator the goal of reconciliation should be rooted in the motivation of reaping the rewards of greater innovation and creativity in unity. Therefore, it is essential to train one's community how to move people from those places of fear, anxiety, and/or shame, into a place of healing, restoration, unity, and joy.[142]

The Call to Reconciliation:
Reconciliation is more than just a political or ethical movement. It is our Christian calling. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. God has called us to love, embrace, and care for the other in the same manner we care for ourselves. Even Christ himself was someone who continued to embrace the lost, the marginalized, those who no one else would touch or give a second glance to. As Christ's followers, we are called to do the same!

As a church, it is important to understand that the ministry of reconciliation stems from a theological background. Therefore, as a consultant I would teach the following key biblical principles as a part of this vital work.

1. What is reconciliation?
- "The intentional actions of embracing creating space for both men and women to embody their God given unique particularities, in order to join Christ in a love that is communally interdependent." – Kaila Alvarez's definition of gender reconciliation
- "The ongoing Spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that transforms broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all of creation to flourish."[143] – Brenda Salter McNeil, Roadmap to Reconciliation, p.22

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[142] Inspired by from Salter McNeil's reconciliation method to move people out of fear, shame and anger. Salter McNeil, Brenda "Fear, Shame, and Anger." THEO 6512 lecture, Seattle Pacific Seminary, Seattle, WA, February 2016

[143] McNeil, Brenda Salter. "*Roadmap to Reconciliation*: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness, and Justice." (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015.) Seattle Pacific University EBL, 22

2. Scripture and Reconciliation:
   - Genesis 1:27
   - Numbers 15:5
   - Isaiah 11:6-9
   - Matthew 28:18-20
   - John 4
   - Acts 10:15-35
   - Revelation 7:9
   - Ephesians 2: 10-22
   - Hosea 3:1
   - Romans 5:10-12
   - Romans 11:14-16
   - Acts 2:1-47
   - Galatians 3:28
   - Jonah 4:1-11

3. Gender Reconciliation: While the Church has made great advancements in equitable gender practices, the truth remains that many women still encounter biases. This often stems from older theology that has left out women in their exegetical practices. To help bridge the gap, this praxis would take a strong approach to educating the leadership team in a theology that magnifies women's voices. This includes some of the following theological concepts:
   - Jesus working with and alongside women
   - The Holy Mary
   - Women in Scripture
   - God's motherly characteristics (Israel, the woman and the lost coin, etc.)
   - History of Gender and Theology
   - Miriam, the forerunner for Moses

To aid your leadership in a stronger theology that highlights women, see the consultant for the following resources provided by Dr. Laura C.S. Holmes, Associate Professor of New Testament; Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and Dr. Sara M. Koenig, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and specialist of Old Testament Studies.[144]

The Benefits of Reconciliation:
Not only is reconciliation a theological mandate from Christ, it also remains a profoundly influential and helpful tool to propel communities towards equity and inclusion. In today's corporate work culture, reconciliation can be best translated to the work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. According to a study by Rosemary Hays-Thomas, the following benefits result from embracing a diverse leadership team and community:[145]

- Increases demographic reach
- Brings in diverse talent
- Better problem-solving skills
- Increased creativity and innovation
- Greater system flexibility
- Lowers employers' cost

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[144] Laura C.S. Holmes, Sara M. Koenig, "Resource List," (paper presented during THEO 6240: Women in Scripture, Seattle Pacific Seminary,7, July 2019)

[145] Hays-Thomas, Rosemary. *Managing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion: A Psychological Perspective.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. EBL

- Increases efficiency and productivity

Leading Effective Conversations:
Ground rules are essential in a reconciling community to foster a safe, inclusive, and empowering atmosphere for people to learn and develop. By establishing these guidelines, it not only creates an environment that fosters trust and vulnerability, but also produces a pathway for receiving the most valuable resource in the reconciliation process, *NARRATIVES.*[146] Another way to think of narratives, is the culmination of people's life experiences, which are nuggets of gold! They give critical information and insight into the real experiences, emotions, and cultures that are happening in one's local community.

In order to develop an effective process for a community, it is imperative that we understand individual's narratives because they become guidelines and mile markers for the community's reconciliation process. However, uncovering those narratives is nearly impossible unless you create a welcoming environment that provides safety, security, and trust. It is important to note that when it comes to sharing narratives, studies have shown that women have a devastating inclination to belittle, suppress, or ignore their own ideas, experiences and opinions. Likewise, because women have often been given administrative or assistant roles, many of them may never learn to think or dream for themselves.

Therefore, ground rules will provide a framework to help foster that environment.

Following is a list of recommended ground rules that should be discussed and agreed upon in a communally setting:[147]

- Always seek to understand
- Suspend judgement
- Assume positive intent
- Active listening
- Admit "I do not know"
- Express gratitude for input
- Be Kind but honest
- Confidentiality
- No Interruptions
- Be fully present
  - Speak from personal and not generalized experiences

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[146] The concept of narratives was established by Robert J. Schreiter.
[147] Adapted from Ground Rules in *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, by Salter McNeil.

> **PRO_ACTIVE_ POINT:** For many women, reliving and expressing their experiencing is painful, overwhelming, and confusing. In fact, some women have even been discouraged, or gotten in trouble for speaking their truth. Therefore, in order to be proactive in aiding women to be all they can be, this praxis suggests that the leadership team provide resources, external spaces, or community to help support these women. Ideas include, hiring a counselor specializing in diversity, developing cohorts for women, and allowing women to anonymously share their experiences, etc.

Once your community has set the ground rules, begin to set at least two meetings to talk about the following:
1. Why did your community need this praxis in the first place?
2. What is the most pressing issue your potential or current female leaders are facing?
3. Whose voices are being heard and whose voices have been ignored?
4. What is/does gender reconciliation look like for your community?
5. What has been your experience on the topic? (Specifically pay attention to the stories of women on team)

Step 3: Preparation
Now that the team has discovered and gathered the information necessary to identify the key elements contributing to the disempowerment of female leadership, it is time to start preparing an action plan. In this section the leadership team will learn to navigate the various components necessary to activate the whole community towards gender reconciliation.

Analyzing the Data:
Once the team has correlated all the data from step 2 and listened first-hand from women and heard their experiences, it is time to analyze the results. The team should explore questions like: Where do the data differ? Are there correlations? What are the biggest issues at hand? What did you learn? What surprised you? What does the initial data help you understand? But more importantly, what is missing from the data? While data is important, it often remains only half of the story. For example, in your study you might have realized that while half of your entire staff is equally divided as male and female, your senior level of leadership is only comprised of 8% women. The question that remains is why? Perhaps it is because many women are never elected as final candidates for consideration. Maybe it is because many women still feel the social and theological pressure to be the primary care giver and therefore do not have the accessibility to a full-time job. In either case, both scenarios help the team understand the kind of action plan that is necessary to prepare women for leadership. Therefore, finding the why behind the statistics is just as important as the statistics themselves. To help

aid the community in this process, the follow W questions are suggested as a guideline:

- **WHO:** Whose voices are being heard or ignored and why? Who are the people leading and not leading and how did they get there? Who have excuses been made for and what are the reasons for doing so? Who calls the shots on what is a priority and what is not? Who has the power and who is at the mercy of other people's power? Who has the answers to your problems? Who is ready to lead but hasn't been given the opportunity?
- **WHAT:** What has been your culture and whose voice has been left out from defining it? What questions need further investigation or clarification? What does gender equality look like? What are some ideas to create change? What powers or dynamics are contributing to gender marginalization? What is the best way to communicate these initiatives to others?
- **WHEN:** When were women cut off from continuing on the leadership path? When are women included and when are they not?
- **WHERE:** Where are women represented in your community and why are they only limited to those areas? Where did you learn about gender roles? Where can we make structural changes to amplify women's voices?
- **WHY:** Why haven't women been given an equal opportunity to be hired or lead? Why does your community operate the way that it does? Why would the community be afraid to change?

Identify First & Second Order Change:[148]

Now that the initial leadership team has begun taking the necessary steps towards reconciling gender disparity, it is time to engage the larger community in this process. Although creating equitable practices for women at the executive leadership level has been essential, its functionality can only provide a micro level impact. In order to create a system that is self-sustaining and generative, the change has to affect the community on a macro-level scale. If not, the community risks defaulting back to old systems and old ways once those leaders are no longer around to carry on its culture. Therefore, a mission to achieve gender reconciliation must be embedded into the entirety of the communities' culture. This is the work of first and second order change.

First order change is best described as the preliminary change necessary to bring about increased diversity. Second order change, on the other hand, is the systematized process needed to bring about structural and systemic change throughout the organization. Many times, when a church begins the

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[148] McNeil, Brenda Salter. "*Roadmap to Reconciliation*: iGuide" Presented during Apprenticeship for Salter McNeil and Associates, 2019) EBL, 41

reconciliation process, they stop at first-order change but true justice and reconciliation requires second-order change. In fact, according to Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil:

"Relational connections cannot be sustained without structural intentionality…the preparation phase requires leaders and group members to make a conscious choice to count the cost of moving forward…It is the beginning of second-order change [which is] deciding to do things significantly or fundamentally different from how they have been done before…it might mean the shifting of operational paradigms and result in structural changes being made within the organization. It might mean that the ways people interact, or believe they should interact, are renegotiated. It might mean new people being empowered to participate in innovative ways. It might mean that the leadership structures are reconsidered and the budget becomes a moral document that reflects our commitment to support reconciliation"[149]

Therefore, to aid the community in identifying these necessary changes, consider the following:

- First Order Change: In an attempt to bring about greater gender diversity in an organization, one may add personnel or increase the number of women to a group. This is first order change, and although it may resolve some aspects of the problem, in the long run, it leads to the same cultural assumptions in operation, but with new or rearranged cast members. In essence, people who have not traditionally been a part of our community are asked to add "numerical diversity" without any real change in the organization. Often their distinctiveness is either ignored, or overemphasized as a cultural novelty, but few changes occur within the institution beyond the interpersonal level. While first order change may eventually produce an increase in the numbers of diverse peoples, these gains may be hard to maintain, or sustained without structural or systemic adjustments. The focus of many organizations is on "increasing numbers." This is a good initial goal, but it is inadequate if a new community is to be formed and reconciliation is to be ongoing.
- Second Order Change: In a classroom marked by inequality and conflict between students of different genders, second-order change involves creating collaborative group exercises and making sure all students are treated as equals. Second-order change proposes that the structures (policies and decision-making hierarchy), systems (relationship networks) and role relationships be altered among persons in a setting.[150]

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[149] Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 85
[150] Salter McNeil, *iGuide*, 41-43

Preparing Women For the Work of Leading Reconciliation
In order for women to lead effectively, they need to have the space to self-define and self-determine who they are and what God has called them to do. Since women are rarely given opportunities, it is not uncommon for many women to take whatever opportunity has been afforded to them. This is due to the fact that in many Christian cultures, women have been trained to believe that it is too presumptuous of them to advocate for roles or positions that they feel called to. This can be attributed to different theological claims like: "If God wanted to open the door, then God would do so." Likewise, in many Christian communities, women have been instructed to believe that because Christ came to serve, they are called to serve also. While there is great truth to that, one must be careful not to overly accentuate these words. By doing so, we risk having women defaulting to a posture of serving other people's visions and desires rather than leaning into the roles that God has asked of them.

Therefore, if women in the community do not feel like they have the knowledge, skill set, or self-understanding to lead, make space for them to "prepare" for the work of ministry. Give them the resources they need to stand strongly and effectively. But most importantly, give space for women to lead the way they are called to lead. This means they won't look like, act, talk or lead in the way men have led in the past. Instead, they will lead in ways that are honest to who God has called them to be.

Step 4 Activation:
Now that the team has successfully identified and prepared to engage in gender reconciliation, it is now time to activate the plan! While it is important to gain the support of the ELT, space must be made to release the women in the community to lead their own initiatives. In these moments, representation and empowerment matters. If the mission and goal is to create equitable leadership practices, we must start by making space for women to lead according to their own giftsets and strengths. Below is an example of an action plan that gives space for more women to lead effectively and equitably in the community.

Action Plan[151]
1. Communicating the business case for gender equality, internally and externally: Communication from your key leaders displays buy-in to the rest of your community that gender equity is a priority. Examples include: bringing up the initiative in staff meetings, sending our reports and analytics of your gender surveys to your larger staff, etc.

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[151] Adapted from Shirley Davis Inclusive Leaders Action Plan Sheet. Shirley Davis. "CEO Actions for Diversity and Inclusion," (paper presented at Linkedin Learning Lecture: Inclusive Leadership, 11, March 2018), 1

2. Share personal exposure to difference: Having meaningful conversations should be a life-long journey. By engaging and broadening your conversations, you aid the community with new ideas, insights and information to sharpen and advance your reconciliation plan.
3. Embedding gender equality practices into the organizations business strategy: Examples include: removing gender specific mentoring programs, paid parental leave, childcare, embryo savings, changing tables, places to nurse, increasing talent searches, and most importantly: giving women leadership roles who are due leadership roles and power.
4. Reporting gender equality efforts and progress to directors or ELT
5. Requiring direct reports to provide updates on gender metrics in leadership
6. Sponsoring employee resource groups or chairing women empowerment committees to represent women's needs. Examples include: Women's Leadership Groups, Women's Committee
7. Tying compensation to senior leaders pay
8. Integrated messages of gender equality's impact into business
9. Monitor, reward, and recognize

Metrics and Accountability

While activating the plan, it is important to include metrics and structures to bring accountability to your particular gender initiatives. Metrics and accountably measures provide a way to tie the community's initiatives to measurable outcomes. Without accountability, the community can easily get sidetracked, disengaged, or lose focus of their particular mission. Likewise, without continual metrics and analysis, a community can never really know whether or not their initiatives are having their desired effect. This is important to note because *intentions* do not always *impact* the community in the ways they are expect to. For example, a community may have promoted one of their female leaders to an executive position because their intention was to have a woman represented at the table. However, the impact of their action resulted in the woman feeling tokenized because no one highlighted her education, experience, and character as a reason for her promotion. While the intention for representation was good, the impact ultimately made the woman feel devalued rather than elevated. However, by putting metrics in place that assess these kinds of scenarios, one is able to make adjustments for future gender equity initiatives moving toward.

Below are examples of diversity and inclusion metrics that can be measured, tracked, and tied to organization outcomes. The leadership team should

review the following metrics list and commit to implementing two or three of them in their division/department over the next 90-120 days.[152]

- Inclusion surveys that assess levels of engagement among diverse workers
- Reasons that workers exit the organization (exit interviews)
- Customer/community satisfaction surveys
- Promotion rates
- Assignment of special projects
- Turnover rates
- Employee resource group sponsorship and support
- Reduction in pay inequities
- Mentoring programs
- Understanding employee complaints
- Lawsuits and settlements
- Behavior changes as a result of training
- Major policy changes and utilization rates (for example, telecommuting options, benefits, or women's health accommodations)

In summary, the entire reconciliation process takes time, discernment and openness to change. Therefore, the work to establish metrics and accountability is vital to clarifying what the community will need to be successful in this endeavor.

Phase 2: Communal Development

Step 1: Second-Tier Leadership Training
In order to advance the communities gender reconciliation process, the leadership team from phase one needs to develop a culture where equitable gender practices and advocacy for female leadership is normalized throughout the larger community. To achieve this, the core reconciliation team will begin to implement six key, inclusive leadership traits within their second-tier leadership team (STT). [153] The STT should be comprised of leaders who carry significant influence and authority within the community. Likewise, they should be those who have the largest impact on shaping the culture, values, and image of the community. This may include, the larger staff, people who oversee departments or teams, or it could also include specific individuals elected to help implement the action plan from Phase One.

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[152] Adapted from Shirley Davis, Metrics and Accountability Worksheet. Shirley Davis. "Metrics for Diversity Inclusion Initiatives," (paper presented at Linkedin Learning Lecture: Inclusive Leadership, 11, March 2018), 1

[153] Adapted from Shirley Davis, Inclusive Leaders Action Plan Sheet

The 6 C's of Inclusive Leadership

1. **Commitment;** Inclusive leaders take the time, energy, and support needed to develop and propel women.

2. **Courage:** Inclusive leaders are not afraid to challenge the status quo, and call things out so that the community can be accountable to their mission of supporting female leadership.

3. **Cognizance of Bia's:** Inclusive leaders know how to help develop policies and procedures that eliminate bias's throughout their department and larger community.

4. **Curiosity:** Inclusive leaders are open mind and take the time to learn, understand, and empathize with other perspectives. This could also mean, asking questions as to why things are the way they or perhaps they are curios to understand correlations of inequity within your community.

5. **Cultural Intelligence:** Inclusive leaders understands and embodies the competencies, skill sets, and temperament to lead across genders, cultures, and traditions. It means developing leaders who are aware of diverse needs, expectations and styles. Most

By developing the STT to be inclusive leaders, they become the core pipeline for implementing the reconciliation teams' mission and commitment for equitable female leadership. The key role of the STT is to use their influence to developing a new culture and identity for the larger community. To further aid the community in their inclusive leadership development, Dr. Shirley Davis recommends educating your leaders on the following competencies and traits:[154]

- Adaptability
- Passionate
- Strategic
- Visionary
- Risk-Taker
- Decision-maker
- Inspirational
- People skills
- Empowering
- Manage less
- Technologically savvy
- Trustworthy
- Team oriented
- Results oriented
- Authentic and Transparent
- Self-Awareness
- Accountable
- Keep it Fun
- Knowledgeable

Based on Dr. Shirley's research on inclusive leadership, the following common pitfalls have been adapted to educate leaders regarding the key obstacle's people face when perusing their equitable gender inclusivity mission.[155]

1. **Lacking vision and Goals:** The responsibility of the core leadership team is to create a compelling vision that inspire people collectively and individually. If your core team isn't passionate about it, no one will be passionate about it.
2. **Treating everyone the same:** Just like the phrase, "I don't see color." Some leaders believe "not seeing gender" is a helpful aid to creating equitable systems. Unfortunately, this cannot be farther from the truth. In order to overcome the obstacles and hurdles hindering women, we must see gender. By understanding people on a personal level, leaders are able to see how gender effects people corporately and individually.
3. **Showing Favoritism:** While it is easy to lean into the few leaders who have already won the leadership teams confidence, the leaders

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[154] Shirley Davis. "Competencies of Inclusive Leaders--What Employees Want," (paper presented at Linkedin Learning Lecture: Inclusive Leadership, 11, March 2018), 1
[155] Adapted and expanded list for Inclusive Leaders from Davis. Shirley Davis, "Common Mistakes" (lecture on LinkedIn Leaning: Inclusive Leadership, Online Platform, 11, March 2018) doi: https://www.linkedin.com/learning/inclusive-leadership

need to be leery of showing favoritism. Favoritism does is tear down trust and it also limits the opportunity for innovation and creativity.

4. **Being Inflexible:** Reconciliation is an ongoing process. While an action plan is needed to develop change, the action plan should never be "fixed." Instead, the plan should move, alter, and flow with the communities needs and desires. The key here is learning to discern when to just push through an action plan and when to simply change it.

5. **Knowing it All:** Being core leadership team does not mean they have all the answers. A good leadership team knows their inherent need for others. Therefore, the core leadership team needs to understand how to collaborate with STT's in innovating and improving effective methods and strategies for equitable female leadership. Likewise, it requires humility and vulnerability to learn with and alongside others. By displaying humility from the top, it gives space for those under your leadership to do likewise.

6. **Lacks Recognition or Reward**: According to a 10-year, 200,000-person study on managers and their employees, the evidence confirmed a staggering 79% of people simply quit their jobs due to a "lack of appreciation." People need to feel valued and appreciated for what they do. Likewise, rewarding people expresses the value of their commitment to gender equity.

7. **Failure to provide feedback**: Teams and leaders need positive and corrective feedback since it gives them a sense of where they stand. Because so many individuals are unfamiliar with systematic gender inequity, it would be presumptuous to assume that leaders know if their actions are working or not. Feedback provides information and education on what is helpful and what is not.

Step 2: Equity and Empowerment
Now that you have the support of the ELT and the STT, it is now time to implement an action plan that brings equity and empowerment to all women within the community. What this provides is a pathway for current female leaders and potential female leaders to be supported and encouraged in their leadership. This step is dedicated to specifically building the women within your community. However, it will still require the support, recourses, and engagement of the whole community to make action plans happen. Therefore, the community should take considerable time to hear from many of the women within their community and ask them which initiatives should be added to the action plan.

Empowering Women's Identity:
In order to equip women with a stronger sense of self, this praxis will look at different avenues of identity development. Dr.Hee-Sun, a specialist in

multicultural psychology, reports that in the process of identity development, humans look to five major elements in constructing their sense of self.[156] They are 1. Intellect/Knowledge 2. Emotions 3. Relationships 4. Values and roles 5. One's body

1. Intellect/Knowledge

What we know about ourselves has everything to do with how we treat ourselves. If we understand ourselves as worthless, we will treat ourselves that way. If we perceive that we are too confrontational, we will sensor ourselves and minimize opportunity to be perceived as an adversary. Unfortunately, the systematic oppression of women has led to many female leaders believing false notions of their own suffering. In many cases, women have been taught to believe things like, "I am crazy, 'I am overthinking overacting and overthinking things," "It probably won't happen again," or worst, women think, "I deserve this, it is my fault, and I should have known better." This, has had a detrimental impact on a female leader's identity development. It has perpetuated a culture where women start believing the problem is with them and that they are the ones causing harm to their congregation by advocating for their own flourishing. This results in a culture where women are left to question their own identity and experiences. This is what the theologian, priest, and reconciliation scholar, Father Robert Schreiter calls, "the Narrative of the Lie."[157] It is the idea that we learn to assume the lie other people impose upon us. Thereby, losing a piece of our own identity and instead, replacing it with another person's belief about us. In order to combat the narrative of the lie, it is important to aid women with the knowledge and mindset to define themselves for who they are. The following list is provided to equip women with examples of how the narrative of lie might be playing out in their own lives:

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[156] Cheon, Hee-Sun. "Multicultural Issues in Family Therapy- Issues of self identity." MFT 6210 Power lecture, Seattle Pacific Unversity, Seattle, WA Autumn 2017

[157] Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, EBL chapter 2

> ### The Narrative of the Lie versus the Truth of Her Story
> By: Kaila Alvarez
>
> - She is too passionate
>   - No, someone is just intimidated by my power
> - She needs to be quiet
>   - No, it is not okay for someone to be comfortable silencing me
> - She needs to stop causing trouble
>   - No, someone needs to stop thinking that my action for liberation/equality/and value is a problem.
> - She needs to stop being so emotional
>   - No, someone need to learn to empathize with my pain
> - She needs to be under a man
>   - No, we all need to be obedient to God
> - She needs to calm down and stop being so serious
>   - No, someone needs to learn to listen to the reason for my urgency
> - She needs to stop whining
>   - No, someone needs to assess their bias that sees my criticisms and advocacy against a problem as complaining

2. Emotions:

Emotional development is a critical human element. Unfortunately, there has been a cultural trend within the Western world where emotions are seen as primitive, or a sign of weakness. However, emotions are natural gauges in one's body to help people cognitively assess and analyze a situation. Emotions become essential building blocks to discovering what is right and wrong in the world and engages our fight or flight reflexes. Therefore, by teaching women to ignore their emotions, they are simultaneously being taught to ignore situations of pain, danger, and disempowerment. It leads to women staying in situations and environments that are unhealthy and damaging to their overall well-being. As a result, it is imperative that women focus on emotional development and learn the key skills to assess and analyze their feelings.

This section is dedicated to giving space for women to reclaim and identify how they are actually feeling. This is a critical part to understanding one's own health and current situation. In order to help foster and develop these

emotions, it is suggested that female leaders should engage professional help such as:

> 1. Hiring a women's counselor to professionally lead workshops on emotional development, trauma, or healthy conflict resolution strategies.
> 2.Creating safe spaces where women are given the opportunity to voice and show their feelings. This in particularly key in facilitating reconciliation conversations.

3. Relationships

The people we know and surround ourselves with have a huge impact on our identity formation. Pastor Judah Smith, leader of the Churchome mega church in Seattle, WA, once said, "Show me your friends, and I will show you your future." This means that the community you surround yourself with can either propel you forward or hinder you from being the person you are called to be. This does not mean that we dismiss the people in our lives who are imperfect, but it does mean taking a critical assessment of who has the authority to speak into one's life. People surrounding you should be "reflectors," meaning they are mirrors that help you assess who you are. Overall, there are three different kinds of people who should be reflecting your life. They include:

> **A. Mentors & Leaders**: These individuals are people who inspire you, speak into your life, practically teach and train you, or hold you accountable to reaching your goals. Unfortunately, women who seek leadership have an incredibly hard time finding other leading women to mentor them. Therefore, the few women who do mentor, are bombarded and there is simply not enough time to go around. Therefore, there may be a season when a leader or mentor might not personally know you. Perhaps they are a national speaker who you follow, or an educator that you skillfully learn from. In reality, finding a personal mentor who can specifically speak into your life may take time but women must be relentless. Peruse the mentor yourself and don't wait for someone to come find you. Be comfortable hearing "no" 1000x, because one day, that no will be a yes. If you are in need of a mentor, a great recourse for finding a female mentor can be found at www.owntrail.com[158]
>
> **B. Friends:** In today's social media driven culture, it is easy to settle with friendships that are superficial or convenient. Instead, find like-minded individuals who sharpen you. They should be people who bring out the best qualities in you and can help you address the obstacles you are trying to overcome. Friends should be a safe space, where you can dream together, be honest about where you are, and provide a

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[158] Rebekah Bastian, CEO and Founder of Own Trail, Author of Blaze Your Own Trail, "Own Trail," doi: www.owntrail.com

place to be silly and fun. Friendships takes work but are worth the work. This does not mean you will not have up's and down's, but a good friend learns to sit with you and work it out. As a woman who wants to a leader, it is important to have friends because leadership can often be lonely and overwhelming. By having friends, you create a support system that helps to make you the best you can be and carries you through tuff times because you cannot do it alone.

C. Disciples: If you really want to discover what is within you, start taking someone under your wing. Being responsible for others brings out who we are as a person because it gets magnified in the people, we pour ourselves into. Discipleship can take many different forms but ultimately, women should look for an outlet to stir and test your giftset and character. Look for people who can learn from your gift, and likewise challenge your skillset.

4.Values and roles

An essential part of a women's identity is understanding what you are good at, what you value, and what you want to give yourself to. Unfortunately, discovering the answers to these questions is a luxury many women are never afforded. Too often, women are rarely given opportunities to define who they want to be and how they want to be perceived. Due to of systemic hurdles like gender bias in the workplace, criticism of women's anger or societal gender expectation roles, many women are coerced into taking positions they do not desire. Therefore, many women have never been taught to actually ask themselves who they are and what they feel called to. In response, this section is dedicated to educating and equipping women with the knowledge of discovering who they are and what they have to offer the world. By doing so, we empower women to start the journey of paving a path towards their desired goal(s). Thus, they are no longer serving other people's visions but establishing the vision and mission God has given them. The following are tools to equip them in this process:

- Strengthsfinder Test: www.gallup.com - While there is a free assessment, if a community wants to take the empowerment of women seriously, they should devote the financial resources towards a more holistic test. Therefore, it is recommended that the church should supply this test, especially for women serving in leadership.
- Spiritual Gifts Test - There are a healthy variety of spiritual gift tests. Although these tests try to be accurate, we must be careful not to use them as if they are the voice of God. This is important because, as people we change and are always in a process of discovering and developing who we are. Therefore, it is suggested that women (and all men on the ELT and STT) take a spiritual gifts test as the beginning of

the reconciliation process. They should also retake the test in the middle and end of implementing their action plans.

- Finding Your Chazown:[159] The concept of the chazown is about finding our life's purpose. In his book, *Chazown* by Craig Groeschel, he provides a simple but powerful aid for Christian believers to discover and peruse God's purpose for their life. By the end of the book people are equipped with a mission statement, an assessment of their gift-set, and a holistic analysis of their life experiences.

PROACTIVE POINT: It is important to note that MEN & WOMEN would benefit from taking using these tools. While this section specifically seeks to helps women, it is also important that men understand their own calling, identity, and giftset. This is because male privilege and cultural "favoritism" can provide men with opportunities they are actually unqualified to lead. Therefore, by analyzing one's own assessments, one is more aware of their own position, possibilities, and privileges. Thereby aiding your community in restructuring its leadership teams in a way that serves peoples aspirations and gift set.

However, it is important to note that just because someone does not "test well" in one area, does not mean they are unqualified. Instead, these tools are meant to provide a framework for your community to build off of. In order to successfully do this, it will require honest conversations, discernment, and prayer. Therefore, the consultant would be a great asset to aiding your community through this process.

5. Embodiment: Representation and Why it Matters

Art and images are a kind of language. What you see and even what you don't see, conveys something to people. Imagine being a woman who is called to be a public speaker but all she sees are men on stage. No one looks like her, sounds like her, or acts like her and when she tries leading in her own way, she is told she doesn't have the right "look" or "quality" to be a public speaker. So, she gives up with her hopes and dreams left in the distant pass. This is why representation matters.

What people see, is what people believe is possible. If we don't see diversity within our communities, we risk perpetuating a culture that limits people's possibilities. Therefore, representation will require skillful actions, interpretation and analysis that shows a diverse array of women with different body types, cultural backgrounds, experiences, and vocational roles.

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[159] Craig Groeschel, *Chazown: Discover and Pursue God's Purpose for Your Life,* Crown Publishing Group, 2011, EBL

The following are suggested ways for the community to expand the visual representation of women.

- <u>Stage & Leadership Presence</u>: It is important for women to lead the community from large platforms. This provides a public space for women to display their power, knowledge, and creativity to others. These opportunities show that a woman can teach, empower, and direct others. It also supports her voice as a leader and empowers the voices of other women to be taken seriously.
- <u>Media</u>: Women need to be represented in the media, especially portrayed in non-traditional conservative female roles. Once again, this shows other women their potential and possibilities. It helps to rewrite the narratives of what women do and where their place is in society.
- <u>Theology</u>: Although women are clearly represented in scripture, older theologies have restricted women's identities and roles in society. By highlighting the various roles women played in scripture and by elevating the feminine qualities of God, Christian women will begin to see themselves as image bearers, who are also called to the work of ministry and leadership.

Step 3: Involving the Whole Community
In order to successfully prepare women for leadership, it is important for the community around them to buy-in to this process. Therefore, it is vital for the STT to explain to the larger community why equitable practices matter, why women need help, and how they have been marginalized. By creating an action plan that is inclusive of the whole community, we create an environment where women no longer have to fight this battle by themselves. Instead, women will now have a new energy within the culture to help move them foreword in their leadership pursuits. The goal here is not to create a community that simply has *empathy* for women perusing leadership, but instead is committed to *equity* for their women in leadership.

Communities can fail to realize the difference between empathy and equity. As a communal assessment, I have provided a worksheet for the ELT, STT, and reconciliation teams self-reflection. Before moving forward, take a moment to read each of these experiences and ask the following questions: How many of these models reflected in your day to day church practices? Which ones do you need to work on? Do women's answers differ from men's? Why is this? Learn to ask questions. This, in and of itself, will become a great catalyst for developing a reconciliation praxis throughout the larger community.

> ## Equity versus Empathy for Christian Women
> ### By: Kaila Alvarez
>
> 1.Empathy: We talk about how powerful women are
> - Equity: We give space for them to show how powerful they are.
>
> 2. Empathy: We have women on staff
> - Equity: We have women leading equally as much as men and from equal platforms
>
> 3. Empathy: We value women
> - Equity: Women are paid, employed, and promoted equally as men
>
> 4. Empathy: We listen to women's problems
> - Equity: We work alongside women to help them accomplish their needs and take seriously what they say
>
> 5. Empathy: We teach our congregation the importance of women
> - Equity: We allow women to speak for their own ideas and reality
>
> 6. Empathy: We invest into women
> - Equity: We give as much access, opportunity, and resources that is necessary so that women are equal.
>
> 7.Empathy: We value who women are

Once all levels of leadership have answered these questions, it is time to start building an action plan. This is indented to practically serve the whole community in building equitable leadership opportunities for women. At this point the ELT and the STT will work alongside each other to implement this process. As a framework for developing your plan, consider including the following:

- Education: Provide your community with resources to learn about gender equality. Consider hosting workshops, conferences, TEDTALKS, or small groups that study a book together.
- Changing your Message: Create campaigns dedicated to uplifting women within your community. Allow women to share their experiences, talents, and passions. If you happen to be a church, also consider a lecture series that teaches your church how to be an advocate for women (examples: women in scripture, loving your neighbor as yourself, Christ suffering has ended, unity not uniformity, the body of Christ)
- Systemic Change: Create a philanthropy action plan within your community that is dedicated to ending systemic injustices for women.

This may include creating a scholarship program to aid women who are perusing a higher education, teaching men how to be present at home as much as their wives, finding subsidized child care, or providing practical needs for single mothers.

In the end, what makes reconciliation powerful is that it draws all people into each other's experiences, directly or indirectly. Therefore, your leadership teams should discern how to create a process that allows everyone to come together.

Step 4: Continued Assessment
Justice and reconciliation are hard work. It requires sacrifice and change but this can often be hard to identify and measure. Therefore, take some time to look back at the metrics and accountably section in Phase One, Section 4. Ask your community what metrics you can put in place to ensure that you are growing and seeing more women lead equitably and holistically. It is recommended that a general analysis of your progress be taken every 4-6 months and a thorough analysis, with new surveys and data, be taken at a minimum of every 1-2 years.

Summary:
Reconciliation is an on-going relational process. While metrics, data, and analysis are a fundamental element of evaluating the community's gender reconciliation progress, it is important to discern how the systems are affecting women personally. Who women are is important to the work they do and likewise, what they do influences who they are. However, more importantly, as the Church pays attention to the well-being and flourishing of women, it is critical that women also feel loved. This is true because as Christians we are called to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, leader in the anti-apartheid movement and advocate of Ubuntu Theology states it plainly when he says, "I am because we are." This simple phrase understands that another person's well- being has direct and divine implications to our own. In Christ, we are all connected together. We must not forget that even scripture itself likens the Church to a Body; a body with many parts and members. Each portion of the body carries a specific function and role. If one part of the body is sick, we are all sick. If one part of the body is well, then we are all well. Therefore, as followers of Christ, reconciliation must look beyond the statistics and beyond the roles in order to love one another. This will mean serving, advocating, and sustaining one another in the same way we desire to be. Activation is not complete unless it is rooted in love. Therefore, this activation praxis ends with a call to love, which is taken from the 1 Corinthians 13.[160]

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[160] 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, The Message Version,

1 Corinthians 13 The Message (MSG)

13 If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

2 If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

3-7 If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.

8-10 Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

11 When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

12 We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

13 But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is **_love_**.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The overall purpose of this thesis project was to discover if a "praxis to help the Church engage women's identity, gifting and calling would aid women for leadership and contribute to reconciling the female/male disparities within Christian communities." The goal is to see women empowered and released to fully lead in the Church and society. To determine the answer to this important question, this thesis conducted a survey, which examined the proposed praxis described in chapter 4. This chapter is a detailed analysis of the finding discovered through this assessment process and the conclusions derived as a result.

Survey Participants:

This survey conducted a study comprised of 11 individuals who have an extensive, yet diverse, experience with leadership development. The panel selected for this process represents a wide variety of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, life experiences, denominations, ages, professional positions, and length of service within the local church.

It is important to note that out of the 10 individuals who agreed to participate, 4 of them were men. Unlike the women who carry various leadership experiences and titles, all four of these men are currently hired by their churches. Two of the selected participants for this survey are founders of their churches, who hold over 25 years of pastoral leadership. They are also currently standing as their community's senior pastor and preaching pastor. Although the other two participants are not senior pastors, they are still hired for other pastoral leadership roles. One participant currently leads a whole campus of over 2000+ people and the other participant pastorally leads a variety of leadership departments and teaches at a leadership training college. Although these four men committed to evaluating the proposed

process, none of them followed through with their commitment and no response was received.

The following is a brief description of the individuals interviewed:

- **Angela** is the current Co-Lead Pastor and international preacher from The House Church in Guadalajara, Mexico. Before leading at The House, Angela held various leadership roles for Churchome as the full-time Media and Art Director, and later as the part-time Campus Pastor in Guadalajara, Mexico. She is also the current President and Founder of The House Café & Roastery, a social enterprise project for the community of Guadalajara. She has a Master's in Business Administration and a B.A.in Interdisciplinary Visual Arts. Angela has a significant background in the arts as a fashion model, media director, and artist. Angela identifies as a bi-cultural Mexican/American and is married with has three children.

- **Megan** and her husband serve as the current Campus Pastors for the Kirkland Campus, and was the previous Campus Pastors for the University Campus at Churchome, in Washington State. Before pastoring the entire campus, Megan and her husband were asked to serve as the Churchkids Pastors at the Kirkland Campus, serving up to 800 children on a given weekend. Currently, Megan is hired part-time while her husband is full time. In addition, her husband is part of the rotating preaching staff, however Megan's pastoral role does not include preached from the main platform. Instead, she often leads the congregation in transitions, welcoming and closings of the worship services. Prior to marriage, Megan held various administrative roles within the church. She has no advanced degree and would identify with white-U.S. American culture. However, she is married to a man of a racially mixed background and they have three children together.

- **Carla** is the current Executive Leadership Director of Churchome's entire organization. She is currently the only woman and Person of

Color to hold a position on the Executive Team. Over the years, Carla has been in charge of pastoring the Women Ministry, Singles Ministry, served as the Executive Director, and all information as the Content Manager. Prior to working at the church, she utilized her B.A. in Business Administration by serving in the business world as a sales and human relations director. Carla is only one of two single women in the churches 25 year history to hold a pastoral title. In addition, Carla recently took on the role of creating and leading a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative within the church. She identifies as a black woman, is married, and has no biological children.

- **Kristin** is the current Executive Assistant to the Lead Pastor at Saints Church in Queens, NY. Before this position, she served as the Campus Administrator for the Churchome University Campus in Seattle, WA. Over the years Kristin has held various ministry roles such as the high school ministry leader and women's small group leader. Kristin did not attend college and identifies as white. She is married to a man who identifies as black and they have no children.

- **Joanne** is the current Missions Pastor for the entire Churchome organization. Over the years, she has assumed multiple position and roles within the church. However, she is well known to other women as a strong female preacher. Joanne is the only female preacher not married to another staff member at Churchome. She is also the only woman to be hired fully-time in a pastoral role. While Joanne only preaches at Churchome once or twice a year, her profound preaching abilities and missional work has led her to preach on some of the largest Christian platforms in the world. Joanne would identify as a white woman, formally uneducated, and is a mother of two adult children.

- **Nina** is a full-time mother in the greater Seattle, WA area. Over the years she has served at Churchome as a volunteer. She oversees all

baptisms and baptism education programs. She also launched, developed, and oversees all family small groups. She leads a mom's group of over 35 women and mentors/trains other mothers to lead their own groups. She has a strong background as a national speaker and was once on staff as a public speaker for Rachel's Challenge, an organization launched in response to gun violence. In addition, Nina has served as a co-hosted for several podcasts. She also volunteers as a speaker and educator for Churchome's global app which reaches over 100,000 people on a given weekend. Nina has an advanced degree, with a B.A. in Christian Theology. She would identify as a biracial black and white woman, is married, and is the mother of three young children.

- **Johannys** is a licensed psychologist/counselor within the greater Seattle region. In addition, to her work as a counselor, Johannys was also hired as an early education instructor for the City Kids School in Kirkland, WA. However, as a recent mother of two, she has chosen to step back from traditional employment and focus on being a full time, stay at home mom. Before her time in Seattle, Johannys was a full time Youth Pastor and Elder for her local church in Puerto Rico. In addition, she has also served as a Sunday school teacher and small group leader over, on and off, over the last decade. Johannys is married to a man who has no leadership affiliation, identifies as a Hispanic/Puerto Rican, and has a B.A. in Psychology.

- **Hannah** is the previous worship director for the University Campus, at Churchome in Seattle, WA. While Hannah served in this role for years, she did it as a volunteer. This role included managing a worship team, running practices, creating schedules, hosting try-outs, mentoring the worship team, directing worship, serving at major conferences/camps/events, team nights, building worship team community, and more. In addition, Hannah is so powerful in her

worship abilities, she has toured with Judah Smith in all three of his JESUS IS. . . TOUR'S; which hosted thousands of people in every city. Before leading main Sunday services, Hannah also ran the worship department for the kinds ministry. Currently, Hannah works for the VA and is perusing an opportunity for law school. She has an advanced degree in theology, identified as a black woman, is single, and has no children.

Research Scope:

To gather the necessary information required to answer the guiding question of this thesis, a draft of the proposed process was sent to each of the selected participants. Their task was to provide their honest feedback regarding the necessity, effectiveness, and viability of this process to empower Christian women for leadership. The participants were given an assessment containing various questions and were instructed to respond and submit their feedback once finished. The following evaluation question were used to conduct the survey:

Organization:
1. Did this reconciliation process make sense to you?
2. Would you have arranged things differently? Why/Why not?

Evaluation:
1. Would a process like this be helpful for your community? Why/Why not?
2. How likely are you or your leadership to use something like this? What would keep you from using it?
3. What would you have liked to seen more of or what was missing for you?
4. Was anything confusing to you?

5. What did you learn? What were you surprised to see?

Thoughts/Considerations:

1. What were your initial feelings?
2. What did you like about this?
3. What did you not like about this?
4. Additional thoughts/considerations:

Data Analysis:

Overall, the data collected from the participates strongly suggest that the proposed praxis would contribute to reconciling the female/male disparities within their Christian communities and empower women to be fully released as leaders within their churches and larger society. Each participant conveyed that this praxis, designed to engage the identity, giftset, and calling of women will, in fact, contribute to strengthening women's leadership. The respondents affirmed the holistic approached used in this thesis and believed that it adequately addressed the present needs, concerns, and realities of Christian women. In addition, five (5) of the participants specifically reported that they most liked the "posture" or "tone" of this praxis. They stated that women's advocacy is often bombarded with materials that judge, condone, and/or criticize men. However, they communicated seeing no such posture within this proposed project. Instead, they experienced the methodology of this praxis as uplifting, inviting, and hopeful.

These statements suggest that many women are concerned with the receptivity of such a process. The women conveyed their concern that a topic like women's equality might be perceived as being "dismissive or disrespectful to men." [161] This suggest that women are highly concerned about the perception, posture, or tone of leadership efforts, especially when it

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[161] The word disrespectful or dismissive came from each of the 7 participants

comes to men. While none of the participants blatantly expressed the reason for this, the research in this thesis suggests that many women may be unconsciously experiencing a kind of "male fragility." This may be because many men are unaware of their privilege. Therefore, the action of questioning their character, power, and position can feel invasive and uncomfortable. Consequently, as a means of self-preservation, men may disengage with processes that feel critical of their character and identity. In light of these social structures and the feedback received from the women, this suggests that the approach of this praxis is effective for introducing men to the topic of equitable female leadership.

In addition, the women's feedback about not "being dismissive or disrespectful to men,"[162] may also suggest that further research should be conducted to investigate why women are afraid of a process that challenges men's egos. This could lead to pertinent information on how to skillfully engage men in uncomfortable conversations about gender equality. It may also highlight how and why women are adapting their opinions and actions to accommodate men. This would greatly contribute to understanding systemic disparities between men and women, both in the church and society.

It is also important to highlight that out of the fifteen (15) individuals selected to be surveyed, eleven (11) were women and four (4) were men. It has been established that none of the men followed through with their commitment to complete the survey.

It is also important to highlight that the lack of male resonances suggests that men may have less buy-in for supporting women. The simple lack of following through in evaluating a process designed to empower women seems to communicate that this issue is not as important to them. This in turn, confirms the power disparity between the women who have no power and the men who have all the power but no commitment to addressing issues

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[162] The word disrespectful or dismissive came from each of the 7 participants

of equity. Similarly, the lack of apology or explanation as to why they did not respond, may suggest that they do not highly regard the issues addressed in this thesis. Therefore, more research is necessary to determine if men are more likely to engage in this process if another man requested their participation. By investigating this idea, we may be able to understand if a praxis carries more "validity, weight, or urgency," if proposed by a male leader. This information would speak to developing a strategic methodology that builds "buy-in" from men on women's causes, especially when proposed by women.

Lastly, the lack of male involvement also reinforces the idea that Christian men are highly unaware of the severity of women's inequality in leadership. This strongly suggesting that Christian communities are in dire need of a liberative praxis for women. However, the men's lack of involvement also suggests that directly asking men to be involved is not sufficient enough to gain their participation. Since the majority of senior leaders are men, securing male participation presents a real challenge. If the senior leaders are not committed to this process, this entire praxis will not be effective. Therefore, this thesis would benefit from investigating practical approaches for getting men with power to support women's equality and equity. In addition, more research is necessary to investigate approaches for gender reconciliation that does not depend on male leadership to initiate it.

Since the lack of male involvement suggests that directly asking men to participate is not enough, women must learn to demand their involvement whether men like it or not. Women do not need men's permission to create a pathway for reconciling the disparity between men and women in leadership and to redistribute power. In fact, some may assume that because people have power, they are the only ones who can distribute it. However, based on the sacrifice and contribution of justice seekers like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Sojourner Truth, and Rosa Parks, we know that

disempowered people are actually able to rally power on their own, and distribute it between those who have and those who have not.

This dismantling of power creates a catalytic event that can produce a new system in which men and women are forced to face the issue of gender inequity. However, in order to do this effectively, women will need to specifically name what they want and what they need. This suggests that this praxis would benefit from adding a new section to its methodology that teaches women how to rally together and name what they want and how to create a pathway to get there.

It is also important to note that of the seven (7) women surveyed, there was a striking contrast in the reaction between the white women and the minority women's responses. It was clear that the feedback from white women did indicated an interest and strong desire for this project. However, their lack of a call for urgency seemed to treat this project as an information tool. The three white women continually expressed that they, "learned a lot," but no idea the depth of the problem. In addition, all three admitted that although they had some negative experiences, they did not really think it was bad enough to do something about it. The language of the white women gave the impression that they were complacent about the way things were. None of the white female respondents seemed to carry an identity of victimization, which could contribute to their lack of their sense of necessity. This by no means suggest that they did not see the value of this praxis for empowering female leaders. Instead, it was perceived as a great resource to, "make things better."

In contrast, all the women who identified as a minority concluded that reading this praxis was desperately needed in the Christian community. All these women communicated excitement, hope, and desperation for this praxis of equity and inclusion. They also reported that the unforeseen result of this project created an emotional response that was surprisingly painful. This pain was never communicated in a negative light. Instead, this praxis gave

space for these women to grieve and acknowledge their experience of pain and suffering was indeed unjust.

Unlike the white women, the minority women were able to relate to the material with their own painful and challenging stories. For the minority women, the pain was undeniably real. They attested to experiencing how being denied equitable pathways towards leadership was profoundly damaging to their sense of identity, calling, and gifting. Their language to describe the material was "triggering" or "painfully enlightening." It was triggering because it called to remembrance their own dehumanization. It was considered "painfully enlightening" because the material gave language to describe their experience and also gave information to finally name the injustices against them.

Most of the women of color discovered that the pain they experienced was still there and the process only confirmed their need for continued healing. As a result, it is important to note that most of them specifically called to talk and convey their feelings and reaction to the material. It seemed that writing the words was not enough to communicate the entirety of their emotional experience with the project. Similarly, it is important to note that while one woman of color did not call, she went to great lengths to describe her experience, relatedness and the emotional impact this project had on her. Due to the strong emotional response from these women, the need for minority women to have emotional and practical support and care is blatantly clear.

Likewise, it also suggests that because the women had a need to vocalize their experience, this praxis should include a "pastoral" approach to specifically aid women of color. In fact, all seven women, regardless of race/ethnicity, noted that they loved the idea of having someone, "walk with them," through this reconciliation process. They believe that gender reconciliation seems like a daunting and overwhelming task but having a consultant or expert to guide the process would help them feel more at peace.

After hearing the feedback from both white women and women of color, it is clear that this praxis will be an even stronger asset if it includes an individual consulting and a pastoral care component.

Final Summary:

The feedback strongly suggests that a liberative and empowering process for women's leadership is needed within Christian communities. However, this thesis project has revealed that there is an even stronger urgency for women of color. Therefore, if an adjustment were to be made to the current praxis, it is highly recommended that a process be created that specifically relates to women of color. In addition, it is also recommended that additional research be conducted on the intersectionality of women of color and their experience as female leaders in their Christian communities.

As a woman of color who has also experienced my own suffering, the overwhelming positive feedback received from this project strongly confirms that something is greatly needed for female leaders in our Christian communities. Interestingly, the feedback from the other women of color confirmed that there is a deep need and desire from other women of color to acknowledge the reality of the problem we face. The women of color clearly expressed that reading this thesis reversed their feelings of being alone. In fact, half of the participants specifically requested that they wished to hear and see more of my own experiences as the thesis writer. This request speaks to the deep desire to be in connection with other individuals who have experienced the same thing.

Therefore, in conclusion, to the question of "will a praxis of engaging women's identity, gifting, and calling aid them for leadership and contribute to reconciling the female/male disparities within Christian communities so women are empowered and released to fully lead in the Church and society,"—the answer is a resounding *YES*! The only obstacle facing its implementation is if those with power will use it to initiate the reconciliation

of female and male leadership, so all people can embrace their God given unique particularities and join with Christ in a love that is communally interdependent.

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31. Research inadequacies: While researching, it was evident that numerical and statistical data was unreliable. Due to denominational difference, each

denomination classified a womans leadership differently. For example, while a Baptist congregation my not ordain a woman, they do allow her to function as a "sister" or "elder." Therefore, there were many traditions that allowed women to serve as leaders but never actually ordained, hired, or gave titles to their position. Likewise, my research also discovered the reverse. While a congregation may have given the title of "pastor" or leader to some women, the women rarely were given actual opportunities to lead. Instead, they were commissioned as pastors because their husbands were hired to lead/pastor.

32. Narrative Research provided by the countless unnamed women who have entrusted me with their stories over the last 18 years. As a small group leader for 7 years, a small groups director for 4 years, a Hospitality director for 2 years, a Student Ministry Coordinator for 1 year, a female leadership developer for 5 years, and an Volunteer Campus Pastor for 4 years, I have taught, listened, and disciples hundreds of women. Each of their stories and experiences have helped shaped a larger narrative that only someone of my privilege has been privy to. As a privileged, educated, female, leader I have chosen to keep many of these narratives as anonymous because of the potential repercussions these women may face if their identities were to be discovered. It is not an understatement to say that if they were discovered many of these women would lose their jobs, be exiled from their church communities, or even beaten by spouses for telling their truth. While quantitative, hard data is important for this research, our narrative data will remain as soft data in order to continue to preserve the identity of these unsung heroes.

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