

Bethel University

Spark

All Electronic Theses and Dissertations

2016

Clergy Leadership Development: Exploring Factors in the Leadership Development Process of United Methodist Clergywomen

Mary Bendall Henley
Bethel University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henley, M. B. (2016). *Clergy Leadership Development: Exploring Factors in the Leadership Development Process of United Methodist Clergywomen* [Doctoral thesis, Bethel University]. Spark Repository. <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/285>

This Doctoral thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Spark. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Spark.

BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL SEMINARY ST. PAUL

CLERGY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING FACTORS IN THE
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF
UNITED METHODIST CLERGYWOMEN

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE IN
STRENGTHS-BASED CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY
MARY BENDALL HENLEY
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

MAY 2016

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
CHAPTER ONE: CLERGYWOMEN AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.....	5
CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.....	15
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	55
CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS.....	101
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....	118
CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION.....	140
CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION.....	159
APPENDIX A – LIST OF CLIFTON STRENGTHSFINDER THEMES.....	168
APPENDIX B – QUALTRICS SURVEY BACKGROUND ITEMS.....	170
APPENDIX C – QUALTRICS SURVEY - LIST OF LIKERT SCALE ITEMS.....	172
APPENDIX D – LIKERT SCALE SURVEY RESPONSES.....	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	176

ABSTRACT

This project was designed to discover factors associated with the leadership development of effective United Methodist clergywomen. The researcher chose a collective case study approach incorporating principles from grounded theory in the data analysis. After framing the research problem, the researcher conducted a biblical review highlighting female prophets from the Bible. In particular, the women from the Old Testament provided important insight.

The researcher conducted a literature review confirming the lack of scholarly work in the area of leadership development and clergywomen. The researcher identified four areas to frame the research, each representing an area of identity work. The four areas were not named as areas to focus on in developing one's leadership. Rather, the four areas framed the inquiry itself.

Grounded in the work of positive psychology, the researcher examined how the women came to be the outstanding leaders they are today. Two research instruments were designed based upon the framing of the research problem, the biblical review and the literature review. One instrument was a thirty-eight item close-ended survey. The survey gave the participant an opportunity to provide important personal background information and measured the degree to which each item in the four areas was critical for her development as a leader. The researcher also designed a twenty-eight item open-

ended interview protocol which the researcher conducted in person with each participant in Washington D.C., Silver Spring, Maryland and San Antonio, Texas.

Five major themes emerged from this study as factors that were significant in the leadership development process of these clergywomen: (1) vision – cultivating the capacity to see what is possible; (2) prayer practice – making time with God a priority; (3) strengths – knowing yourself and expecting the best; (4) mentors and coaches – building in sources of wisdom and encouragement and (5) intentional Christian community – investing in on-going covenant relationships.

CHAPTER ONE: CLERGYWOMEN AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Problem

In the United Methodist Church a lack of information exists about the leadership development of effective United Methodist clergywomen. Many clergywomen do not emphasize leadership development or utilize the empowering research in the area of strengths-based leadership development. Many may not know the importance of their unique strengths and abilities and how those strengths shape how they lead. Leadership development has not been a well-known stated goal among clergywomen. Therefore, the purpose of this project was to understand the leadership development, including strengths-based leadership development, of highly effective United Methodist clergywomen.

Much of the current and historical leadership literature has focused on leadership traits or techniques, with little focus on the process that helps leaders develop.¹ The limited body of meaningful information about leadership development is a detriment for clergywomen and the congregations they serve. The goal of this project is to be able to conceptualize the leadership development process in a way that can be utilized by United Methodist clergywomen as they carry out their ministry. Often the resources, programs and experiences that are designed for United Methodist clergywomen are based on the false assumption that all clergywomen are alike. Events are designed assuming that all clergywomen share the same, or at least very similar, joys and struggles. This is simply

¹ Bruce J. Avolio, "Promoting More Integrative Strategies for Leadership Theory-Building," *American Psychologist*, 62 (1), 2007, 29-30.

not the case. While this may have been true for the trailblazing generation of women, it is an assumption that is no longer valid. Much is known about the struggles of women in ordained ministry. Little is known about the successes, the victories and what works. Therefore, this project aimed to understand the positive actions and processes that have fostered excellent leadership among United Methodist clergywomen.

Delimitations of the Problem

This study did not seek to identify and interview all effective United Methodist clergywomen. The researcher does not provide a history of United Methodist clergywomen nor attempt to argue the legitimacy of women as leaders in the church, nor the ordination of women, which occurred in 1956 within the United Methodist church. The researcher limited this project to discovering and understanding the leadership development processes of three effective ordained female United Methodist pastors who have served at least twelve years and currently serve large congregations.

Assumptions

In this project the researcher made four general assumptions. The first assumption is that God calls all baptized Christians into ministry and acts of service. God expects Christians to discern opportunities for meaningful serving and sharing of the faith. In addition, God calls some men and women into full-time ordained ministry. Because God values men and women equally, God calls both men and women into ordained ministry.

The second assumption is that leadership development is a concept that has not been widely explored nor intentionally embraced by many, if not most, United Methodist

clergywomen, and it is time for clergywomen to engage and utilize such concepts in order to develop as leaders.

The third assumption is that United Methodist clergywomen desire to be the most competent and most faithful pastoral leaders that they can be, and that meaningful information about leadership development, as it relates to leading a local church, would be welcomed by clergywomen.

The fourth assumption is that women lead best when they choose to lead from their God-given strengths and talents. Therefore, an understanding of one's strengths is not only preferable in developing as a pastoral leader, but essential.

Subproblems

This project addressed five important subproblems. The first subproblem was to review the biblical and theological material related to female leaders in the Bible who are identified as prophets. Two general areas were explored: the first was to review the presence and role of women leaders in the Bible, especially the Old Testament; the second was to review what the Bible says about using one's talents and strengths. The presence and role of women leaders was explored through the leadership setting of the women, the leadership role of the women and the leadership contribution of the women. By identifying the setting, role and contribution of these women, the researcher observed the courage and faithfulness of the earliest women leaders among the people of God. Next, the biblical foundations of strengths were explored in order to review what Scripture says about abilities, talents and strengths. These two areas formed a foundation to explore strengths-based leadership in clergywomen.

The second subproblem was to examine the research literature related to leadership development in clergywomen, including strengths-based leadership theory and development. This project reviews the work of several researchers in the areas of clergy and women and leadership, but none were identified that specifically addressed leadership development in clergywomen. The lack of scholarly work on leadership development for clergywomen illustrates the need for this kind of study. The researcher discovered that plans are underway by four researchers, Diana Bilimoria, Gelaye Debebe, Deidre Anderson and Susan Vinnicombe for a special issue of the *Journal of Education Management* on women's leadership development.² The researcher emailed the research team in hopes that the team would share their preliminary findings. The research team indicated that they were editing manuscripts and that no information could be shared. It is the hope of this researcher that Bilimoria's publication will provide new and empowering information on the topic of women's leadership development.

The third subproblem was to develop an instrument to gather data. First, the researcher conducted a brief survey among twelve United Methodist clergywomen. This survey helped to identify general leadership themes that are on the minds of clergywomen. Next, a Likert Scale and an in-depth interview protocol were developed based on relevant issues that emerged from the biblical review and the literature review.

The fourth subproblem was to conduct a collective case study by interviewing three successful United Methodist female pastors who have been in ministry for at least twelve years and are effectively leading large churches. The case study was conducted in order to uncover the distinct leadership development process of these women.

² Diana Bilimoria, Email correspondence (September 14, 2015).

The fifth subproblem was to analyze and interpret the data collected through the case study in order to identify factors that may important to the leadership development process of clergywomen. These factors may help provide clergywomen with resources to engage both the opportunities and challenges of ordained ministry.

The Setting of the Project

The United Methodist Church is organized first into Jurisdictions and then into Annual Conferences. The researcher lives and serves in the North Alabama Annual Conference, in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, of the United Methodist Church. The North Alabama Conference is a geographical region encompassing approximately the top half of the state of Alabama. The researcher is in her sixteenth year of full time pastoral ministry and her third year as Senior Pastor of an 1100 member congregation in Birmingham, Alabama. This project was informed by the researcher's sixteen years of pastoral ministry in the United Methodist Church. The research itself was completed directly with participants who are located beyond the bounds of the researcher's immediate ministry context. It is the hope of the researcher that any helpful findings may be used to design leadership resources for United Methodist clergywomen.

The Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

Serving as an ordained United Methodist clergywoman has been both a challenging and exciting experience for the researcher. During her fifth year of ministry it became apparent that in order to be effective as a pastor, and to be healthy and contented

as a human being, it would be necessary to grow as a leader. The work of a local church pastor is challenging, intense, consuming and demands leadership skill. Confronted with the challenges of supervising staff, discerning vision, strategic planning and other executive demands, the researcher determined it was time to seek education in leadership and management. She was fast approaching a crossroads at which she could choose to operate with knowledge she already possessed, or, she could choose to meet the need head on and gain new knowledge and develop new skills. The researcher began the process of educating herself by reading books about management and leadership, and conducting informal interviews with seasoned female and male pastors. The researcher's desire was and is to be the best leader that she can be. Gaining insight into the developmental process of becoming an excellent leader is critical to the career and well-being of the researcher.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Context of Ministry

First, this project is important to the immediate context of ministry because identifying factors that lead to sustained excellence in pastoral leadership will maximize the ministry of the researcher. These leadership development factors can inform the supervision of staff members, preaching, leadership of teams and committees, strategic planning, casting a vision, and developing funds for ministry.

Second, this project is important for the congregations served by United Methodist clergywomen. United Methodist churches reap the benefits of having a pastor who is committed to being the best, most informed, most competent and faithful leader possible. As congregations are strengthened by good leadership, they are better able to fulfill their mission. As a denomination, the mission of the United Methodist Church "is

to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”³ It is based on Jesus’ command to the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”⁴ The United Methodist Church is guided by Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor (Matt. 22:37, 39).

The researcher plans to share the findings of this project in three ways. First, the researcher will submit an article for *Wellsprings: A Journal for United Methodist Clergywomen* and *Interpreter* magazine. Second, the researcher will provide a summary presentation to the clergywomen of the eight Districts in the North Alabama Conference. At the conclusion of this project, if the desire exists among the clergywomen, a potential third way to share could be to design a resource that can be offered to women who want develop their leadership expertise.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

Since its beginning, the community of faith has needed competent and faithful leaders. The early people of God, as reflected in the Old Testament, needed leaders to help them make sense of their lives and of life with God. The early church also quickly discovered the need for appropriate leadership. The early apostles instructed the church to identify people to lead and administrate (Acts 6:3-6). Across the centuries the leaders of the church have varied in gender, background, life experience and abilities. In church leadership there is room for a variety of giftedness, strengths and abilities.

³ The United Methodist Church, homepage, <http://www.umc.org> (accessed May 6, 2016).

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from Wayne Meeks, ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins), 1993.

The Apostle Paul described the variety of abilities among the people of God: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7). He expresses a similar thought later in the same chapter, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:27-28).

The researcher believes that every congregation desires a competent pastor, and that every pastor desires to lead a vibrant, or willing-to-become-vibrant, congregation. Ministry is empowered by God, and it is God who deserves the credit for the success of any pastor. Yet, each pastor can commit to develop her leadership skills and strengths over the years. As a denomination, the United Methodist Church has not experienced numerical growth. In fact, the United Methodist Church has been in decline since its formation in 1968:

When The United Methodist Church was created in 1968, it had approximately 11 million members, making it one of the largest Protestant churches in the world. Since its birth, United Methodism has experienced a number of changes in its life and structure. It has become increasingly aware of itself as a world church with members and conferences in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States. While its membership in Europe and the United States has declined noticeably since 1968, membership in Africa and Asia has grown significantly.⁵

The addition of new members has not outweighed the loss of members. Furthermore, few bright, young women see ministry as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church

⁵ The United Methodist Church, “What We Believe,” <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/developments-and-changes-since-1968> (accessed September 18, 2015).

as a desirable or feasible career. The United Methodist Church benefits when clergywomen to lead well. More importantly, the kingdom of God is strengthened when the church has effective leaders. When a clergywoman leads with skill she honors herself, other women in ministry, and God.

Research Methodology

The researcher used a collective case study approach to learn about the leadership development of three highly effective United Methodist clergywomen. Primary data included a Qualtrics survey and face-to-face interviews with the women. Secondary data included biblical, theological and scholarly material regarding women and leadership development, including strengths-based leadership development, as well as information about leadership development programs that are currently available to clergywomen.

The first step was to identify women leaders in scripture and to understand their setting, role and contribution. A review of three female leaders/prophets from the Old Testament and a brief review of four female leaders from the New Testament provide a foundation for understanding female leaders in the Bible. The Old Testament women provide particularly valuable information because they are featured prominently in the narrative of God and God's people. While the New Testament women are equally important to the birth and growth of the church, the biblical record does not provide the same richness of material about what is involved in leading and speaking to the people of God. Therefore, this project emphasizes is the women prophets/leaders from the Old Testament. In addition, a discussion of spiritual gifts provides a biblical foundation for understanding a strengths-based approach to leading.

The second step was to review the literature related to leadership development for clergywomen. This included a review of programs offered for clergywomen, positive psychology, leadership development, strengths theory, and strengths-based leadership development.

The third step was to design a research instrument that would enable the researcher to gain a thorough picture of the self-understanding of three successful United Methodist clergywomen. The research instruments were based upon leadership issues identified through the biblical and literature review.

The fourth step was to identify three highly effective and faithful clergywomen and conduct interviews with them about their leadership development. Attention was given to their views and thoughts regarding their leadership development process.

The fifth step was to collect, organize and interpret the data in order to gain insight into their leadership development process. Finally, a reflection upon the findings and the project overall is provided, including suggested topics for further exploration.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Female Leaders in the Bible

The Bible identifies few women, in comparison to men. Even fewer women are identified as leaders. Part of the difficulty in identifying female leaders in Scripture is that there is ambiguity in the actual naming of individuals (regardless of leadership stature) in both the Old and New Testaments. The task of identifying women in Scripture is further complicated by the fact that some names are presented in more than one form and in more than one language, and some names are shortened into a different form depending upon the use of the Hebrew.¹

One can reach a different total of names based on how the above challenges are addressed. According to Karla Bohmbach, in one calculation the number of named individuals in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is approximately 3000-3,100 of which 2900 are men and 170 are women. Another calculation named 1,700 distinct names, with about 1,563 of those being men's names and 137 of those being female names.² Among several studies counting the names "in all of them, women or women's names represent between 5.5 and 8 percent of the total, a stunning reflection of the androcentric character of the Bible."³ Bohmbach notes that Scripture "contains 205 separate entries about named women. Because some of the names are shared by more

¹ Karla Bohmbach, "Names and Naming in the Biblical World," *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 33.

² Bohmbach, 33.

³ Bohmbach, 34.

than one woman, or because the same woman is referred to in the different main sections of the Bible and so counted separately, the number of distinct women's names comes to 162."⁴ Carol Meyers, in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, also reports the lack of named women in Scripture when she states "the Hebrew Bible mentions a total of 1,426 names, of which 1,315 are men. Thus only 111 women's names appear, about 9 percent of the total."⁵ Meyers views this as an example of the androcentric nature of the Bible in terms of its content, its authorship and its perspectives.⁶ Even with the lack of women cited in the Bible, the Bible can and should be studied for the purpose of understanding that female leaders were part of the biblical story. God used both men and women to accomplish God's purposes.

In the Old Testament the women who may be considered leaders are identified as "prophets." The prophet's job is to speak to the people on behalf of God and to speak to God on behalf of the people. A prophet delivers God's message to the people as God provides it, as does the pastor of a church. Speaking to God's people on behalf of God and speaking to God on behalf of the people is a primary task in the United Methodist Church. It is a critical role played by the pastor. Of the women named in the Old Testament, five are identified as leaders, or prophets: Miriam (Exod. 2:4-10, Exod. 15:20-21, Num. 12:1-16, Num. 20:1, Num. 26:59, Deut. 24:8-9 and Mic. 6:4); Deborah (Judg. 4 and 5); Huldah (2 Kings 22:14-20 and 2 Chron. 34:22-28); Noadiah (Neh. 6:14); and the unnamed wife of Isaiah (Isa. 8:1-4). Of these five women, Miriam and Deborah

⁴ Bohmbach, 34.

⁵ Carol Meyers, "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992) 245.

⁶ Meyers, 245.

are well known in the church. Huldah is a little known prophet yet meets the criteria of prophet because she spoke on behalf of God. Noadiah is generally considered to be a false prophet. And finally, Isaiah's wife is mentioned only as the woman whom Isaiah married.

This project is grounded in Scripture and therefore examines these female leaders in three dimensions that include leadership setting, leadership role, and leadership contribution. First, leadership setting is defined as the general situation of the community of faith at the time of the leader's actions. Second, leadership role is comprised of the words and actions of the leader. Third, leadership contribution can be understood as the impact or significance of the leader's words and actions.

Many women carried out important actions and played an important role among the people of God. Of the female leaders/prophets named in the Old Testament, this project examines the leadership setting, role and contribution of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. Of the female leaders named in the New Testament epistles, this project examines Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche and Prisca. One wishes that Scripture would contain the names and the stories of all the faithful women who functioned as leaders in many different situations. This project, in terms of the biblical review, chooses to make the best of the limited information found in Scripture. Insights into the leadership development process for United Methodist clergywomen can be gained by examining seven of the female leaders that are named in Scripture.

Female Leaders in the Old Testament

Understanding the leadership setting, role and contribution of key female leaders in the Bible provides insight into the process required for real leadership development. Though the Bible does not describe their experience as “leadership development experience,” we can learn from these women some of the factors that are involved in the process of becoming the leader God wants you to be. This review focuses primarily on women from the Old Testament (Miriam, Deborah and Huldah) because these women led the people of God during pivotal times. Scripture identifies them as prophets meaning they were individuals who spoke the very words of God to God’s people. For the purpose of understanding the process of leadership development, the biblical material on these women is far richer than the material surrounding the women in the New Testament. Though the women in the New Testament are important, valuable, and contributed to the beginning and the growth of Christianity, readers of the scripture passage may not observe the same depth of rich narrative as with the Old Testament prophetic leaders. These Old Testament women show that becoming the leader God wants is not about getting it right all the time, not about being perfect and not about things being easy. They show that true leadership is sacrificial.

Miriam

Her Leadership Setting

Miriam, the sister of Moses, is important for clergywomen because she demonstrates courage, perseverance and faithfulness to God. She appears in four of the five books that comprise the Torah and also in one prophetic book. She appears also in 1 Chronicles 6:3 in which her lineage is noted and she is identified as the sister of Aaron

and Moses. In three passages, Miriam plays an active role in the story of the people of God (Exod. 2:1-10, Exod. 15:20-21, and Num. 12:1-16). The remaining four references to Miriam are simply notations that she existed among the people of God (Num. 20:1, Num. 26:59, Deut. 24:9 and Mic. 6:4).

The prophet Miriam can best be examined within the three distinct contexts in which her actions are recorded. First, she is seen in a setting in which her people are suffering at the hand of Pharaoh. Their lives are marked by forced labor and anxiety over their condition (Exod. 1 and 2). Second, she is seen in a setting in which the people joyfully sing a song of victory to God because God has acted dramatically on their behalf. It is a time of elation for the people of God (Exod. 11 and 12). Walter Brueggemann, in describing the context of Exodus, notes the importance of the establishment of Moses, not Miriam, as the key leader of the people. Therefore, Miriam cannot be understood apart from her brother Moses. Third, Miriam is seen in the wilderness setting in which the people are once again filled with anxiety and fear over their lives (Num. 11 and 12). In the wilderness setting, the Israelites struggle to maintain faith and trust in God. Additionally, Moses struggles to deal with the grumblings and complaints and rebellious hearts of the Israelite people. This is important to note because Moses' plea (Num. 11) for help in leading the people sets the stage for Miriam and Aaron's later challenge to Moses' prophetic authority (Num. 12). Miriam's appearance in three different contexts reminds us of how clergywomen must be able to lead in a variety of circumstances. Even if a clergywoman serves the same church for a lengthy period of time she must be able to respond to the changes in the organization over time.

Her Leadership Role

Miriam's leadership can be observed first in the rescue of her infant brother Moses, then in the leading of the people in the victory dance after crossing the Red Sea, and finally in the conversation with God in which she and her other brother, Aaron, challenge Moses' prophetic role.

Miriam's leadership in Exodus 2. Miriam first appears in the book of Exodus during the pre-covenant and pre-wilderness era. The Israelite people are in bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. They are oppressed by the new king of the Egyptians and their lives become bitter and miserable (Exod. 1:9-14). In an effort to control the population of the Israelites, Pharaoh instructs the Hebrew midwives to kill any male Hebrew newborns. The midwives refuse to carry out Pharaoh's orders, and God blesses them for their courage. Next, Pharaoh resorts to giving the same instruction to "all his people" (Exod. 1:15-22). Moses is born into this dangerous setting and, consequently, Miriam's first actions can be observed in this context of danger.

Miriam's success in rescuing her brother, Moses, demonstrates Miriam's courage and her resourcefulness. Drorah O'Donnell Setel points out that "one way in which the women of Exodus provide unauthorized leadership is through acts of intervention" such as the rescue of Moses by his sister Miriam. The infant Moses, only a few months old, is crying in the basket among the reeds on the riverbank when Miriam suddenly proposes a solution.⁷ She inquires of Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" (Exod. 2:7). Pharaoh's daughter responds favorably and through Miriam's actions Moses is saved. Miriam, in fact, was one of

⁷ Drorah O'Donnell Setel, "Exodus," *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 29.

“numerous women who play significant, although unelaborated, roles in the events described in the narrative. Their stories may be the remnants of a larger cycle that recorded women’s as well as men’s involvement in the leadership of the people.”⁸

It is impressive that Miriam acted decisively in the moment of need. Julianna Claassen celebrates that Miriam “emerges as a canny negotiator, whose initiative is responsible for the fact that the infant will be nursed by his own mother, all the while growing up safely in Pharaoh’s own home.”⁹ Immediately, from the birth story, it is clear that the most important event in the beginning of the Book of Exodus is the birth of Moses, not the birth of Miriam. Miriam’s world is focused on the birth and survival of the male that will become the “founder and generator of all things Israelite, including Israel’s faith and freedom.”¹⁰

Miriam as leader in Exodus 15. The adult Miriam’s actions show that she is a strong and independent leader.¹¹ The liberation of the Israelites and their safe passage through the Red Sea becomes “the defining, paradigmatic account of faith whereby Israel is understood as the beloved, chosen community of YHWH and the object of YHWH’s peculiar and decisive intervention in public events.”¹² It is impressive that Miriam is a leader during such an important time for the Israelites. Miriam’s actions in Exodus 15 can

⁸ Setel, 29.

⁹ Julianna Claassen, “Miriam 2,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 4*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 107.

¹⁰ Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1*, ed. Leander E. Keck. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 690.

¹¹ Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women’s Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 207.

¹² Walter Brueggemann. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 53.

best be understood in light of the content of the previous chapter. Exodus 14 describes the dramatic events of the liberation of the people through the Red Sea:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots and chariot drivers (Exod. 14:21-23).

This story is the central story for the ancient Israelite people because it is evidence that God acted mightily on their behalf. There can be no doubt that God saved the Israelite people. Therefore, a song of victory follows. Exodus 15:1-19 is a song of victory that Moses leads the people in singing in response to God's mighty acts of liberation. Brueggemann notes "such speech in this poem opens up the most elemental struggles and hopes that are part of the human experience. No other mode of theological speech so well touches the human concreteness of faith."¹³ Miriam's leadership in this expression of gratitude and praise of God is highly important to the people. The most appropriate response after being rescued is to sing a song of thanks and praise. It is clear that Miriam's relationship with God is important to her. Her own insight into the power God has in their lives overflows as she leads the people in song. Her leadership comes from her relationship with God and her clarity that God has provided for her and for her people.

Being an effective pastoral leader involves being able to have this perspective. Over time, a leader can develop a deeper and deeper sense of God's provision. This song, verses 13 and 17 in particular, describe a loving and powerful God and the resultant trust by the people in such a God. It is a beautiful affirmation of the relationship forming

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," 803.

between God and God's people. At the conclusion of the song by Moses, adult Miriam appears with her own song:

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (Exod. 15:20-21).

Additionally, Miriam's single verse song has almost the exact wording of the beginning of Moses's song: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously, horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (Exod. 15:1b). The fact that Miriam appears here at all is a victory in and of itself. Yet, it is striking that Exodus records a lengthy expression of faith by Moses and attributes only one verse at the end to Miriam. Frank Frick also celebrates that "the important role given to women at the beginning of Exodus is here seen again at the Song of Miriam."¹⁴ From a similar positive perspective, Setel sees beyond the one verse attributed to Miriam at the end of Moses' song to understanding the entire song to be the song of Miriam: "The fact that this citation has been preserved despite later perspectives that augment that significance of Moses, while diminishing that of his sister, has led scholars to conclude that the work was indeed originally preserved as her creation."¹⁵ Setel's interpretation of Miriam focuses on the fact that the biblical record identifies her as a leader and prophet: "Miriam's designation as a prophet and her unquestioned leadership of the victory celebration in Exodus 15 indicate that ancient

¹⁴ Frank Frick, *A Journey Through the Hebrew Scriptures* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace), 1995, 219.

¹⁵ Setel, 31.

Israelites were also familiar with forms of female authority that did not survive into later periods.”¹⁶ Miriam was an important leader.

Miriam’s role was significant. When her brother, the future leader of her people, was threatened, Miriam acted quickly and effectively. Her resourcefulness saved Moses from certain death, and guaranteed that he could be nursed and raised safely by his actual mother. These actions can be considered leadership actions because what she said and did affected others in important ways. Later Miriam takes liturgical leadership as an adult among the people. She confidently leads the people in a song of thanks and praise. These two segments of Miriam’s life demonstrate that she was a woman of creativity and resourcefulness, of faith and of hope. It is evident that Miriam was confident in her own ability to impact others in positive ways, whether it be the saving of her brother or the leading of people in appropriate praise of God.

Miriam’s leadership in Numbers 12. The Book of Numbers includes Miriam’s actions during the Israelites’ journey in the wilderness (Num. 12). Moses, their leader, has brought them to a place of safety, yet difficult discussions arise regarding the leadership of the people. Thomas Dozeman states “Numbers 10:11-21:35 tells of the tragic wilderness journey of the first generation. The literature is organized around conflicts in which Israel rebels against God and the leadership of Moses.”¹⁷ Once again it is a time of anxiety for the Israelites, as indicated by their complaining and grumbling (Num. 11). In contrast to the anxiety found in Exodus 1 in which the people seemingly had no solution, in the wilderness the people have been given a leader by God.

¹⁶ Setel, 31.

¹⁷ Thomas Dozeman, “The Book of Numbers,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 4.

Yet they are not satisfied. In this unsatisfied, frustrated context we encounter Miriam once again. This time, Miriam is not presented as a hero who rescues her brother from imminent death, nor is she the poised leader of the song of thanks and praise.

Unfortunately, Miriam's actions in Numbers are met with anger and punishment from God.

Miriam and Aaron are reported to have first criticized Moses for his decision to marry a Cushite woman. Then Miriam and Aaron proceed to inquire about their leadership role among the people of God, and whether God might speak through them just as He has spoken through Moses:

And they said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth. Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting.' So the three of them came out. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward" (Num. 12:2-5).

Alice Ogden Bellis reveals "God is exceedingly angry with Miriam and Aaron for their conflict with Moses on the issue of prophetic authority."¹⁸ God proceeds to explain that God speaks indirectly to most prophets through visions and dreams. However, God does not employ that method with Moses. Moses is different. Moses is special. God speaks directly to Moses and Moses "beholds the form of the Lord" (Num. 12:6-8a). God explains clearly that "in the hierarchy of leadership Moses is at the top."¹⁹ Immediately following this explanation, God asks Miriam and Aaron why they were not fearful of speaking against Moses, considering he is such a special person. Without Miriam and

¹⁸ Bellis, 91-92.

¹⁹ Bellis, 91-92.

Aaron being given an opportunity to answer the question, Scripture immediately indicates God's anger (Num. 12:9).

Miriam is then immediately severely punished for her inappropriate line of questioning about the special prophet Moses: "When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous" (Num. 12:10). Aaron immediately realizes that he has escaped punishment from God. Aaron quickly turns to Moses and asks for mercy from him for both him and Miriam, though only Miriam has received punishment: "Oh, my Lord, do not punish us for a sin that we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like one stillborn, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother's womb. And Moses cried to the Lord, "O God, please heal her." (Num. 12:11-13). Moses now intercedes for Miriam as she once interceded for him. This is a positive note that should not be missed, given this painful narrative.

Unfortunately, God does not reverse the leprosy for Miriam. The punishment shall not be lifted from her. Aaron shall remain unpunished. Miriam must endure the punishment of being struck with leprosy (Num. 12:14-16). This story portrays God punishing "a woman for speaking up and claiming her role as a leader."²⁰ However, Claassens points out that "Miriam's importance for the community is evident from the fact that Aaron and Moses intercede on her behalf and that the whole community is said to wait until she is healed before resuming their journey."²¹

²⁰ Claassens, 107.

²¹ Claassens, 107.

To gain insight into this harsh treatment of Miriam, it is necessary to look at the broader context of Numbers 12. First, it must be noted that this is during the wilderness era. The wilderness is a time in which God leads the people rather circuitously toward the Promised Land. The wilderness is *spiritually* a time of great struggle and testing in which God seeks to establish a true relationship with God's people. Over and over God provides what is needed to survive in the wilderness. Yet, over and over, the people do not trust God, do not have faith in God and even rebel against God's commands. The wilderness is a sort of spiritual "boot camp", a formational period in which the people of God will either learn the difficult lessons that come along, or miss out on a future with God.

Thomas Dozeman writes about the meaning of wilderness:

The wilderness is the place where Israel is organized, when structures of leadership are defined, when their relationship to God is revealed and when systems of worship and government are developed. The wilderness also symbolizes a time of transition ... in which an age of innocence is replaced by a time of testing. The test is whether Israel is able to live the life of faith outside the Promised Land. Testing gives rise to the possibility of failure, in which case the wilderness may be a negative time of rebellion, rather than a positive time of innocence and courtship.²²

The wilderness a time of testing; it is also a time of establishing. It is after the liberation from bondage in Egypt and before the arrival to the Promised Land. It is in the in between time in which all find themselves challenged. The people are frightened and losing hope. Moses is frustrated with them. Leadership of the people of God is indeed an important topic during the sojourn through the wilderness. Understanding the nature of the wilderness may provide insight into the seemingly unfair treatment of Miriam. For instance, the harsh punishment from God may be because the wilderness is a time of establishing roles, and God wanted to dramatically affirm Moses' special status as the

²² Thomas Dozeman, "The Book of Numbers," 16.

prophet chosen by God to lead the people. Perhaps the effect was not to punish Miriam as much as it was to honor Moses and his special prophetic authority. Another possibility, according to Dennis Olson, is that “it may be that the story was originally only about Miriam and Aaron was added secondarily. Another explanation may be that the writer simply could not tolerate having Aaron, the high priest, rendered unclean by leprosy.”²³ Another perspective comes from Katherine Doob Sakenfeld who proposes that God’s anger comes from the fact that Miriam “has tried to claim authority comparable to that of God’s chosen leader.”²⁴ She further states that this is a “painful signal of the patriarchal perspective underlying the narrative.”²⁵ Even within a patriarchal system Miriam leads with courage.

These events between God and the people are important to note with respect to Miriam’s story because it provides further insight into life in the wilderness with God. Numbers 11 shows the dissatisfaction of the people as well as the continual anger of God. It is against this backdrop of complaint and anger that Miriam and Aaron raise their criticism of Moses and their question about his exclusive role as God’s prophet. Perhaps the anger of God persisted and was directed at Miriam. Perhaps God showed mercy to Miriam in that the leprosy was not permanent. Perhaps the seven days of shame was somehow grace compared to permanent leprosy, fire consuming the people or the plague noted in Numbers 11:33.

²³ Dennis Olson, “Numbers,” *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. James Mays (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 191.

²⁴ Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, “Numbers,” *Women’s Bible Commentary: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 84.

²⁵ Sakenfeld, 84.

Perhaps the most helpful perspective in interpreting Miriam's seemingly innocent question and God's seemingly harsh punishment comes from Susan Ackerman.

Ackerman suggests the following as the reason Miriam could be affirmed as a leader as depicted in Exodus, even as she is severely punished for her attempt at shared leadership with Moses in Numbers:

The biblical record suggests that the Israelites could imagine women as occupying these sorts of roles only within the context of some very specific conditions. Historically, the conditions required were the kind of period of destabilization or decentralization during which women can generally achieve a more elevated status and find opportunities for a greater exercise of power. Literarily, the conditions required were a narrative containing a liminal phase in which the characteristically liminal experience of anti-structure allowed women to be depicted as holding positions within their communities that in the re-aggregated sections of the text they would otherwise be denied.²⁶

In other words, the environment of bondage in Egypt (Exod. 1) and the victorious crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 15) were both "liminal anti-structure."²⁷ They were unstable, delicate times in which women could readily serve as leaders, or prophets. In contrast, the wilderness, though seemingly liminal, was actually a time of great establishment and structure, thereby making women's attempts at leadership intolerable.

Ackerman suggests that

in Numbers 12, when liminality has come to an end, Miriam's claims about her prophetic stature within a reaggregated community are perceived as presumptuous, and far more presumptuous than are Aaron's, for while he has only misconstrued the nature of his relationship with God as compared to Moses, she both has been guilty of this misconstruing and has overstepped the bounds of gender.²⁸

²⁶ Susan Ackerman, "Why is Miriam also among the Prophets? (And is Zipporah among the Priests?)," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 121/1 (2002), 80.

²⁷ Ackerman, 80.

²⁸ Ackerman, 80.

Miriam, the prophet, is remembered both positively and negatively in the biblical record beyond Exodus and Numbers. In Deuteronomy she is remembered negatively as an example of what not to do. Now the people are in the covenant era, and the deuteronomic author is describing the various restrictions and regulations for faithful living. It is best read in the context of this listing of rules:

No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge. If someone is caught kidnapping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnapper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. Guard against an outbreak of a leprous skin disease by being very careful; you shall carefully observe whatever the levitical priests instruct you, just as I have commanded them. Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on your journey out of Egypt. When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind... (Deut. 24:6-10a).

In this context, Miriam is presented as a reminder of the punishment that God has the capacity to bring upon the people. Though it is disturbing that a female leader is remembered in this way, it can also be viewed less about Miriam and more about the holiness and power of God.

Her Leadership Contribution

Miriam demonstrates resourcefulness and strength as a young girl, reverence and praise of God as an adult, and resilience in facing the punishment of God. Alice Ogden Bellis assures us that “in spite of diminution by the biblical text, Miriam can be reconstructed as a multi-faceted, strong character.”²⁹ She “emerges as a leader in the wilderness and therefore is doubly a hero, in spite of her punishment by God.”³⁰ The Book of Micah can be interpreted, according to Brueggemann, as a “doxological meditation upon the character of YHWH as understood and evidenced in a series of

²⁹ Bellis, 95.

³⁰ Bellis, 96.

critical moments in the life of Israel.”³¹ Brueggemann’s view on the importance of Micah as a book that points to critical moments for Israel, reveals the vital role Miriam played in the overall story of the people of God. Even with the difficulty and suffering of Numbers 12, Miriam remained a person of faith. She remained in relationship with God and her people. Perhaps redemption comes for Miriam when she is referenced in Micah 6:4 where she “is remembered together with Moses and Aaron as one of the leaders by whom God redeemed Israel from the house of slavery in Egypt, attesting to her significance in the collective memory of Israel.”³² The people of God remember her as a leader that helped them on their journey. She is remembered as faithful and strong. Her faith allowed her to find the very words to lead the people in praise of God. If one endeavors in the leadership task long enough one will experience suffering. Miriam’s story remains as a witness to persistence in the face of challenge and the importance of staying in relationship with God.

In the prophet Micah, we see that once again, the people of God have not been faithful. Again, God is frustrated, even angry, with the people. However, this time Miriam is portrayed as an equal with her brothers: “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam” (Mic. 6:3-4). In fact, when God says that God sent these three people God is recalling “the saving history in which God has repeatedly rescued and led Israel. In light of this history God cannot understand the people’s faithlessness. God redeemed Israel so

³¹ Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 233.

³² Claassens, 107.

that the saving acts of God would be known and recited with praise and honor.”³³ The entire passage of Micah 6:1-18 is “widely taken to be a summary of prophetic ethics, an ethic that requires justice, steadfast love and intimate responsiveness to YHWH.”³⁴ It is impressive that Miriam is named as a leader sent by God to the people to draw the people into such intimate responsiveness. Though a leader’s intentions can be noble, being in leadership brings with it successes and failures. Miriam shows us that leaders sometimes are on target and sometimes miss the mark completely.

Conclusion. Perhaps Miriam’s full story will remain a mystery. She began her leadership as a young child using her power, her resourcefulness and her creativity to ensure that her baby brother receives what he needs. She saves his life and ensures he is cared for by his own mother (Exod. 2). As an adult, Miriam’s leadership focused on leading the people in the song of thanks and praise to God after the victorious fleeing from the Egyptians. Finally, Miriam suffers greatly because, as Phyllis Trible notes, “she understands leadership to embrace diverse voices, female and male. But the price of speaking out is severe.”³⁵ Trible also notes that “after her punishment, she never speaks, nor is spoken to. Indeed she disappears altogether from the narrative until the announcement of her death and burial at Kedesh (Num. 20:21).”³⁶ It is important that the most important story in the Hebrew Bible begins “with women who act courageously,

³³ W. Eugene March, “Micah” in *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. James Mays (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 735.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* 236.

³⁵ Phyllis Trible, “Miriam,” *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 128.

³⁶ Trible, 128.

defying oppression, and that it begins with women who are life-affirming women who are wise and resourceful in tough situations. Without these women there would be no Moses to liberate the Hebrews from bondage.”³⁷ These are the demands upon leaders of God’s people. In the midst of complex challenges, God’s leaders, male and female, must find the best path forward.

And so it is that God can be known as a powerful, redemptive God who seeks to be in relationship with the people. However, God’s actions in relation to God’s leaders cannot always be easily understood. Even so, it can be known that Miriam was a significant part of the story of redemption, a woman called by God who impacted others for God. Leaders are called by God to influence and shape others. United Methodist clergywomen have the same calling and purpose to be part of God’s larger story of redemption. Miriam demonstrated resourcefulness and perseverance needed to lead the people of God. There is an element of risk involved as seen in God’s punishment of Miriam. When a leader speaks she is not always certain as to how it will be received. The risk is real. Yet, faithfulness to God, even in the face of leadership mistakes is crucial. Miriam’s story teaches faithfulness and adherence to who God is at all times.

Deborah

Her Leadership Setting

The Book of Judges is the story of tribal leaders who emerged during a series of crises for Israel that “were provoked by the fact that there were still Canaanites in the land who, from time to time, threatened to displace the Israelites.”³⁸ Judges tells the story

³⁷ Bellis, 86.

³⁸ Frick, 254.

of how a vicious cycle ensues for the people of Israel. First, their unfaithfulness results in a need to cry out to God for aid. God provides the aid by raising charismatic tribal leaders. When the tribal leaders have met their responsibility to help deliver the people “the people again forsake Yahweh, and the cycle begins again.”³⁹ Into this cyclical environment Deborah emerges as a leader.

Her Leadership Role

Deborah is a woman who has been given many titles including judge, prophet, warrior, mother and poet. Her story appears in narrative form in Judges 4 and in poetic form in Judges 5. Deborah is an Israelite judge who sits beneath the palm of Deborah and judges. From beneath the palm that bears her name, Deborah resolves various local and tribal disputes that are presented to her. The Israelites regularly come to her for judgments on matters that are important to them (Judg. 4:1-5). She provides response to problems and resolved disputes.⁴⁰ Deborah is unique among the judges, not only because she is female, but because she was also a prophetess, or messenger of God. In addition, Deborah “is also the only biblical individual called ‘a mother in Israel.’⁴¹ Mieke Bal notes that “it is perhaps not a coincidence that the only judge who combines all forms of leadership possible – religious, military, juridical, and poetical – is a woman.”⁴²

Clergywomen often experience expectations from the congregation to be everything to

³⁹ Frick, 258.

⁴⁰ Paula McNutt, “Deborah,” *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, Volume 2, ed. Walter Harrelson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 352.

⁴¹ Patricia Tull, “Deborah,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Volume 2, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 75.

⁴² Mieke, Bal, *Death and Dyssymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 209.

everyone. Deborah is a powerful example of a woman leader who served in several different ways. Yet, she was not unlimited, she did not do everything. Deborah did the work she was called to do.

Deborah's role as a prophetess is clear when she speaks God's message:

She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand'" (Judg. 4:6-7).

After giving God's message to the military commander Barak, Deborah receives Barak's reply: "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go" (Judg. 4:8). Deborah replies "'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.' Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh" (Judg. 4:9). Together Deborah and Barak journey to meet Sisera's Canaanite troops in the lowland plains of the region where the Israelites do not have the advantage. Paula McNutt points out that the "large number of chariots suggests the hopelessness of defeating the threat posed by the Canaanites."⁴³ Though it is not clear whether Deborah entered into combat herself, she clearly communicated a second message from God to Barak and his troops:

Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day on which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. The Lord is indeed going out before you.' So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left (Judg. 4:14-16).

⁴³ McNutt, "Deborah", 352.

Judges explains that God intervenes and the battle is won because of that divine intervention.

The story of a second strong woman is included in Judges 4:17-22 and is connected thematically to the story of Deborah. Jael the Kenite is featured as a brave woman who welcomes the enemy Sisera into her tent, allows him to find sleep in her tent and then uses a hammer to swiftly drive a tent peg directly into his temple, killing him immediately. The Song of Deborah (Judg. 5) tells the same story of Jael as having killed the dreaded Sisera, although the details of the killing are different from Judges 4. The research does not point to Jael as a leader but rather as a woman who, for reasons not clearly given in the biblical text, chooses to end the life of the Canaanite military leader Sisera, an enemy of ancient Israel. Most scholars agree that Jael's story is included in part in order to demonstrate the fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy that the Lord will deliver Sisera not into the hand of Barak but into the hand of a woman (Judg. 4:9.) Both Deborah and Jael are "depicted as strong women who act independently and in a positive fashion."⁴⁴ By Scripture describing the fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy, she is revealed as a reliable and faithful prophet.

Her Leadership Contribution

Deborah has been described as "a decisive figure in the defeat of the Canaanites"⁴⁵, "influential"⁴⁶, a prophet who's "prophecy finds its fulfillment"⁴⁷, a

⁴⁴ Bellis,122.

⁴⁵ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Deborah 2," *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 66.

⁴⁶ Cheryl Exum, "Deborah," *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James Mays (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 250.

“commander”⁴⁸, a “charismatic leader”⁴⁹, and a “responsive leader.”⁵⁰ Readers will see in Judges 4:4 she is named as the wife of Lappidoth. Scholars point out that the phrase ‘wife of Lappidoth’ could also be translated “woman of fire”. Deborah demonstrated versatility as a leader in that she was able to perform as a leader in a wide variety of roles. Perhaps her versatility is her greatest strength as a leader. Mieke Bal observes that Deborah could fulfill several roles “because (1) poetry and prophecy go together; (2) mothers were noted for their words and actions that memorialized people and events; (3) poetry was related to the military-political and juridical business of judging, as seen in songs of judgment such as Deborah’s song; and (4) one way of bringing order out of chaos, the judge’s business, was by means of the spoken word.”⁵¹ Today, the pastor of a church fulfills a similar role. The pastor’s spoken message impacts the direction of the church. This is not seen just in preaching but in being able to create and articulate a vision for the church.

Deborah demonstrated a faithful relationship to Israel, to God and to the commander Barak. She used her strengths and abilities to carry out her duties faithfully and consistently. When she received a word from God that needed to be shared she shared that message clearly and with conviction. Deborah’s faithfulness to God led her to call for battle.

⁴⁷ Exum, 251.

⁴⁸ Tull, 75.

⁴⁹ Emily Chaney, “Deborah,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 2*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 76.

⁵⁰ Bellis, 106.

⁵¹ Bal, *Death and Dyssymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, 209.

Deborah's call to battle is significant because this battle was strategically important for the Israelites:

In contrast to the battles led by the other major judges in which Israel defends its territory against the encroachments of hostile neighbors, Israel here fights a Canaanite coalition in the plain, where the Canaanites had a clear military advantage. Victory meant the breakdown of the Canaanite city-state system and gave Israel control over central and northern Palestine.⁵²

Deborah's wise leadership enabled her to speak the words of God, prophesy the outcome, accompany her followers to battle and proclaim the assured victory of the people of God over a strategically valuable area of land. Feminist interpreter, Denise Carmody, describes the meaning of Deborah's story as significant in that "no matter how patriarchal the culture of her time, it could not deny the Lord's use of her. When God chose Deborah, patriarchalism had to give way."⁵³ We find this to be true in church life today – God's power to use an effective leader is the most important thing to remember in terms of developing as a clergywoman. Popular opinions carry no power. Clergywomen today can see that as they focus on the mission of the church and being the most capable, sophisticated leader that they can be that the church moves forward and the emphasis is on the power of God, not on their gender.

After battle, her wisdom and humility as a leader is seen in what has been called the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5). Widely regarded as one of the oldest texts in the Old Testament, the Song of Deborah recounts the story of Judges 4 in a poetic fashion that gives ultimate glory to God. Brueggemann highlights this wise and humble leadership perspective of Deborah in that "in the poem it is impossible to distinguish between the

⁵² Exum, 252.

⁵³ Denise Lardner Carmody, *Biblical Woman: Contemporary Reflections on Scriptural Texts* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 29.

triumphs of Yahweh and the triumphs of Israelite peasants, for the poem clearly intends that no distinction should be made because both agencies are indispensably important to the outcome.”⁵⁴ Dennis Olson makes a similar observation when he states that “in the end, God accomplishes the salvation promised, but we as human readers ponder the often untraceable combination of human and divine ‘hands’ at work in a given situation.”⁵⁵ Though the details of Judges 4 (the narrative account) and Judges 5 (the poetic account) vary slightly, the story of Deborah, Barak and Jael is told in its entirety twice. The conflicting details may be of interest to those conducting in depth literary and historical research. However, that is not the focus of this project. Rather, the Song of Deborah functions to provide a post-battle reflection on what happened and on the inevitable complications that come with tribal warfare. The Song of Deborah tells of God’s might and power (Judg. 5:1-23), and yet also observes the impending pain of the Canaanite wives who wait for their presumably victorious husbands to return from battle (Judg. 5:28-30) The Song of Deborah blesses Jael for the killing of Sisera (Judg. 5:24-27) and yet calls to mind the mother of Sisera peering out of the window waiting for her presumably victorious son to return home (Judg. 5:28). Patricia Tull describes the bittersweet quality of The Song of Deborah:

Though a product of poetic imagination, this mother elucidates the threat posed to women by callous enemies, both warriors and women. Deborah as a “mother in Israel” and Sisera’s mother become counterparts, while Jael, caught between the two armies, is praised for her cunning.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 123.

⁵⁵ Dennis Olson, “The Book of Judges,” *The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 783.

⁵⁶ Tull, 75.

Conclusion. As a leader, Deborah responds to the promptings of God, delivers God's message, confidently leads God's people into battle, and claims victory in the name of God. She demonstrates strategic decision-making and clearly gives God the credit for the victory. Deborah demonstrates the maturity of a wise leader by providing an acknowledgement both of God's power and of the power of war to destroy and disappoint. As a leader, Deborah holds the tension between confident trust in God and the reality of broken hearts and lives that are a result of war, even a war in which victory is assured by God. Deborah's story shows that developing wisdom and courage are imperative in the leadership development process. In leading their churches, clergywomen are faced with a wide variety of challenges and opportunities. Being able to calmly respond to each situation is essential. Deborah demonstrates the talent to be courageous and wise in a variety of circumstances. The process of becoming an excellent leader demands the willingness and courage to become wise and strong.

Huldah

Her Leadership Setting

The prophet Huldah appears in Second Kings 22:14-20 and her story is repeated in Second Chronicles 34:22-28. Huldah is identified as a prophet and as "the wife of Shallum son of Tikviah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her" (2 Kings 14). Just as with Miriam and Deborah, Huldah's leadership role can best be understood in light of her context. The books of Kings describe the monarchic history spanning three hundred years. Robert R. Wilson notes that "these books recount Israel's history from the conquest of Canaan to

the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the exile.”⁵⁷ This is a pivotal time in the life of the people of God and therefore it is all the more impressive that Huldah was the voice of authority. Brueggemann notes that First and Second Kings were written to tell the history of the people of God in terms of its identity and its theology. Kings is intended to be “a theological and interpretive commentary.”⁵⁸ Once again, we see that Huldah speaks with authority as she uses her voice to confirm the Word of God for the people of God. She delivered a stern message because she spoke what the people needed to hear, not what they wanted to hear. Leadership, for pastors, is about speaking the very words of God to the people of God. When clergy speak they must speak with a sense of calm authority, knowing that because of their own faithfulness and nearness to God they are able to speak effectively and purposefully.

Kings tells the history of the various kings who reigned during the time period covered by the writings. As kings are introduced in the Scripture, each is described as either a king who was faithful to God and did what was correct or right, or a king who did what was evil and displeasing to God. At its most basic, Kings reminds the reader that God is a God who makes demands of the people. There are expectations from God for the people of ancient Israel.⁵⁹ Second Kings reports that, unfortunately, most of the kings “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 3:2).

⁵⁷ Robert R. Wilson, “1 Kings,” Wayne Meeks ed., *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 509.

⁵⁸ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 146.

⁵⁹ Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*, 145.

Doing what is evil consisted of disobeying the essential commandment to worship only God. Exodus 20 (and Deut. 5) describes the first commandment:

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments (Exod. 20:1-6).

Choosing to worship God only and refraining from any form of idolatry is essential in every way. The command is clear, yet 2 Kings describes the rampant idolatry among the kings, and therefore the people of God. This command is central for Israel. God makes it clear that it should not be dismissed.

Josiah was among the few faithful kings. Second Kings affirms that Josiah “did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kings 22:2). During Josiah’s eighteenth year as king, he instructs his secretary, Shaphan, to go to the temple to see the high priest Hilkiah. Shaphan is to instruct Hilkiah to distribute funds to the various workers who were in the process of renovating and repairing the temple. Hilkiah reports to Shaphan that he has “found the book of the law in the house of the Lord” (2 Kings 22:8). Shaphan reads the book and reports to Josiah that the book has been found. Shaphan reads the book aloud to Josiah, who is immediately disturbed by the realization that the people have been so unfaithful. Josiah tears his clothes (2 Kings 22:11). Immediately, Josiah instructs Hilkiah, and several other men to go and seek a word from the Lord on this matter: “Go inquire of the Lord for me, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled

against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book” (2 Kings 22:13).

As Josiah requested, Hilkiyah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went immediately to seek the word of the Lord from the prophet Huldah (2 Kings 22:14).

Her Leadership Role

Huldah’s leadership role is evident in her response to the request of her visitors. She declares to them an oracle of judgement. Her message begins with the traditional “thus says the Lord” (2 Kings 22:15). Huldah’s message appears to have two parts. First, she speaks the message that God will bring disaster on the place and on the inhabitants because they have abandoned God and have made offerings to false gods:

“Thus says the Lord, I will indeed bring disaster on this place on its inhabitants – all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to the other gods” (2 Kings 22:16). Huldah continues the oracle to report that God’s people have “provoked me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched” (2 Kings 22:17).

In part two of the oracle of judgement (2 Kings 22:18-20) Huldah explains that because of Josiah’s response he will not suffer as the rest of the people will. Second Kings 22:11-13 describes King Josiah’s faithful response, sending people to inquire of the Lord. He realized the error of the people and he immediately wanted to know God’s instructions in the matter. Therefore, Huldah delivered to Josiah a separate message:

Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the Lord, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the Lord. Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors and you

shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place. (2 Kings 22:18b-20).

Upon hearing the Lord's message through Huldah's oracle King Josiah instituted reform in the land. He immediately directed all the elders to come to him and he initiated a renewal of the covenant with the Lord.

Her Leadership Contribution

Huldah's oracle of judgement is not just noteworthy because she is female. It is noteworthy because she speaks about the central, core message of the covenant between God and the Israelites. She names the true word.⁶⁰ The core of the covenant is love God fully and to worship only God. Huldah's message was significant because it allowed Josiah to take the necessary steps to get the people of God back on track. Though information on Huldah is limited, one can see that this woman was given the opportunity to speak the very words of God. A key responsibility of prophetic leadership is to speak the words of God to the people of God. Leaders speak, and their words have a ripple effect. Their words impact others and cause others to take appropriate and positive action. Huldah is an example of a leader who was prepared and ready to speak a divine message. Her message was received genuinely by the men who came to listen to her.

Female Leaders in the New Testament

Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia, Syntyche

The apostle Paul mentions several women in his writings. These women played various types of benefitting or leading roles in the early Christian church. Some women

⁶⁰ Karen Achtelstetter, "Huldah at the Table: Reflections on Leadership and the Leadership of Women," *Currents in Theology and Missions* 37:3 (2010), 180.

are simply named, while others appear to have had a more prominent role. Paul identifies Phoebe as an important woman in his letter to the church in Rome:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (Rom.16:1-4)

Though information about Phoebe's role as a leader is incomplete, it is clear that Paul valued her and she was "probably the one who carried the letter from Paul to the church in Rome."⁶¹ Phoebe is not defined by a male in her life. Instead she was a self-sufficient woman and she "may well have been traveling to or through Rome as a missionary or church worker."⁶² Her appearance in the scripture is brief and to the point. She was deacon and benefactor which appear to have been significant roles in early Christianity. Her independence, her wealth and her dedication most likely made her a person of influence among the early house churches.

Phoebe is given prominent position in a long list of people that Paul commends in Romans 16. According to Beverly Roberts Gaventa, these women "appear to be engaged in tasks of ministry, a fact that needs to be taken into account in any assessment of the roles of women in early Christianity. Whatever Paul writes or does not write elsewhere, here he simply assumes that women too are God's agents on behalf of the

⁶¹ Jouette M. Bassler, "Phoebe", *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 135.

⁶² Bassler, 135.

gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁶³ It is important to know that these women were leaders of the early church.

Prisca is given an important role in the leadership of the early church. Acts 18 describes the formation of the team of Paul with Prisca, also known as Priscilla and Aquila, a husband and wife missionary team:

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together – by trade they were tentmakers (Acts 18:1-3).

In Romans 16:3, Paul also encourages the receivers of his letter to welcome and support the husband and wife missionary team of Prisca and Aquila. Though information is sparse concerning this missionary team, and especially the leadership role of Prisca, it is clear that they were coworkers with Paul in his work of spreading the gospel. He sends greetings to the church at Corinth and includes Prisca and Aquila: “The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord” (1 Cor. 16:19).

Jouette M. Bassler points out that “house churches were a common feature of the early Christian movement.”⁶⁴ This couple presumably is independent enough and had enough resources to own a home and to be able to host a congregation within it. Prisca’s work most likely would “have involved preaching, teaching, presiding over the church in

⁶³ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “Romans,” *Women’s Bible Commentary, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Revised and Updated* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 555-556.

⁶⁴ Jouette M. Bassler, “Prisca/Priscilla,” *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 136.

her house, and serving as patron to other believers.”⁶⁵ These kinds of leadership tasks are also suggested in Acts 18:24-26

Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.

It is clear that Priscilla held a position of authority and that she, along with her husband, was respected. Similarly, Paul references other female leaders who helped begin and foster the early movement of Christianity. Euodia and Syntyche are women who are described in Philippians: “I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:2-3).

Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia and Syntyche were female leaders that are mentioned only briefly. One may approach this fact thinking that because they are mentioned only briefly that their role as leaders was of minimal significance. However, it is worth noting that in a male-dominated ancient world, one might expect to have a complete lack of information about female leaders. Though one would wish to know more about these women, it is encouraging that their identities were preserved. Frank Frick observes that “while the specific evidence in the text considering women in leadership roles is hardly abundant, one cannot, relying on an argument from silence, simplistically assume that only these few women (or men, for that matter) whose stories are preserved in the Bible

⁶⁵ Bassler, “Prisca/Priscilla,” 137.

played roles as leaders in ancient Israel.”⁶⁶ Though Frick refers here to ancient Israel, the same can be considered for first century Palestine. These women were important leaders. What is known of these women is their faithfulness to God. Because they believed in the power of God through the resurrected Jesus Christ they were able to be among the first leaders of the Christian church.

In conclusion, in reviewing the presence of female leaders in scripture, Alice Ogden Bellis’ approach is most helpful:

We read ancient texts not simply to find out what happened, what the ancients thought, and what the texts meant. We read these texts because of the way past history and the ancients’ thoughts interact with, shape and challenge our contemporary views even if it is not always easy to tell which is which. We read the Bible because of what it means to us today.⁶⁷

Scripture describes many named and unnamed women. The women of the Old and New Testaments are important. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia and Syntyche are just a few of the many important women in scripture. These female leaders are specifically named as prophets and teachers. They served as encouragers, benefactors, and supporters. They spoke the word of God when it was needed. They led the people when it was needed. They corrected and encouraged the people when it was needed. Scripture cites the existence of several named and unnamed women in both the Old and New Testaments.

The information on these women is incomplete. Yet, the information that is available shows that these women fulfilled their tasks as leaders of the people of God. One can observe and appreciate the risk-taking and dedicated heart of Miriam, the

⁶⁶ Frick, 460.

⁶⁷ Bellis, 214.

focused courage and conviction of Deborah, and the articulate message of Huldah. Their stories are important because “what becomes noteworthy about these women is how few of them there are compared to the number of men who were assigned the prophetic designation throughout Israel’s history.”⁶⁸ In a similar way, the visionary abilities of Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia and Syntyche established the early movement of Christianity. Their toil and labor laid the foundation for what would eventually be the worldwide spread of the faith.

Spiritual Gifts and Strengths in the Bible

The accounts of the female leaders surveyed revealed that there were indeed women who God used to speak to the people and to lead the people. They were able to lead because they used the abilities that God gave to them to fulfill their divine purpose. Each woman led according to her abilities and to the opportunities she received from God. The best way to lead today may be to follow the example of these women of using our unique strengths even when the leadership road is challenging. Though the biblical record does not reference “strengths” in the same way as the Clifton StrengthsFinder, each person (male and female) in the church is given spiritual gifts or abilities that are intended to be used by the recipient in ways that bring glory to God. Spiritual gifts are “divinely given capacities to perform useful functions for God, especially in the area of spiritual service. Just as the human body has members with different capacities, so individual Christians forming the church as the body of Christ have different

⁶⁸ Ackerman, 50-51.

capacities.”⁶⁹ It is important to note that God gives clergywomen the abilities they need to live out their calling as leaders. God is the giver of the gifts and, therefore, helps each clergywomen to use them fully.

Receiving spiritual gifts is half of the equation. Because God gives them to the believer, the other half of the equation is to be a good steward use them properly. Whether one has received several gifts or only a few, it is the believer’s responsibility to use them well and to understand that they are to be used for the glory of God. First Peter affirms this: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:10-11a). This scripture forms a foundation for exploration of spiritual gifts and abilities because it points to the source of the gifts and makes clear the purpose of the gifts.

Each person receives a distinct ability, and it is to be received as a gift. Leadership is a gift named in Paul’s lists. Three key scripture passages affirm that God gives abilities to people for the purpose of serving others.

⁶⁹ John F. Walvoord, “The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts,” *Bibliotheca sacra* 143, No. 573 (April-June 1986), 109.

These can be found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, each of which provide a list of spiritual gifts:

Table 1. Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:8-10,28-30	Romans 12:1-8	Ephesians 4:1-16
Utterance of Wisdom	Prophecy	Apostleship
Utterance of Knowledge	Ministering (Service/Helps)	Prophecy
Faith	Teaching	Evangelism
Gifts of Healing	Exhortation	Pastor-Teacher
Working of Miracles	Generosity (Giving)	
Prophecy	Leading with Diligence	
Discernment of Spirits	Compassion (Mercy)	
Various Kinds of Tongues		
Interpretation of Tongues		
Apostleship		
Teaching		
Assistance (Helps)		
Leadership		

Source: Data from *Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service, Leader's Kit*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 8.

These three lists of spiritual gifts are the foundation for understanding the variety of gifts given by God. The Apostle Paul asserts the importance of this topic: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Cor. 12:1). Paul’s desire is for the readers of his letter to clearly understand what spiritual gifts are and how they are to be used. Paul explains the wide variety of gifts given by God to people:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same

God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is good the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually, just as the Spirit chooses (1 Cor. 12:4-11)

Any leader in a church can begin to understand their role as a leader by studying these scriptures.

First Corinthians 12 also explains spiritual gifts. There are several different kinds of gifts. Each gift is given by God to each person. Each gift is given with a specific intended function. Most importantly, though there are varieties of gifts, they are all given for the sake of “the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). In other words, there is a clear mandate to use one’s gifts in ways that are helpful and edifying to the community. Gifts are given so that the community can function smoothly and receive what it needs. A leader can consider these scriptures in light of their own practice of leadership. The gifts and abilities that leaders receive are not given for their own gain. They are given by God to the leader to strengthen the community.

Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to communicate the importance of each and every gift and to illustrate how they can work together. First Corinthians 12:14 says “Indeed, the body does not consist of one member, but of many.” He follows with an argument that one body part cannot dismiss the importance of another body part. Each part is needed so that the whole body can function properly. Paul concludes this argument with the statement, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27). Paul is writing to the community of believers, not just leaders. These statements are to be received by everyone in the community, regardless of role. Paul the

continues and discusses the different kinds of roles and gifts that exist in the church: “first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, deeds of power, gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28).

Paul’s letter to the Romans contains the same message that the church is to be understood as one body of believers, with each believer possessing a different role and purpose. Before providing the list, Paul notes that each person in the church should be humble and to “think with sober judgement” (Rom. 12:3). Paul then provides the list:

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members of one another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness (Rom. 12:4-8)

Part of being in a church is recognizing that a life of faith results in change. A person experiences grace, growth and change when they become a follower of Jesus Christ and choose to participate in a community of faith. Robert A. Bryant presents it well in saying, “life in Jesus Christ brings complete renewal and transformation for both individuals and communities.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, according to Bryant, this means “one is a recipient of a spiritual gift, a gift that contributes to the health of the body of Christ and its work in the world.”⁷¹ Paul’s point is that as each person recognizes the gift that they have been given they can choose to then, with humility and sober judgment, use that gift as they live out their faith. All of the gifts are important, but not all are leadership gifts. In Romans 12:8 Paul specifically lists the gift of leadership and connects it with diligence. Leading with diligence is one of the gifts that some Christians will receive. Similarly,

⁷⁰ Robert A. Bryant, “Romans 12:1-8,” *Interpretation* 58, No. 3 (July 2004), 287.

⁷¹ Bryant, 289.

Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 12:28 names gifts such as apostles, prophets, teachers, deeds of power, and forms of leadership. Being a leader is one of the gifts that God gives. If one has received the calling and gift of leadership, then one is to be a good steward of that special gift. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus he does not specifically mention leadership in his gifts list:

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

It is unknown why leadership is not named as a spiritual gift in this passage.

Nevertheless, leaders must determine which specific gifts they have and employ those in their leadership of the church. Using one's gifts is part of the process of maturing in faith. As gifts are used faithfully one grows deeper in unity with one another and in leadership knowledge and ability.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Development and Clergywomen

In his article, “What Is This Thing Called Leadership?” Richard Hackman describes the experience of watching a truly great leader in action. He notes that this master leader is “someone who knows just what to do, how to do it, and precisely when to act to help a system achieve its purposes.”¹ The task of the ordained clergyperson is to help a system – the church – achieve its purpose. The pastor in charge of a congregation is responsible to order the life and mission of the congregation in such a way that the congregation is successful in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. When a clergywoman chooses to develop her leadership abilities she becomes the master leader that is worth watching in action.

The purpose of this project was to understand the leadership development of some of the best United Methodist clergywomen. It was important to explore the leadership development process of these unique leaders so that other clergywomen may benefit from the findings and maximize their leadership effectiveness. Cynthia McCauley, Russ Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor define leadership development as “the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes. Leadership roles and processes are those that enable groups of people to work together in

¹ J. Richard Hackman, “What Is This Thing Called Leadership?” *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: A Harvard Business School Centennial Colloquium*, eds. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010), 115.

productive and meaningful ways.”² The purpose of this project was to understand this expansion process. Rather than waiting to see if one’s capacity to be effective happens to expand, the researcher believes that one can choose to expand. In the midst of the endless demands of ordained ministry, it can be difficult to make the decision for expansion. Clergy can grow in their ability to lead and they can choose to facilitate the process.³

How can one facilitate the development that is needed? Numerous approaches and methods exist to help leaders develop. McCauley, Moxley and Velsor describe “three strategies for enhancing the development of a leader: (1) create a variety of rich developmental experiences that each provide assessment, challenge and support; (2) enhance people’s ability to learn from experience and (3) use an approach that integrates the various developmental experiences and embeds them in the organizational context.”⁴ The local church is naturally a place with a variety of rich developmental experiences. The ebb and flow of local church life provides a ripe setting for choosing to develop one’s leadership abilities.

The second and third strategies from McCauley, Moxley and Velsor may be less commonly experienced by clergy. Due to the continuous demands upon a pastor, it is difficult to pause and consciously learn lessons from one’s experience. A pastor must face the next rapidly approaching challenge or crisis and rarely has opportunity to reflect upon an experience as it relates to her own leadership development.

² Cynthia D. McCauley, Russ S. Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor, *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 4.

³ McCauley, Moxley and Van Velsor, 5.

⁴ McCauley, Moxley and Van Velsor, 21.

A pastor typically lacks an intentional approach for categorizing or integrating various developmental experiences. The typical approach is to meet the most pressing need, attend to the most urgent crisis and then take a breath before it is time to write another sermon. Leadership development is a long process that is “grounded in personal development, development that is never complete. It is embedded in experience: leaders learn as they expand their experiences over time. And, it is facilitated by interventions that are woven into those experiences in connected and meaningful ways.”⁵ Leadership is a process rather than just a job. It is much more than “the mere exercise of formal authority.”⁶ It is of the utmost importance for clergywomen to choose to be the best leaders they can be because the work is given by God. The local church is the hope of the world, and the leader of a local church is the pastor. Therefore, the desire of this project is to shed light on critical dimensions of leadership development so that clergywomen can choose to engage in their own process of leadership development.

Theories of Leadership and Leadership Development

There are many ways to conceptualize leadership and leadership development. In his book, *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Peter Northouse acknowledges that understanding the exact nature of leadership can be challenging. Northouse notes that though there are many concepts of leadership there a few key components that can be identified: (1) leadership is a process; (2) leadership involves influence; (3) leadership

⁵ McCauley, Moxley and Van Velsor, 25.

⁶ Herminia Ibarra, Scott Snook and Laura Guillen Rama, “Identity-Based Leader Development,” *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: A Harvard Business School Centennial Colloquium*, Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, eds. (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010), 663.

occurs in groups; (4) leadership involves common goals.⁷ These four core components of leadership are applicable when thinking about clergy leadership. Becoming an effective clergy leader is a dynamic and challenging process that unfolds over time. It involves influence because the very nature of being a pastor brings the opportunity and obligation to exercise influence in the church and community. Churches are comprised of groups of people, and as such, the importance of being to lead groups and mobilize groups is critically important for clergy. Finally, effective pastors lead churches to achieve goals. The success of a church is largely dependent upon the pastor's ability to lead groups of people to work together in meaningful, gospel-centered ways.

Peter Northouse describes several frameworks of leadership including the trait approach, skills approach, behavioral approach, situational approach, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory, transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, psychodynamic leadership, leadership ethics, and team leadership. While each of the theories adds to the conversation, the most valuable concepts in terms of clergy leadership development are transformational leadership and servant leadership. Additionally, two other approaches are very helpful with respect to clergy leadership development. First, Stephen Covey describes principle-centered leadership. Second, the Gallup organization describes strengths-based leadership. These four approaches help to form a framework for conceptualizing the leadership development process for clergywomen.

⁷ Northouse, 6.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on inspiring others to make the world better. Transformational leaders “are recognized as change agents who are good role models, who can create and articulate a clear vision for an organization, who empower followers to meet higher standards, who act in ways that make others want to trust them, and who give meaning to organizational life.”⁸ This approach is helpful in terms of clergy leadership development because the pastor’s role is to articulate a compelling vision that moves the church forward as an organization. The pastor should live and lead in ways that build trust among the members of the church. Clergywomen can engage proactively in the process of developing themselves as transformational leaders. They will be transformed as individuals while their church is transformed as an organization.

Servant Leadership

The servant leadership approach “emphasizes that leaders should be attentive to the needs of followers, empower them, and help them develop their full human capacities. Servant leaders make a conscious choice to serve first – to place the good of followers over the leaders’ self-interests.”⁹ Servant leadership is the model set forth by Jesus when he repeatedly teaches that his followers must be servants. Servant leadership requires putting the development of others as the top priority. Pastors can engage their congregations in empowering ways so that each person can develop into the person God calls them to be. This approach is beneficial because it affirms that both the clergy and the congregation have the opportunity to engage in a process of intentional development.

⁸ Northouse, 190.

⁹ Northouse, 253.

Principle-centered Leadership

Principle-centered leadership, as set forth by Stephen R. Covey, focuses on people incorporating natural principles “into the center of their lives, into the center of their relationships with others, into the center of their agreements and contracts, into their management processes, and into their mission statements.”¹⁰ The advantage of the principle-centered leadership approach is that it steers away from quick fixes and shortcuts, and instead focuses on principles or ideas that are applicable everywhere. It is the view of the researcher that a disadvantage is that it requires intentional commitment as to whether a person can abide or wants to abide by certain principles. Principle-centered leadership can be a great benefit for clergy in terms of their own leadership development because principles can be unchanging in various situations and circumstances. If principles are identified, articulated and respected it can give traction to the leadership development process.

Strengths-based Leadership

Strengths-based leadership utilizes results from the online Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment and argues that the most effective leaders are focused on building their strengths, on surrounding themselves with the right team and on understanding their followers’ needs.¹¹ It is the view of the researcher that an advantage to the strengths-based leadership approach is that it is positive in nature because it focuses on gifts and abilities, rather than weaknesses. Strengths-based leadership springs from the field of positive psychology and gives us a generative framework for

¹⁰ Stephen R. Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 25.

¹¹ Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *Strengths-Based Leadership Development* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008), 2-3.

understanding how God has uniquely gifted each clergywoman with particular strengths. The strengths-based leadership approach helps us to see that grouping all clergywomen together for development purposes fails to acknowledge the individuality of each clergywoman. A conventional approach to leadership assumes all clergywomen have the same experiences and needs and, therefore, all need the same kind of development. In contrast, strengths-based development emphasizes the unique contribution and unique developmental need of each clergywoman. This project suggests that clergywomen are best served, and the church therefore is best served, by exploring the individual's developmental needs.

Leadership Studies and Clergy

A review of the scholarly literature reveals very little research in the area of clergy leadership development, and even less in the area of clergywomen and leadership development. Four studies have somewhat recently been conducted that relate to this topic. The United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study¹² examined the stories of the struggles of the pioneering clergywomen. The Lead Women Pastors Project¹³ examined leadership style differences between men and women. A brief review of these two studies indicates the lack of a positive approach on how clergywomen can actively develop their

¹² Margaret S. Wiborg, *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study*, Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology (2001), <http://www.bu.edu/shaw/publications/the-clergy-womens-retention-study/> (accessed May 6, 2015).

¹³ HiRho Park and Susan Willhauck, *Lead Women Pastors Project Survey Summary*, (2009), http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/clergywomen/CW_LWPP2009essay.pdf (accessed September 15, 2015).

leadership abilities. The Clergy Effectiveness Study¹⁴ and the Events and Lessons Study¹⁵ come closer to exploring the development of clergy from a positive perspective. Each of the four studies is reviewed in order to understand its contribution to the overall discussion of leadership.

The United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study

In 1999, the Anna Howard Shaw Center at the Boston University School of Theology conducted the United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study. The preface to the study is entitled “The Oppressive Silence of the Promising, Bright Voices” and describes the suffering due to the isolation some clergywomen experienced, the rejection of their gifts for ministry, and their largely painful stories.¹⁶ The focus of the study was to “identify reasons clergywomen leave local church ministry; and, to identify possible interventions by the connectional structure of the Church in retaining clergywomen in local churches.”¹⁷ The study confirmed that many women left due to “lack of support from the hierarchical system, being unable to maintain one’s integrity in the system, rejection from congregation/parishioners, and the conflict of family and pastoral responsibilities.”¹⁸ This study was important because it gave a voice to those who felt

¹⁴ Richard P. DeShon, *Clergy Effectiveness: National Survey Results, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church* (2012), http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/bom_clergyeffectivenessdeshon_0.pdf (accessed May 6, 2016).

¹⁵ Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost and Tanya N. Boyd, “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Volume 35, Number 3 (2007).

¹⁶ Wiborg, *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study*, Preface.

¹⁷ Wiborg, *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study*, Preface.

¹⁸ Hee An Choi and Jacqueline Blue, *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II in the U.S. Context*, (2012), <http://www.bu.edu/shaw/publications/united-methodist-clergywomen-retention-study-ii-2/introduction-2/> (accessed May 6, 2016).

voiceless. It provided honor and respect to the women who sought to be pastors. While this study is of value, it is not helpful to the purpose of this project because of its focus.

The United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II was conducted in 2010 to continue to understand the stories of clergywomen. The stated purpose of the study was: “to investigate the changes of clergywomen’s reality in ministry for two decades after our first research and to recognize their voices again. As we acknowledge, we believe it is necessary to examine the current status of clergywomen in the twenty-first century and pay attention to urgent needs of support for clergywomen and their ministry.”¹⁹ The second study indicated that the overall situation for clergywomen improved over the years, but that there remained problems resulting in clergywomen leaving ministry. The study named lack of support, lack of ability to balance work and home life, lack of self-care, lack of higher salary, and lack of fair appointment-making by the Bishop and Cabinet as reasons for departure. One of the recommendations of the study was to conduct exit interviews to understand the problems that caused each person to leave.²⁰ Again, this study is of value because it respects the painful journey of many United Methodist clergywomen. In order to develop as leaders women need to learn from the ones who stayed in ordained ministry. There is a need to focus on what is working for clergywomen, not on their problems. Such a focus will provide useful information that is needed as women and the churches they lead move forward in coming years.

¹⁹ Choi and Blue, Introduction.

²⁰ Choi and Blue, Introduction.

The Lead Women Pastors Project

In 2008, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist church created the Lead Women Pastors Project (LWPP). According to the “Lead Women Pastors Project Survey Summary”, the LWPP was initiated in response to a question posed at the 2006 International Clergywomen’s Consultation: “How can the church equip younger generations of clergywomen to fulfill their calling to serve the needs of the present age that demands gender inclusivity in its theology and practice?”²¹ The LWPP Survey Summary states that “the purpose of the LWPP was to affirm, empower, research and nurture leadership of clergywomen who are serving churches with a membership of 1000 or more.”²² The LWPP provided fellowship, learning, and a culminating retreat in which the results from the survey were shared. The LWPP contracted the Lewis Center for Church Leadership to analyze the data collected. According to the Lewis Center’s report the “survey looked at a host of issues among lead pastors serving churches with membership of 1,000 or more. Surveys were sent to women serving as lead pastors of churches with 1,000 or more members and a randomly selected sample of men serving churches of this size.”²³ The sampling for this study is problematic because church membership is often far higher than church attendance. In most churches, the number of active people is far less than the membership number.

The LWPP survey was gender-based, meaning the survey focused on the differences in leadership style between clergymen and clergywomen leading these larger

²¹ Park and Wilhauck, 1.

²² Park and Willhauck, 1.

²³ Lovett Weems, *Report Responses*, The Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary, (2008), (Report provided to the Researcher by Lovett Weems), 1.

churches. According to the Lewis Center report, there were many similarities between men and women in terms of their leadership styles, practices and concerns. There were very few statistically significant differences.²⁴ According to the directors of the LWPP, HiRho Park and Susan Wilhauck, “the experiences of these lead women pastors will serve as a resource for the formation of younger generations of women leadership for not only the UMC but also in our society.”²⁵ It is interesting to compare leadership styles if that is the goal of a project. It is the view of the researcher that the LWPP survey did not information that is actionable in terms of developing as a leader.

The Clergy Effectiveness Study

In 2010, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry worked with Richard P. DeShon of Michigan State University to conduct a survey that would provide information to assist the denomination in conceptualizing effectiveness.²⁶ The focus of the study was to provide empirical data that would allow a true definition of effectiveness to be understood and embraced. The aim was to allow the denomination to adopt one understanding of effectiveness and therefore help all pastors to become more effective. It is the most closely related to the topic of the research paper because to study effectiveness one must take an approach that is positive in tone. If someone is an effective pastor then there are positive observable decisions, experiences and emotions in their work and in the way they carry out their leadership. The Effectiveness Study

²⁴ Weems, *Report Responses*, 3.

²⁵ Park and Willhauck, 6.

²⁶ Richard P. DeShon, *Clergy Effectiveness: National Survey Results Summary*, The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church (2012), http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/bom/BOM_ClergyEffectivenessSummary2012.pdf (accessed May 6, 2016).

provides a “picture of the tasks performed by local church pastors and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics that enable the effective performance of these tasks.”²⁷ Overall, the study found that clergy conceptualize effective performance as a multidimensional process reflecting the following four factors.²⁸ This study is important because it gives common language to the concept of effectiveness, which has been difficult to define in the church world.

Table 2. Four Factors of Clergy Effectiveness

<i>Calling</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Transforming lives</i>	<i>Helping others</i>
Effective pastors possess a profound inner sense of being called by God and called to ministry. This calling is manifested as a deep trust in God and the willingness to act boldly and to take risks as part of that called ministry.	Effective pastors have the ability to cast a vision and mobilize and empower people to work toward it. Effective pastors influence people in way that will help them achieve their goals.	Effective pastors are able to transform lives. People with transformed lives experience spirituality as part of their identity; that is, they incorporate spirituality into their everyday lives. People with transformed lives experience God in their lives every day of the week, not just on Sundays. Transforming lives involves helping people grow in their love of God and develop a deeper relationship with God. People with transformed lives also have a genuine desire for spiritual growth.	Effective pastors help people discover and utilize their gifts for the good of their communities. They help people grow personally as well as spiritually. They help people become better, more spiritual people who make better decisions and have stronger, healthier relationships with God and others.

Source: *Clergy Effectiveness*²⁹

The Effectiveness Study also examined the typical work tasks of the pastor and identified several critical areas such as administration, care-giving, communication, relationship building, evangelism, facility construction, fellowship, management, other-

²⁷ DeShon, 4.

²⁸ DeShon, 2-3.

²⁹ DeShon, 2.

development, preaching and public worship, rituals and sacraments, self-development and United Methodist connectional service.³⁰ According to the study, for pastors to be effective in leading their congregation they must be able to complete these tasks. The Clergy Effectiveness Study is a very valuable study for clergywomen who strive for effectiveness. The data collected gives a concrete picture of the tasks and duties in which the pastor must succeed. This study provided important information to Bishops, Cabinet and local church leadership in terms of evaluation. Part of leadership development is improving, accelerating and emphasizing effectiveness. Additionally, the study indicated that helping others discover and utilize their gifts/strengths is vital. The Effectiveness Study was very valuable. However, the Effectiveness Study still does not give insight into the leadership development process that has enabled the best clergywomen to succeed.

The Events and Lessons Study

Of the four studies mentioned that relate to clergy leadership development, the most valuable study is “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders”, conducted by Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost and Tanya N. Boyd of Seattle Pacific University. The authors acknowledge the lack of empirical data about the leadership development process for clergy. They note that “while much work has been done in understanding the developmental journey of leaders in secular organizations, there is limited empirical research investigating the key experiences in the pastoral leader’s journey and the associated lessons emerging from

³⁰ DeShon, 5-9.

these events.”³¹ This study acknowledges the reality that pastors receive initial training, but then, typically do not pursue further training once they are the pastor in charge of a congregation, and that few programs exist that could help facilitate their leadership development.³² The need is great for opportunities for clergywomen to develop. The need is great for programs to be designed that can facilitate growth so that our clergywomen become dynamic, effective leaders.

The purpose of the Events and Lessons study was to gain an understanding of the unique experience of being a pastoral leader and to understand the lessons that emerge as most critical in a pastor’s growth.³³ Pastors were asked in the interview to reflect upon their development as leaders. This was the same question asked of executives by M. W. McCall and colleagues in their book *The Lessons of Experience: How Successful Executives Develop on the Job*. The central question was: “When you think over your career as a leader, certain events or episodes probably stand out in your mind – things that led to a lasting change in your approach to leadership. Please jot down some notes for yourself identifying at least three ‘key events’ in your career – things that made a difference in the way you lead others.”³⁴ A strength of this study is that pastors were asked to specifically reflect on their leadership development process as it occurred throughout their career. Simply asking clergywomen to do this would be a positive approach in gaining understanding about how our best clergywomen lead.

³¹ Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost and Tanya N. Boyd, “Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Volume 35, Number 3, (2007), 179.

³² McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 179.

³³ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 180.

³⁴ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 181.

The McKenna study found that the majority of key “developmental experiences occurred in-the-trenches (32%), during times of significant transition (27%), or in personal relationships (23%), indicating that pastors develop as they are doing their work and leading on the edge of their comfort zones.”³⁵ The study reports that out of these key events several critical lessons emerged. Of the lessons learned, sensing a renewed call by God was the most important developmental experience and the most statistically significant. The renewed call involved trust in/reliance on God, God’s presence, courage to be one’s self, and self-awareness.³⁶ Sensing a renewed call from God allowed clarity of leadership purpose. Clarity of leadership purpose is one of five critical areas for development named later in this project.

The McKenna study concludes that the leadership development process for business leaders and for pastoral leaders have some elements in common. For example, in both, “education and training represents an important element in the pastoral leader’s development, but the importance of ongoing development in on-the-job experiences, during transitions, and in relationships tends to be underestimated.”³⁷ The McKenna study also suggests that are important lessons to be gained by pastors as a result of key events in their careers. These lessons include relationships, managerial thinking, personal values, and personal awareness and might also be used by pastors to identify what they need to learn and to proactively look for the experiences that will teach these lessons.”³⁸ This study provides much meaningful information about the leadership development

³⁵ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 179.

³⁶ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 185.

³⁷ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 187.

³⁸ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 187.

process. It is a very valuable study and is an important part of the overall conversation in terms of gaining understanding about how clergy can focus on their leadership development.

Summary of the Four Studies

The United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study I and the United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II sought to understand why clergywomen were leaving ministry and to uncover their stories and their struggles. These studies were important to conduct because they gave a voice to many clergywomen who felt they had no voice. The Clergy Effectiveness Study was of value because it helped provide a way to conceptualize effectiveness in pastoral ministry. It helped to pave the way for effectiveness to be discussed among clergy and the Bishops, Cabinets and Boards of Ordained Ministry using a common language. The Lead Women Pastors Project sought to provide information that would empower future generations of clergywomen in their ministries. The gender-focused approach of the LWPP yielded results indicating that there are not as many differences between clergymen and clergywomen as one might initially assume. The LWPP study focused primarily on leadership styles between men and women. The McKenna study provides the most robust approach to gaining knowledge about how our best leaders develop. The McKenna study contributes helpful data that gives pastors the opportunity to reflect upon their careers.

Each of these studies adds to the body of knowledge about clergy and leadership. Each study adds value to the conversation. The McKenna study provides the most relevant results. More research is needed in terms of understanding the process of clergy leadership development, and specifically of clergywomen.

Three Leadership Resources for Clergy

The researcher is aware of three quality resources or programs that exist to assist United Methodist male and female clergy in their leadership development. First, the Lewis Fellows program is a post-ordination leadership development opportunity for young clergy of any denomination offered by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary. The Lewis Fellows Program is supported in part by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The program brings together outstanding young clergy persons for intensive leadership development activities and sustained peer interaction over the course of one year.³⁹ The program is designed to give young clergy an environment to become even more effective in ministry. The program is structured around four components: exploring elements of effective leadership, developing greater skills in the basic areas of leading a church, contextualized learning visits in order to see the church in action in diverse contexts and developing a greater sense of self-identity.⁴⁰ The identity piece is helpful because clergywomen must be very clear on their identity and have a very solid sense of self in order to lead effectively.

Second, the Royce and Jane Reynolds Leadership Program, in its seventeenth year⁴¹, provides United Methodist clergy serving in Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina or Virginia an opportunity to spend one year in a leadership development program. The intent of the program “is to assist strong pastors in becoming congregational leaders who develop a clear vision for the church. Participants are invited

³⁹ Weems, Lovett, *Lewis Fellows*, <http://www.churchleadership.com/lewisfellows/default.asp> (accessed May 6, 2016).

⁴⁰ Weems, Lovett, *Lewis Fellows*, <http://www.churchleadership.com/lewisfellows/default.asp> (accessed May 6, 2016).

⁴¹ Russ Moxley, Center for Creative Leadership, Email correspondence, September 30, 2015.

into a study of their leadership gifts and challenges and the impact of those gifts and challenges on the creation of congregational vision, its articulation and its fulfillment.⁴²

Third, the Reynolds Program inspired the creation of the Virginia Clergy Leadership Program designed for male and female clergy who are “already engaged in fruitful ministry to increase their potential for effective leadership.”⁴³ The VCLP provides an opportunity for Virginia United Methodist clergy to focus on becoming more effective leaders.

In conclusion, it would be beneficial for the denomination to develop a program that assists clergywomen with their leadership development. The Lewis Fellows Program, the Reynolds Program and the Virginia Clergy Leadership Program are excellent initiatives toward improving the effectiveness of our male and female clergy. What is missing is a deeper exploration of the process that is necessary to truly develop over the course one’s ministry career into an excellent pastoral leader. As insight and knowledge is gained about the leadership development process of the denomination’s best clergywomen it can be used to inform future resources and programs.

Leadership Development Programs and Women

Peter Northouse notes that in the past people asked, “Can women lead?”⁴⁴ He points out that the research questions that people ask now are around how men and

⁴² Russ Moxley, Center for Creative Leadership, <http://www.umfwnc.org/pdf/Reynolds> (accessed September 30, 2015).

⁴³ Russ Moxley, Center for Creative Leadership, *Virginia Clergy Leadership Program*, <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/AC2014/ClergyLeadershipProgram.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2015).

⁴⁴ Northouse, 397.

women lead differently and whether one gender is more effective than the other.⁴⁵

According to Northouse, the research indicates very few differences in the leadership effectiveness between men and women.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, many scholars have pointed out the importance of considering gender and leadership together. The researcher agrees that women and men alike should prudently evaluate the culture of their organization in order to ensure that all employees are treated with respect. It is the view of the researcher that while gender should not be ignored, focusing on gender can decrease a clergywoman's effectiveness. An area of inquiry and focus is needed in which the question is not "what do all clergywomen need", but "what does this clergywoman need to develop as a leader?"

If the world of academia asserts the importance of women and leadership, why doesn't the church? Why do more clergywomen not engage in intentional leadership development? It is possible that it is an issue of language? Do these terms sound less spiritual and therefore are not seen as helpful or good? For example, in ordained ministry, one rarely speaks of leadership development. Even more rarely heard is conversation about career development or career advancement. By its nature, ordained ministry is ultimately about being faithful to God which requires humility and self-sacrifice. These may be a few of the reasons why we do not hear clergywomen readily speaking about their commitment to leadership development.

This is unfortunate because clergy of all people have incredibly important reasons to be the very best leaders they can be. Whether one uses terms like leadership

⁴⁵ Northouse, 398.

⁴⁶ Northouse, 404.

development, career development, greater fruitfulness, leadership training or continuing education, the concept is of great value. The emphasis on leadership development found in the secular world should motivate the clergy world. In fact, it is the opinion of the researcher that pastors have much in common with CEOs. The role of the pastor is executive in nature in that the pastor must be able to direct vision, strategy and organizational change. The pastor must develop leaders who, in turn, develop other leaders within the organization. The pastor is the primary vision-caster and is able to look further down the horizon than the rest of the team. A term such as “executive leadership development” probably best captures the process. Perhaps “executive” sounds even less spiritual than the other terms. Therefore, the term “leadership development” will suffice.

One approach to helping women develop in their leadership is the existence of leadership development programs for women only, a practice common in business and in higher education.⁴⁷ Women-only programs exist to help move women through the management system or to help move women from management to executive levels. These events and programs are designed for female participants only and many businesses are encouraged and applauded for offering such programs. Robin Ely, Herminia Ibarra and Deborah Kolb, among others, advocate for women-only programs, but emphasize that such programs must not be misguided attempts to train women to act more like men in terms of leadership. Ely and colleagues argue that “such approaches not only fail to give women strategies for countering the effects of gender bias, but they also encourage women to become overly focused on self-image to the detriment of the central

⁴⁷ Deborah J. O’Bannon, Linda Garavalia, David Renz and S. Marie McCarther, “Successful Leadership Development for Women STEM Faculty,” *Leadership and Management Engineering*, October 2010.

leadership task: to enable others to be maximally effective in the service of shared goals.”⁴⁸ This is an important insight for clergywomen. Rather than becoming overly focused on how she thinks she is being perceived, a clergywoman should focus on the primary task of empowering others to make a difference in the world for the sake of the gospel. The pastor is responsible for setting the tone that each person is called to participate in a life of discipleship in and for the world. When a clergywoman possesses clarity about her purpose as the leader, the attention is placed in the correct place – the mission of the church.

Leadership Development and Positive Psychology

In her work on leadership development, Gretchen M. Spreitzer asks, “What is more vital to an organization’s long-term success than its ability to cultivate leaders?”⁴⁹ Though her question is not aimed toward clergy, it is clear that without effective leadership, the local church suffers. As an organization, the local church needs pastors to lead with faith, passion and expertise, all the while developing lay leadership. The church cannot accomplish its mission without excellent clergy leadership and lay leadership. The field of psychology offers a general framework for the conversation about leadership development and clergywomen. Specifically, the area of positive psychology serves as a foundation upon which to build a deep understanding of what it takes for clergywomen to engage in a robust and meaningful leadership development process, which in turn fosters

⁴⁸ Robin J. Ely, Herminia Ibarra and Deborah M. Kolb, “Taking Gender Into Account: Theory and Design for Women’s Leadership Development Programs,” *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Volume 10, No. 3, 2011, 488.

⁴⁹ Gretchen M. Spreitzer, “Leading to Grow and Growing to Lead: Leadership Development Lessons from Positive Organizational Studies,” *Organization Dynamics*, Volume 35, Number 4 (2006), 305.

a robust and meaningful ministry career. According to Spreitzer, “positive organizational studies draw on the fields of organizational behavior, psychology and sociology, and focus on the generative dynamics in organizations that promote human strength, resiliency, healing and restoration.”⁵⁰ Therefore, this field is of great value to the exploration of leadership development. Its emphasis on positive factors serves the purpose of this paper.

Positive psychology is the study of what is strong and right, rather than the study of what is weak and not working. Psychology is not just “the study of disease, weakness and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue.”⁵¹ Because of its generative nature, positive psychology provides the foundation for asking the research questions of this project. Rather than seeking to understand the stories of struggle of United Methodist clergywomen, the positive psychology approach affords an opportunity to understand what is working well and how to build upon that.

Other researchers affirm the usefulness of this positive approach. In his work on the concept of self-efficacy, James Maddux states that positive psychology “emphasizes the development of positive human qualities and the facilitation of psychological health and happiness over the mere prevention of or remediation of negative human qualities and human misery.”⁵² Maddux advocates an approach that builds upon the positive capacities of human beings. Similarly, P. Alex Linley, Reena Govindji and Michael A.

⁵⁰ Spreitzer, 306.

⁵¹ Martin E. P. Seligman, “Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention, and Positive Therapy,” *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 4.

⁵² James E. Maddux, “Self-Efficacy: The Power of Believing You Can,” *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 285.

West, highlight the value of the positive psychology approach because it is the “science of optimal human functioning”⁵³ and is intently interested in studying people at their best. Studying effective female clergy leaders is an opportunity to understand these women at their best and therefore ministry at its best. As discussed, the secular fields of business and psychology provide important and useful material for this inquiry. However, much of the published work in church leadership tends to focus on traits, tactics, tools and techniques. While this has merit, it does not give provide an understanding of the depth of the leadership development process or how important that process is in order to effectively lead a United Methodist congregation.

The church, of all organizations, should be intently focused on building upon what is good and right. The Christian faith rests on the belief that growth and transformation are possible through the power of the resurrection, and that God is working for good in all things for those that are called according to God’s purpose (Rom. 8:28). The same applies to the leadership experience of clergywomen – focus on what is going well and build upon it. Seek to understand what is right and effective and invest in those areas. Approaching life’s challenges and opportunities from a positive psychology approach helps us “to build the qualities that help individuals and communities not just endure and survive, but also flourish.”⁵⁴ Our United Methodist clergywomen need to flourish as leaders. To flourish does not mean leadership is easy. Miriam, Deborah and Huldah demonstrated that leadership is not to be taken lightly. Speaking to the people and

⁵³ P. Alex Linley, Reena Govindji and Michael A. West, “Positive Psychology Approaches to Public Services Leadership: An Introduction to Strengths-Based Leadership,” in *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*, Volume 3, Issue 4, December 2007, 44.

⁵⁴ Seligman, 8.

leading the people is incredibly challenging but it can and should be a time of flourishing. Utilizing a generative positive psychology approach as opposed to a pathology approach positions clergywomen for true leadership development.

Strengths-Based Leadership Development

According to strengths research, people will be most effective and successful when they lead from the area of their greatest strengths, or talents. This project is grounded in positive psychology which forms the foundation for strengths-based leadership development. Positive psychology and strengths-based leadership development suggest that “the best leaders recognize and hone their strengths, while trusting and collaborating with others to make up for their weak points.”⁵⁵ With the strengths-based leadership approach it is essential for leaders to understand their own strengths and abilities. As leaders are able to recognize and understand their own strengths and abilities they are able to make their best contribution to the organization.⁵⁶

The same is true for the church. Each clergywoman will bring something unique to the church she leads. Many contributions will be made by her to the church. However, this approach is about making her very best contribution. Rather than attempting to master all of the tasks of ministry, a pastor can engage in a process to develop her unique strengths. As noted in chapter two of this project, based on the indications in Scripture, God calls people to use their strengths and abilities to make disciples for the

⁵⁵ Richard L. Daft, *The Leadership Experience* (Australia: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2011), 38.

⁵⁶ Daft, 38.

transformation of the world.⁵⁷ Each pastor has something unique to offer her congregation that will help move the congregation forward to achieve its mission.

Strengths Theory

The strengths-based leadership approach, grounded in positive psychology, can provide a framework to empower each pastor to make the most faithful leadership contribution. Donald O. Clifton, author of *Soar with Your Strengths, Play to Your Strengths* and *Now, Discover Your Strengths* is recognized as the father of strengths psychology. In their article “Strengths-Based Development in Practice,” Donald O. Clifton and Tim Hodges outline three stages in strengths-based development.⁵⁸ The first stage is identification of one’s natural strengths or talents. At this stage, individuals name and discover their abilities, share them with others, begin consciously thinking about developing them, add skills and knowledge to them and consider how to maximize them in their current setting.⁵⁹ The second stage is integration in which a person connects this new information with all other areas of their lives. The person intentionally integrates this information into the larger picture of who they are and how they interact with the world. In this stage, individuals “are more able to explain the behaviors that take place as a result of their top talents. They begin to define who they are in terms of their talents.”⁶⁰ Third, behavioral change can be observed. In this stage, positive outcomes or results can be observed because the person used their strengths well. Individuals “tie their successes

⁵⁷ www.umc.org

⁵⁸ Donald O. Clifton and Tim Hodges, “Strengths-Based Development in Practice,” *Positive Psychology in Practice*, eds., P. Alex Linley and Stephen Joseph (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons), 258.

⁵⁹ Clifton and Hodges, 258.

⁶⁰ Clifton and Hodges, 258.

back to their themes of talent. Further, they report increases in satisfaction, productivity, and other outcomes as a result of their focus on what they do best.”⁶¹

Each stage is necessary in strengths-based development. In terms of clergy leadership, how many pastors are able to identify and thoroughly explain what they do best? How many are able to name, claim and intentionally develop their talents in such a way their leadership makes a distinctive contribution to the kingdom of God? Most clergywomen have not been asked to intentionally discover and develop their unique set of strengths. Embarking on this process allows women to truly develop their leadership capacities.

Conventional Development versus Strengths-Based Development

The conventional approach to leadership development argues that there is little need to improve in areas where performance is already satisfactory. The point is to maintain the good performance, and instead, focus on identifying an area that needs improvement and develop a plan to achieve improvement.⁶² Gallup’s research indicates that “the conventional approach to development also relies on two additional misguided maxims: the best in a role use the same behaviors and achieve success in the same way; and if we fix our weaknesses, we will attain success.”⁶³ In contrast, the strengths-based approach asserts that “our talents and strengths are quick, powerful, dynamic and

⁶¹ Clifton and Hodges, 258.

⁶² Material from the Accelerated Coaches Training Course by The Gallup Organization. Accessed January 2015, *Introduction to Strengths-Based Development*, booklet, 5.

⁶³ Material from the Accelerated Coaches Training Course by The Gallup Organization. Accessed January 2015, *Introduction to Strengths-Based Development*, booklet, 5.

transformative”⁶⁴ and that the focus should be “on what people do well.”⁶⁵ Therefore, strengths-based development is based on the following three assumptions:

Only some behaviors can be learned. This includes skills we can practice or knowledge we can pick up through a book or an experience. The best in a role deliver the same outcomes using different behaviors. They play to their natural talents and strengths and perform the activity in a way that works for them. Weakness fixing prevents failure; strengths building leads to success. We do need to address things that get in the way of our success, by managing our weaknesses to prevent them from becoming obstacles. However, if we build on our strengths and further develop the things we already do well, those efforts are more likely to lead to success.

Strengths theory illuminates the importance of the uniqueness of each individual.

If in the church all clergywomen, or clergymen for that matter, are expected to deliver the same outcomes using the same behaviors then some of the outcomes would be positive and some would be negative. This research projects suggests that an approach to leadership development that has an over-reliance on acquisition of skills, techniques or even principles is incomplete.

The Anatomy of Strength

In their decades of research in the area of strengths development, The Gallup Organization compiled responses from tens of thousands of in-depth interviews with high performing managers. Gallup concluded:

Rather than spending time helping their associates become ‘well-rounded,’ many of the world’s best managers have instead invested time in learning about the individual talents of each of their associates, and managing with those unique talents in mind. This concept not only applies to managers, but to educators, administrators, students, salespeople, leaders of faith communities, and essentially

⁶⁴ Material from the Accelerated Coaches Training Course by The Gallup Organization. Accessed January 2015, *Introduction to Strengths-Based Development*, booklet, 6.

⁶⁵ Material from the Accelerated Coaches Training Course by The Gallup Organization. Accessed January 2015, *Introduction to Strengths-Based Development*, booklet, 6.

anyone who desires to heighten their self-awareness and change their paradigm from one of becoming average in many things to excelling in a few areas.⁶⁶

Strengths begin with talent. According to Gallup's research, talents are one's most natural patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively or positively applied.⁶⁷

Next, skills and knowledge are added. Skills are "the steps of an activity" and knowledge "consists of the facts and lessons learned."⁶⁸ All three of these combine over time to

create a strength, which is defined as "the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity."⁶⁹ Clifton and Hodges emphasize that talents are

naturally occurring and recurring, and that the field of neuroscience further clarifies the idea that talents are unique and enduring:

Roughly, between the ages of 3 and 15, the human brain organizes itself by strengthening the synaptic connections used often, while infrequently used connections weaken over time ... stronger synapses within the network of connections in the brain continue to strengthen, while weaker connections fade away. After about age 15, an individual's unique network of synaptic connections does not change significantly. While this doesn't imply that people cannot change, it does provide scientific backup for the notion that their talents, or recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior – don't significantly change over time.⁷⁰

Clifton and Hodges argue that in light of the neuroscientific process, we can see that a person's greatest areas of success will be in the areas that have already formed strong connections.⁷¹ Once the strong connections have formed, one can begin to see

⁶⁶ Clifton and Hodges, 3.

⁶⁷ Donald Clifton and Marcus Buckingham, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 29.

⁶⁸ Clifton and Buckingham, 29.

⁶⁹ Clifton and Buckingham, 5.

⁷⁰ Clifton and Buckingham, 5.

⁷¹ Clifton and Buckingham, 6.

talents emerging from those connections. This is where the area of focus should be in terms of leadership development. Each clergywoman should lead in ways that are most instinctive and natural for her. The discussion of spiritual gifts in chapter two described how God is the giver of the gifts and talents. Individuals are called to be good stewards of these talents that God provides.

Strengths versus Weaknesses

The question arises about the role of weaknesses. According to strengths theory, a weakness is defined as “a shortage or misapplication of talent, skill, or knowledge that causes problems for you or others.”⁷² The strengths approach does not advocate ignoring or being naïve about weaknesses, but asserts that weaknesses are not the place in which to invest. Strengths theory applies in three different levels in one’s life. First it can serve as a philosophy for guiding personal life and professional life. Second, it serves as a strategic tool for decision-making. Finally, it applies as a system for developing those around you.⁷³ Each of these levels is critical for effective ministry in the United Methodist Church. It is critical for a clergywoman to be aware of her weaknesses and manage them (through support systems, tools and partnerships) to the point that they are not obstacles in terms of her leadership.

In summary, strengths develop through a focused combination of talent and investment. Strengths development is about helping people achieve their goals based on who they are and the talents they possess. Strength theory suggests that each

⁷² Material from the Accelerated Coaches Training Course by The Gallup Organization. Accessed January 2015, *Introduction to Strengths-Based Development*, booklet, 8.

⁷³ Donald O. Clifton and Paula Nelson, *Soar With Your Strengths: A Simple Yet Revolutionary Philosophy of Business and Management* (New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2010), 36.

clergywoman possesses a unique set of talents that, with intentional investment, can be developed into powerful strengths.

Choosing a Different Research Focus

The secular world makes an excellent case for the existence of women-only leadership development programs. Organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education are encouraged to design such programs for assembly line employees all the way to the executive level. These programs are a benefit to women in that they create a safe space for women to learn with other women and from other women. These programs serve women and the organizations. They are of great value.

In the church, however, continued emphasis on gender has its limits in terms of usefulness for effectively leading a congregation. The task of the pastor is to lead the congregation to the best of her ability. Ironically, as long as the focus of the clergywomen is on gender, clergywomen will be limited in their effectiveness as leaders. It is evident that clergywomen would not have the ordination rights and equal authority in the church today were it not for the determined hearts, sharp minds and courageous actions of the early generations of United Methodist clergywomen (and clergymen). Naturally, the early wave of research in the area of United Methodist clergywomen focused on the ability of women to be called by God and to respond to that call. The next generation of clergywomen focused less on whether women had a right to be pastors and chose a comparison approach by focusing on the differences in leadership style between men and women. While it is interesting to compare styles between the genders, there is little evidence that this benefits clergywomen. A new wave of generative research is needed

that is designed to benefit the next generation of clergywomen. Ely and colleagues encourage such an approach:

Instead of defining themselves in relation to gender stereotypes – whether rejecting stereotypically masculine approaches because they feel inauthentic or rejecting stereotypically feminine ones for fear they convey incompetence – women leaders can focus on developing and enacting identities that advance the values and purposes for which they stand.⁷⁴

This project suggests that as long as clergywomen focus on gender categories they will be limited. It is counterintuitive because one would think focusing heavily on gender-based leadership development would empower women. In many secular professions this has played a major role in empowering women. However, the old question of leadership styles of women is no longer helpful. For example, rather than asking, “What contributions do clergywomen make?” researchers and clergy should ask “What contribution is *this* clergywoman making?” Rather than asking “What are the issues clergywomen face?” researchers and clergy should ask “What is the process individual clergywomen are using to become excellent leaders?” Rather than making assumptions about all clergywomen one can learn to ask questions which yield less about gender-based styles and more about what each clergywoman has the opportunity to do to change the world on behalf of Jesus Christ. Asking such new questions will yield information that can benefit clergywomen.⁷⁵ If ever an organization was in need of new questions and better questions it is the United Methodist Church. Fulfilling the call to ordained ministry is exceedingly challenging and much good can come from asking better leadership questions.

⁷⁴ Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 488.

⁷⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 27.

Put another way, what male and female clergy choose as their focus impacts what can be discovered about clergywomen. For example, it is going to be more productive for clergywomen to focus on what makes them each unique, rather than what they presumably have in common with all other clergywomen. This, then, becomes the starting point for developing as a leader. A clear focus on each clergywoman's unique process may yield results that propel the clergywoman forward. Leadership development is a worthwhile investment, but as observed from Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, it requires resourcefulness, courage, perseverance and a deep and abiding faith in God. Because the pastor has the immense responsibility of speaking to God on behalf of the people and speaking to the people on behalf of God, it is critical that each clergywoman invest in her leadership development. The work of ministry is too important to miss this critical piece in a lifetime of ordained ministry. Rather than trying to generalize about what makes all clergywomen the same or even similar, why not ask what makes each clergywoman unique and how her uniqueness shapes her leadership development process which then informs the practice of her ministry?

In the fields of medicine, business, non-profit work, engineering, higher education and others, gender-based training programs yield results. In the church, however, it is the perspective of the researcher that strategic work is needed to transcend gender categories and instead focus on each clergywoman becoming stronger in her pastoral leadership over the course of her ministry career. This approach does not advocate naiveté about gender-bias or gender-discrimination. This approach does not claim that there are no differences between men and women, nor it is arguing that there is no place for such research.

Leadership Development as Identity Work

Reading business leadership or church leadership books can be an important habit for clergywomen. Through such resources, clergywomen acquire knowledge and inspiration for the challenging task of leadership. This project suggests that leadership development can be broadly understood as an intentional and deep process of identity work.⁷⁶ The concept of identity work may be important to clergy because as a leader encounters new challenges and opportunities, she is best served by being self-aware in terms of identity. Each of the women in Scripture that led the people of God needed to be clear about their own identity. Each had to shed what no longer fit, and instead, be the woman that God called them to be.

As individuals make positive changes in order to move forward in work and life, they experience a shift in their own self-perception in response to new demands that they encounter.⁷⁷ In their work on identity and leadership development, Robert G. Lord and Rosalie J. Hall have noticed that “over time leadership skills and knowledge become inextricably integrated with the development of one’s self-concept as a leader.”⁷⁸ In fact, Lord and Hall note that due to the great length of time it takes to develop complex leadership abilities and knowledge, the role of being a leader needs to become core to one’s self-identity.⁷⁹ The researcher’s view is that it is important to consider the concept of identity work and the church.

⁷⁶ Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 474.

⁷⁷ Clifton and Nelson, 98.

⁷⁸ Robert G. Lord and Rosalie J. Hall, “Identity, Deep Structure and the Development of Leadership Skill,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005), 592.

⁷⁹ Lord and Hall, 592.

Identity Work and the Church

The notion of leadership development as identity work is in alignment with United Methodist theology. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, emphasized the role of the individual person in God's activity in the world. Wesley taught that part of a person's identity is to see herself as "becoming partners in God's own enterprise of renewing the fallen creation."⁸⁰ The call of the clergy is to recognize that each individual person, whether clergy or laity, can make a difference in the world. God graciously allows humanity to participate in the renewing and restoring work of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Exploring leadership development through the lens of identity work has at least three advantages for clergywomen. First, it empowers clergywomen because developing as a leader is, first and foremost, a personal choice. Second, identity as a child of God, identity as a pastor and identity as a woman are all important parts of the life of the ordained clergywoman. In order to be whole, identity must be honored, respected and authentic. Third, the idea that clergy develop, grow and become more of who they are supposed to be in terms of core identity is in alignment with the concept of sanctifying grace, a core tenet of United Methodist theology and practice. Sanctification, a hallmark of Methodism, is "the process of perfecting the image of God and extending the new birth into every aspect of human existence so that life becomes a consistent whole."⁸¹ Sanctifying grace helps a person to grow deeper in the love of God and neighbor. Sanctifying grace shapes and transforms identity.

⁸⁰ Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 214.

⁸¹ Runyon, 82.

Lord and Hall contend that “with sufficient development, the integration of leadership skills with identity can result in an expert and unique manner of leading that can include the development of internal qualities and abilities located not only within the leader but also within the followers.”⁸² This is a helpful insight for leadership development in clergywomen because the pastor sets the tone for the congregation. The congregation responds to cues given by the pastor. As the pastor develops internal qualities that foster excellent leadership it is easier for the lay leadership to also grow in their abilities to lead. Ultimately, the pastor is not successful if the laity are not also becoming excellent leaders of their own congregation.

Four Critical Areas of Identity Work

A review of the literature confirms the need for attention on the leadership development process that contributes to the leadership effectiveness of United Methodist clergywomen. This project suggests that while education and training are necessary parts of the process leadership development does not stop there. Lord and Hall discuss the distinction between acquiring skills and truly becoming a great leader:

An adequate model of leadership skill development needs to go beyond traditional discussions of training or self-directed learning, which tend to focus on the acquisition of what we will shortly describe as surface structure skill. Such surface approaches minimize consideration of the deeper, principled aspects of leadership that may be especially important for understanding the long-term development of effective leaders. In general, there is little leadership theory and scant empirical research regarding the slower development of core leadership qualities through extensive processes involving months or years, especially theory that describes how surface features like behavior and deeper structures involving abstract principles can both be changed, and together drive skill development.⁸³

⁸² Lord and Hall, 611.

⁸³ Lord and Hall, 592.

Though this deeper approach to leadership development requires perseverance it will be of great value to United Methodist clergywomen. This project seeks to explore leadership development in four important identity-focused areas: (1) clarity of purpose; (2) gifts and strengths; (3) self-understanding and (4) self-complexity. These four areas framed the inquiry for this project. Clarity of purpose and gifts and strengths represent the pragmatic aspects of clergy leadership. Self-understanding and self-complexity represent the psychological-cognitive aspects of clergy leadership.

Clarity of Purpose

The notion of purpose became popular with the release of Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*. This book, along with other resources on the topic of purpose, offered a stressed, tired, overburdened, hurried, non-focused America a way to slow down and take control of life again. Though purpose became a popular buzzword, the concept is actually very useful in terms of leadership development. A leader's identity is very connected to what she perceives her purpose to be. Ely and colleagues state "leaders are most effective when they pursue purposes that are aligned with their personal values and oriented toward advancing the collective good."⁸⁴ Engaging in an intentional leadership development process helps individuals to "construct a better vision of who they need to be as leaders."⁸⁵ Deborah was clear that God was using her to lead the people into battle. Miriam was clear that her purpose was to save Moses and later lead the people in praise after battle. Huldah was clear that her purpose was to speak the very words of God to the wayward people. The biblical women were clear on their function

⁸⁴ Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 476.

⁸⁵ Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 481.

and purpose. This level of clarity allowed them to be successful in completing their God-given assignment.

Leaders need to explore ways to establish and maintain clarity of leadership purpose. Clarity of leadership purpose can serve as a compass, giving reliable direction to the daily work of a leader. Edgar Schein's research on career anchors notes that being clear on identity and role functions as a stabilizing force for leaders. In the midst of anxiety or chaos, career anchors help to remind leaders of their leadership purpose.⁸⁶ Schein explains that "a person's career anchor is his or her self-concept, consisting of 1) self-perceived talents and abilities, 2) basic values, and, most important, 3) the evolved sense of motives and needs as they pertain to the career."⁸⁷ Career anchors develop over time and help leaders to know what they will and will not tolerate and how they conceive of their own self-development.⁸⁸ Nick Turner, Julian Barling and Anthea Zacharates also affirm the importance of clarity of role and purpose. Specifically, they discuss the importance of this for all employees in an organization. Each employee should feel that his/her job is clearly defined.⁸⁹ Many churches fail to create job descriptions for the clergy and each pastor is left to make assumptions about their role.

Engaging leadership development in terms of identity begins with clarity of leadership purpose. When the pastor is clear about her purpose she is able to lead with grace, calm and wisdom. Over time, as she remains clear on her evolving leadership

⁸⁶ Edgar H. Schein, "Career Anchors revisited: Implications for Career Development in the 21st Century," *Academy of Management Executive* (1996), 80.

⁸⁷ Schein, 80.

⁸⁸ Schein, 80.

⁸⁹ Nick Turner, Julian Barling and Anthea Zacharatos, "Positive Psychology at Work," *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds., C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 719.

purpose, she is able to spend more time on the collective leadership purpose of her church. As leadership abilities mature and deepen one becomes concerned less with “I” and much more concerned with “we”. Lord and Hall, in their work on identity, state that “leaders’ identities tend to shift from individual to more collective orientations as their expertise develops.”⁹⁰ This project examined the level of clarity of purpose in the three clergywomen.

Gifts and Strengths

Awareness of gifts and strengths and investment in these is a second critical area to explore in terms of the leadership development process. Spiritual gifts, talents and abilities are given to an individual for the purpose of edifying and strengthening the community. In a similar way, as previously discussed, strengths theory also highlight the meaningful impact of individuals and provides a framework for understanding and researching leadership development. Strengths theory suggests that the developmental process should be based on what a leader does well. A strengths-based approach focused on optimizing and learning from successes is not always popular. Though many believe that it is more profitable for leaders to learn primarily from failures, rather than successes, this project proposes that more will be gained by studying successes.⁹¹ Talents determine how you approach a challenge, relate to others, and fulfill God’s purpose for your life.⁹²

The Clifton StrengthsFinder is a tool for identifying and understanding talents and how those can be developed into strengths. The StrengthsFinder identifies an individual’s

⁹⁰ Lord and Hall, 592.

⁹¹J. Richard Hackman and Ruth Wegeman, “Asking the Right Questions about Leadership,” *American Psychologist*, 62 (1), 2007, 46.

⁹² Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld, *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-given Strengths and Inspire Your Community* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008), 22.

top five themes of talent.⁹³ Gallup's research argues that it is impossible for a leader to lead effectively if she is not aware of her own strengths. Leaders often fail to understand that their greatest potential for growth is in the area of their natural strengths.⁹⁴ Leaders often emulate other leaders rather than leading from their unique set of strengths. This is true of pastors who often emulate popular pastors in hopes of experiencing the same success. While this is initially energizing, it eventually leads to a dead end because the pastor is seeking to lead as someone leads, rather than as God created them to lead. This project examined the level of strengths awareness and investment in the three clergywomen.

Self-Understanding

A third critical area to explore in terms of leadership development is self-understanding which encompasses both self-efficacy and a sense of agency. Both are psychological terms that represent the importance of specific cognitive abilities, and are strikingly important for leadership development research. James Maddux defines self-efficacy as "believing that you can accomplish what you want to accomplish."⁹⁵ Self-efficacy and the core belief that things can be accomplished are very important for clergywomen. Without a belief of what an individual can do and will do there is little hope to lead effectively. Maddux discusses self-efficacy:

Self-efficacy is not perceived skill; it is what I believe I can do with my skills under certain conditions. It is concerned not with my beliefs about my ability to perform specific and trivial motor acts but with my beliefs about my ability to

⁹³ Rath and Conchie, *Strengths-Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams and Why People Follow*, 99.

⁹⁴ Rath and Conchie, 11.

⁹⁵ Maddux, 277.

coordinate and orchestrate skills and abilities in changing and challenging situations.⁹⁶

Self-efficacy is not self-esteem or self-confidence. It is not a personality feature. It is not based on goals or even behaviors. It is not choosing to reach certain goals or achieve certain outcomes. Self-efficacy, rather, is “the belief that I can perform the behavior that produces the outcome.”⁹⁷ Maddux explains that self-efficacy develops over the course of time and in response to work experience and life experience. Self-efficacy and a sense of agency are rooted in social cognitive theory that proposes that individuals begin to develop self-efficacy in infancy in response to their environment. In childhood, environments “that are responsive to the child’s actions facilitate the development of efficacy beliefs, whereas nonresponsive environment retard this development.”⁹⁸ This concept is important for clergywomen. If there is little or no sense of self-efficacy and sense of agency, then the individual will quickly become overwhelmed, or even defeated, by the complex demands of leading the local church. Self-efficacy, combined with a deep belief in the power of God to bring transformation, is important for leadership. The leadership development process should include an exploration of self-efficacy. Maddux summarizes why self-efficacy is important:

People who have strong confidence in their ability to perform and manage potentially difficult situations will approach those situations calmly and will not be unduly disrupted by difficulties. On the other hand, people who lack confidence in their abilities will approach such situations with apprehension, thereby reducing the probability that they will perform effectively. Those with low self-efficacy also will respond to difficulties with increased anxiety, which usually disrupts performance, thereby further lowering self-efficacy, and so on.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Maddux, 278.

⁹⁷ Maddux, 278.

⁹⁸ Maddux, 279.

⁹⁹ Maddux, 281.

Maddux observes that “self-efficacy theory and social cognitive theory are concerned less with understanding pathology and more with understanding the positive aspects of psychological functioning.”¹⁰⁰ This is in alignment with the overall grounding of this project. The aim is to understand the processes that are working well and to build upon those. The concept of self-efficacy focuses on the positive potential in people.

Finally, self-efficacy and a sense of agency are critical because they impact health and well-being. Individuals can excel at work when these and other positive psychological processes are in place. These positive processes raise the overall quality of life and sense of well-being.¹⁰¹ A sense of well-being allows a pastor to lead with calm and conviction, rather than in a reactionary, anxious way. Clergy health studies readily indicate the poor health of clergy as a population. Many United Methodist churches are complex systems with great potential for disciple-making, but also great potential for difficulty and conflict. This is especially true if the pastor does not believe she can accomplish what she should accomplish. This project measured the level of self-efficacy and sense of agency in the three clergywomen.

Self-Complexity

A fourth area that is vital to explore in terms of the leadership development process is self-complexity which includes metacognitive ability. Research suggests that the developmental process should not be overlooked when shaping leaders. In their work on accelerating developmental readiness, Avolio and Hannah propose a framework for leadership development that involves five psychological constructs including learning

¹⁰⁰ Maddux, 281.

¹⁰¹ Turner, Barling and Zacharatos, 725.

goal orientation, developmental efficacy, self-concept clarity, self-complexity and metacognitive ability.¹⁰² This project presents self-complexity and metacognitive ability as two vital areas to explore in terms of the leadership development process for clergywomen.

Self-complexity refers to the leader's ability to have several approaches and perspectives that she can bring to a task or situation. This is important because more self-complex leaders have more dimensions with which to discriminate among and more robustly interpret their own leadership experiences.¹⁰³ Self-complexity is generative and will therefore help leaders become even more complex in the future. Being self-complex gives a leader an advantage in that she is "better able to perceive and attend to a greater range of factors that are inherent in many difficult leadership decisions."¹⁰⁴ She has more resources to draw from and is better equipped to lead in ways that best serve the organization.

In other words, "instead of activating an avoidance orientation when faced with a difficult developmental challenge, such individuals will broaden their thought repertoires and be able to visualize a greater breadth of potential successful developmental outcomes that can enhance developmental readiness."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, leadership development for United Methodist clergywomen should include developing personal resources such as resiliency, persistence, focused determination and courage. A deep well of personal

¹⁰² Bruce J. Avolio and Sean T. Hannah, "Developmental readiness: Accelerating Leader Development," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, Volume 60, Number 4 (2008), 331.

¹⁰³ Avolio and Hannah, 336.

¹⁰⁴ Avolio and Hannah, 339.

¹⁰⁵ Avolio and Hannah, 339.

resources allows a clergywoman to respond, not react. Personal complexity and rich personal resources allows a clergywoman to persevere in the face of conflict, struggle and pain.

Metacognitive ability is the ability to think about one's thinking. This capacity "entails awareness of one's cognitive processes, cognitive strengths and weaknesses, and cognitive self-regulation."¹⁰⁶ Metacognitive ability, combined with self-complexity, are cognitive capabilities that are observed in the best of the best. The most effective leaders are able to respond with expertise when confronted with difficult experiences and potential opportunities. Avolio and Hannah explain the value of metacognitive ability:

When being confronted with a developmental trigger experience, first order thinking is exemplified by processing a given leadership challenge and perhaps resolving it without any impact on one's self-construct and development, whereas metacognitive ability entails introspection over the actual thinking process as one is experiencing these events, as well as how those events may be interpreted and utilized in altering one's self-construct or narrative.¹⁰⁷

This type of leader allows herself to become affected by the leadership challenge.

Because she is clear on her leadership purpose and has a strong sense of self-efficacy and sense of agency, she is able to sort through her thoughts and actually think about her thinking. She is able to think about what she is experiencing and then act accordingly.

Both of these concepts are important for leadership:

In summary, whereas high levels of complexity provide a rich set of knowledge that leaders can use to make meaning of a broad suite of developmental trigger experiences, metacognitive ability provides the processing capability to maximize the use of that enhanced rich suite of knowledge. Therefore, both metacognitive ability and self-complexity are necessary for accelerating positive leader development.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Avolio and Hannah, 340.

¹⁰⁷ Avolio and Hannah, 340.

¹⁰⁸ Avolio and Hannah, 340.

Summary

In conclusion, the purpose of this project was to understand the leadership development processes that facilitate excellent leadership by United Methodist clergywomen. These four previously unexplored areas are important to gain an understanding of the process that creates the best clergy leaders. A review of the literature reveals that positive psychology offers much to the conversation.

Therefore, positive psychology forms the theoretical foundation for this project. From this foundation, this project proposes that the leadership development process of clergywomen can best be understood as identity work. While it is perhaps more appealing to focus one's leadership development efforts only in the area of acquiring new knowledge and skills, the work is incomplete without effort in the areas that comprise the core of one's identity. In order to become the most effective leader possible, clergywomen will best be served by designing their leadership development process around these deeper developmental processes.

The focus of this research project was in four important identity-focused areas including clarity of purpose, gifts and strengths, self-understanding and self-complexity. The literature review revealed a lack of research on leadership development for clergywomen. Based on this lack and based on a review of the areas of strengths development and positive psychology, the researcher suggests that these four areas are critical to explore. They represent both the pragmatic side of leadership and the deep developmental side of leadership.

First, clarity of purpose involves the calling from God and overall function as a pastor. Clarity of leadership purpose comes from a deep and abiding faith in God through

Jesus Christ. Without the abiding faith relationship, the clergywoman does not have clarity about her identity in relation to God's calling for her. The literature review revealed that being clear on function and purpose is key. In one of the few scholarly studies conducted on pastors' key leadership lessons, research shows that a renewed call from God was the most statistically significant lesson.¹⁰⁹ Renewal of call, trust and reliance on God, experiencing God's presence and being self-aware contribute to clarity of leadership purpose.

Second, gifts and strengths involves the challenge of identifying and developing the spiritual gifts and strengths that God has given. It is about developing natural talents into genuine strengths and understanding how to best serve God. The biblical women leaders each had their own set of God-given strengths. Miriam was resourceful and persistent. She adored and worshiped God and therefore was able to lead the people in adoration and worship of God. Miriam was resourceful and self-aware. Deborah was courageous and strategic. She utilized others and gave other people an opportunity to live out their purpose. She used her strengths of courage and self-confidence. Huldah's strengths of wisdom and knowledge served the people of God. She recognized the convicting word of God and affirmed its authority for the people in such a way that King Josiah was motivated to issue widespread reform. These impressive women operated out of the way they were designed by God. Clergywomen today are best served by seeking clarity about their own individual unique strengths and abilities. Once they are clear on their abilities they can choose to invest in those to build them into genuine strengths as they lead their churches.

¹⁰⁹ McKenna, Yost and Boyd, 185.

Third, self-understanding, including self-efficacy and sense of agency involve discovering one's level of ability to believe in oneself to achieve what must be achieved. Becoming an excellent pastoral leader over the course of one's career can be grueling. It requires intentional focus and strategic decisions so that the process can unfold in positive ways over time. Positive psychology grounds the understanding of self-efficacy as it relates to ordained ministry. A clergywoman's experiences throughout her life either affirm or discourage her own sense of herself in terms of what she can accomplish. Developing self-efficacy frees clergywomen from gender-based mindsets and instead allows them to lead with authority and integrity as they empower others to discover their own sense of agency to make the world a better place in the name of Jesus Christ. No research has been conducted on clergywomen and self-efficacy. The literature has focused on clergywomen and the struggle to achieve, to be heard, and to be treated fairly.

Fourth, self-complexity, which includes metacognitive ability, pertains to the highest level of leadership. These two constructs mean that an individual can take a step back and think about how they are thinking. They can process what is happening to them and around them in ways that are constructive in terms of their leadership. It is unknown from the biblical record whether the Old Testament women developed this ability. The greater the depth in mind and soul the greater the clergywoman's ability to respond gracefully to the endless demands of leadership. This dimension, more so than the others, requires intentional setting aside time to think about one's thinking. This does not happen accidentally. Self-complexity facilitates metacognitive ability. But metacognitive ability will not happen without a definite decision to develop this capacity as a leader. One can have self-complexity but still not have metacognitive ability.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Methodology

Purpose of the Research Project

The numerical and spiritual growth of a congregation is determined, in part, by the leadership abilities of its senior pastor. Therefore, it is important to learn from female senior pastors who demonstrate faithful and effective pastoral leadership. This project was designed to gain information about the personal leadership development process of effective United Methodist clergywomen.

Subproblems

The first subproblem was to review the biblical and theological material related to women leaders in the bible. The second subproblem was to review the scholarly work conducted in the area of leadership development for clergywomen. The literature review yielded minimal studies on general leadership development for clergy and some studies on leadership development for women in secular professions, but little relevant work in the area of clergywomen and leadership development. The lack of literature further confirmed the need for this research. The third subproblem was to develop an instrument to gather data. The fourth subproblem was to conduct a collective case study of three successful United Methodist female clergy who have been in ministry for at least twelve years and are effectively leading large churches. The case study was conducted in order to learn about the leadership development process of each of these women. The researcher developed a Qualtrics Survey, in the form of a Likert Scale, and a face-to-face

Interview Protocol. The Qualtrics Survey and the Interview Protocol were based on issues that emerged from the researcher's sixteen years of experience in pastoral ministry, the biblical review and the literature review.

The Research Process

In preparation for this project the researcher sought to frame the specific leadership issues to be studied. Over the course of a few years, the researcher informally asked various colleagues, "As a clergywoman, what are the top issues you face in terms of your own leadership development?" The researcher expected to hear about excellent programs, resources and people, significant learning experiences, strengths and talents in action, leadership challenges and victories and other important and energizing leadership insights. Instead, the majority of the responses centered on problems in ministry due to gender. The clergywomen described feeling a lack of pastoral authority, feeling limited by others, difficulty in gaining respect from the congregation, and lack of opportunity in terms of appointments. They named hurtful criticism from church members and lack of support. Overall, the responses were negative even though the researcher did not specifically ask about struggles and problems.

Later, utilizing a list of names provided by Lovett Weems of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, the researcher then sent a similar couple of questions to nine graduates of the Lewis Fellows program. This time the questions were grounded in the learnings of cognitive theory and positive psychology that emerged from the literature review process. Rather than "As a clergywoman, what are the top issues you face in terms of your own leadership development?" these nine women were asked the questions, "What are the best things you've done in terms of your own leadership development?"

and “What are your strengths and how do your strengths fit into your leadership development?” Eight of the nine clergywomen responded. This time the responses were mostly positive in nature. The tone of these clergywomen was enthusiastic, and the energy was obvious. These clergywomen described various exciting learning programs and beneficial resources. They reported mutually respectful interactions with their church members and they detailed with ease their own talents and strengths.

It is possible that if the researcher had asked these positive questions of the original group that they too would have also given responses that were positive in nature. Nevertheless, the two contrasting sets of responses suggest that the language one uses to discuss “clergywomen’s issues” can dramatically shape the direction of the conversation. A broad question about “issues” yielded responses that were negative in nature. In contrast, a targeted question about “the best things you’ve done” yielded responses that were positive in nature. These informal conversations helped the researcher to frame the topic for study, allowing the research questions to evolve over time and both etic and emic issues to emerge.¹¹⁰ These informal conversations, along with the biblical review and the literature review, shaped the formation of the two research instruments for the study.

The next step was to identify the best strategy to meet the overall aim of the project. First, the researcher considered various qualitative inquiry approaches for this project. The researcher considered a narrative research approach to this project. This approach focuses on developing a narrative about an individual’s life.¹¹¹ This approach

¹¹⁰ Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995), 20.

¹¹¹ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 78.

honors the voice of a demographic whose voice is not always heard. The researcher decided against the narrative approach because it would not have yielded the desired data on the leadership development process of these women.

Second, the researcher considered a grounded theory approach. A grounded theory approach allows the researcher to gather and analyze data and develop a leadership development theory based on the views of the participants of the study.¹¹² Following Creswell's approach to grounded theory, the researcher would have needed to conduct interviews with twenty to sixty clergywomen.¹¹³ An advantage of this approach would have been the breadth of data that comes from conducting a large number of interviews. This could have allowed a substantial theory to emerge from the data. Names of the female senior pastors leading large churches were not available, making a pure grounded theory approach not feasible.

After reviewing the five main approaches to qualitative research, the researcher determined that a case study approach utilizing some key principles from grounded theory would be the most appropriate strategy of inquiry. According to Robert Stake, the case study approach focuses on "the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances."¹¹⁴ The case study approach worked well because the motivation for this project was to understand how these distinctive women developed as leaders. Following Stake's insight into this kind of inquiry, the researcher understands that "case study research is not sampling research. We

¹¹² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 78.

¹¹³ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 79.

¹¹⁴ Stake, xi.

do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case.”¹¹⁵ Given how few women are currently leading large churches, the case study approach provides an important learning opportunity. Though this project could have focused on a single case, the researcher determined that a collective case study would provide the desired data. The researcher recognizes that the case study approach does not allow for mass generalizations about other cases. Rather, it emphasizes the opportunity to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of an individual case or multiple cases.¹¹⁶ Though one cannot make generalizations about all clergywomen based on the three women in this project, it is important to understand these three women and the factors in their development as leaders.

Selection of Cases

The next step was to select the cases. In preparation for selecting the cases, the researcher considered the current reality in the United Methodist Church that very few women are pastors and even fewer are appointed as senior/lead pastors of the large churches. A recent online article published by the denomination indicated that “there are 85 United Methodist clergywomen serving as lead pastor in one of the denominations 1,172 churches with 1,000 members or more.”¹¹⁷ With so few women in ministry, and even fewer leading large churches, it is vital to know more about these women and the experiences that have facilitated their ability to lead at this level. Large churches are

¹¹⁵ Stake, 4.

¹¹⁶ Stake, 17.

¹¹⁷ www.gbhem.org/article/clergywomen-break-new-ground-large-churches (accessed September 5, 2015)

complex organizations demanding highly-skilled pastoral leadership. The women who are successfully leading these churches are a rare phenomenon, worthy of study.

The researcher contacted the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church in order to obtain the names of the women leading the largest churches. The researcher explained the purpose of the project and requested no personal information and that the researcher herself is in the demographic being studied. The denomination did not make this information available to the researcher. Therefore, the researcher concluded that she would need to find the clergywomen on her own. The researcher considered several effective clergywomen for this research project. The criteria for selection of cases included evidence of a positive approach to pastoral leadership, high worship attendance, serving in the role of senior pastor and in ministry for at least twelve years.

The researcher selected Ginger Gaines-Cirelli and Rachel Cornwell from a group of clergy who participated in the Lewis Fellows program through the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. Lovett Weems, the Director of Lewis Center, was very helpful to the researcher by providing names of women who were recent graduates of the Lewis Fellows program and known to be effectively leading larger churches. Barbara Galloway was selected because of her positive online statements as part of the Lead Women Pastors Project. The researcher contacted each of these clergywomen and explained to them the general purpose of the study, and asked them if they would be willing to participate. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Rachel Cornwell and Barbara Galloway all graciously agreed to participate in the study.

The Reverend Ginger Gaines-Cirelli (age 46) is senior pastor at Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. which has an average worship attendance of 600. The Reverend Rachel Cornwell (age 41) is the senior pastor at Silver Spring United Methodist Church, Bethesda, Maryland which has an average worship attendance of 300. The Reverend Dr. Barbara Galloway (age 61), is senior pastor of Coker United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Texas which has an average worship attendance of 725.

Data Collection

The next step was to create instruments that could measure different aspects of the leadership development of these women. The researcher aimed to draw out information about their developmental process. The researcher considered various approaches to gaining the information about how these women have become such excellent leaders. For example, the researcher considered conducting observations to see the women leading committees, worship or other congregational events. Observations afford an opportunity to see the case in action. The researcher considered interviews with the church members, church staff members, District Superintendents and Bishops to gather their thoughts on the excellent leadership skills of these women. The researcher also considered creating an inventory of numerous leadership tasks and functions and asking the cases to indicate which tasks are common for them. The researcher considered using the tasks named in the Clergy Effectiveness study.

Ultimately, the literature review strongly shaped the instruments for the researcher. In a qualitative study, the literature review directly helps form a foundation for the next stages of inquiry. In this particular project, the literature review was instrumental in shaping the next stages of the inquiry. Specifically, the lack of

information about clergywomen and leadership demonstrated the need for scholarly work in this area. As both the biblical review and the literature review were conducted, it became clear that the issues to be investigated were not surface-level leadership tasks, but deep structures that involved the cognitive activities of the leader. Cultivating deep structures allows for a sophisticated approach to leadership that involves exploring one's identity as an expert leader in terms of articulating one's own values and sense of purpose.¹¹⁸ Conceptualizing leadership development as deep identity work is the aim of this project.

The researcher concluded that the instruments should first and foremost allow the clergywoman to describe her understanding of her personal developmental process. Observations, documents, and interviews with other observers, all of which are typical in case studies, would have provided interesting, but not relevant, information. This project is not about observers' thoughts and reflections, but focuses on the leader's personal sense of identity as a leader. Therefore, following Stake's approach to asking good questions, the desire of the researcher was to formulate questions that would direct the looking and the thinking enough but not too much that the participant believes certain responses are expected.¹¹⁹ The researcher considered several ways to structure the interviews and settled on four identity-focused areas: (1) clarity of purpose, (2) gifts and strengths, (3) self-understanding and (4) self-complexity. Areas one and two pertain to the pragmatic aspects of ordained ministry. Areas three and four pertain to the psychological-cognitive aspects of ordained ministry.

¹¹⁸ Robert G. Lord and Rosalie J. Hall, "Identity, Deep Structure and the Development of Leadership Skill," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005), 602.

¹¹⁹ Stake, 15.

Validity and Reliability

Triangulation in order to establish reliability and validity was very important to the researcher because of the ethical obligation “to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding.”¹²⁰ The researcher was committed to collecting data in a respectful manner. In order to establish reliability and validity, the researcher followed the guidelines set forth by Leedy and Ormrod.¹²¹ The researcher designed a Qualtrics Survey to allow the clergywomen to self-rate in the four identity-focused areas. When designing the Qualtrics Survey and the Interview Protocol the researcher compiled with several potential items. The researcher field-tested the Qualtrics Survey and the Interview questions in order to establish *content* and *construct* validity. Content validity can be understood as:

The extent to which a measurement instrument is a representative sample of the content area (domain) being measured. Content validity is often a consideration when a researcher wants to assess people’s achievement in some area ... a measurement instrument has high content validity if its items or questions reflect the various part of the content domain in appropriate proportions and if it requires the particular behaviors and skills that are central to that domain.¹²²

The researcher field-tested the two instruments in order to establish *construct* validity.

Construct validity can be understood as:

The extent to which an instrument measures a characteristic that cannot be directly observed but is assumed to exist based on patterns in people’s behavior ... when researchers ask questions, present tasks, or observe behaviors as a way of assessing an underlying construct, they should obtain some kind of evidence that their approach does, in fact, measure the construct in question.¹²³

¹²⁰ Stake, 109.

¹²¹ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2010), 92-93.

¹²² Leedy and Ormrod, 92.

¹²³ Leedy and Ormrod, 92.

Each of the three clergywomen (colleagues of the researcher) chosen for the field-testing met most of the case criteria for the project. All three are respected for their vibrant ministries, for their ability to think critically about their own leadership and for their passion for sharing the gospel. The researcher administered the Qualtrics Survey and then met with each colleague to discuss whether any of the items were confusing or troublesome. Confusing or troublesome items were removed. The researcher also discussed with each colleague the wording of the continuous scale feature of the Survey to ensure that the progression from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was clear and easy to understand. The researcher conducted the same process with the interview questions. Any questions that were deemed confusing or irrelevant by the field test participants were removed from the interview protocol.

In order to increase overall validity, the researcher chose a mixed methods approach to collecting data by creating instruments with both close-ended and open-ended questions. In addition to the Qualtrics Survey and Interview Protocol, the researcher utilized a third source of documentation in which the clergywoman had the opportunity to describe her understanding of her local ministry context. This was an important step in establishing validity because the ministry context should be presented in the words of the clergywoman, not the words of the researcher. The researcher found it helpful to follow Stake’s wisdom that the case study researcher has a “sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn.”¹²⁴ It is important to understand the local church context of the clergywoman from her perspective rather than from that of the

¹²⁴ Stake, 1.

researcher, the District Superintendent or the Bishop. Her view of her local context and the way in which she understands herself in leadership in her context were of critical importance in this project.

In order to increase reliability, the researcher presented the Qualtrics Survey and the Interview Protocol in the same manner to all three clergywomen. The researcher was committed to consistency of language in her interactions with all three cases. Leedy's guidance was helpful in that "the more valid and reliable our measurement instruments are, the more likely we are to draw appropriate conclusions from the data we collect, and, thus, to solve our research problem in a credible fashion."¹²⁵ It was important to establish validity and reliability because the aim of this project was not to compare male and female leadership, nor was it to establish norms for clergy effectiveness. It was to learn about each clergywoman's understanding of her own leadership development process. Therefore, the Qualtrics Survey, the Interview Protocol and the written documentation about local church context were designed to allow the participant to describe her experience in her own words.

Research Tools

The Qualtrics Survey

The Qualtrics Survey was in a Likert scale close-ended format which gave the participant an opportunity to indicate her level of agreement with each item (Table 3). Ten items pertained to background information. Twenty-eight items (Table 3) measured the respondent's self-understanding in four identity-focused areas (1) clarity of purpose (2) gifts and strengths (3) self-understanding and (4) self-complexity. Each item was paired with a Likert continuous scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

¹²⁵ Stake, 93.

Though the participant could not see the topic areas, each Likert scale item was linked to one of the four identity-focused areas identified through the biblical review and literature review. The researcher emailed the Qualtrics survey, containing the ten background items and the twenty-eight Likert items, to each of the three cases prior to meeting with them for the interview.

Table 3. Qualtrics Survey (Likert Scale) Items by Topic

AREA	MEASUREMENT	28 LIKERT SCALE ITEMS
Clarity of Purpose	<p>Measures participant's self-understanding in terms of purpose, vocation, calling and spiritual health.</p> <p>Reflects the degree to which these items were critical for the leadership development process.</p>	<p>1. I know my purpose as a leader.</p> <p>2. My purpose has evolved over the course of my ministry career.</p> <p>3. I still feel called by God.</p> <p>4. I regularly sense God's presence in my life.</p> <p>5. Leadership is more about who I am and less about what I do.</p> <p>6. I intentionally nurture my relationship with God.</p> <p>7. It takes years to become an excellent leader.</p>
Gifts and Strengths	<p>Measures participant's self-understanding of awareness of unique strengths and investment in those abilities.</p> <p>Reflects the degree to which these items were critical for the leadership development process</p>	<p>8. I am aware of my strengths.</p> <p>9. Over the years I've intentionally embraced and developed my strengths.</p> <p>10. I am aware of others strengths.</p> <p>11. I see how my strengths help me lead with excellence.</p> <p>12. In my congregation, I regularly have the opportunity to do what I do best.</p> <p>13. My focus has been on making my strengths even stronger.</p> <p>14. My focus has been on fixing my weaknesses.</p>
Self-Understanding	<p>Measures participant's level of belief that she can accomplish what she wants to accomplish, and that she can bring about change (self-efficacy and agency).</p> <p>Reflects the degree to which these items were critical for the leadership development process.</p>	<p>15. I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.</p> <p>16. Over the years I have developed wisdom as a leader.</p> <p>17. My experience leading churches has been a positive and affirming one.</p> <p>18. When faced with complex situations at the church I find the courage I need.</p> <p>19. I worry that some things in life are simply beyond my reach.</p> <p>20. I believe my leadership helps make things happen.</p> <p>21. I believe I have what it takes as an ordained leader in the United Methodist Church.</p>
Self-Complexity	<p>Measures the presence of deep and rich resources in the respondent that can be called upon in a situation, including the ability to think about one's thinking (metacognitive ability).</p> <p>Reflects the degree to which these items were critical for the leadership development process.</p>	<p>22. I have found resilience from life's difficulties.</p> <p>23. I have many personal resources at my disposal.</p> <p>24. I am self-aware.</p> <p>25. What works in one situation may not work in another.</p> <p>26. Leadership is foremost about being right.</p> <p>27. I possess strong critical thinking skills.</p> <p>28. I regularly take time to reflect upon my leadership.</p>

The Interview Protocol

Next, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews, rather than through telephone, Skype or FaceTime provided the opportunity for the researcher to establish rapport with the participant in the study, an important facet of qualitative research. The researcher traveled to Washington D.C. to conduct two face-to-face interviews with The Reverend Ginger-Gaines Cirelli. Then the researcher flew to Bethesda, Maryland to conduct two face-to-face interviews with The Reverend Rachel Cornwell. Finally, the researcher flew to San Antonio, Texas to conduct two face-to-face interviews with The Reverend Dr. Barbara Galloway.

The Interview Protocol utilized a set of open-ended questions that she designed based on the biblical review and literature review. The researcher consulted Leedy and Ormrod's guidelines for conducting a productive interview that included these recommendations: (1) identify some questions in advance, (2) consider how participants' cultural backgrounds might influence their responses, (3) make sure your interviewees are representative of the group, (4) find a suitable location, (5) get written permission, (6) establish and maintain rapport, (7) focus on the actual rather than on the abstract or hypothetical, (8) record responses verbatim, (9) keep your reactions to yourself, and (10) remember that you are not necessarily getting the facts.¹²⁶ The interview questions were given to the participants in advance. The advantage of the open-ended format was that it allowed for the participants to share personal examples and stories within the framework of the four identity-focused areas. The open-ended format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions, a hallmark of a strong qualitative interview protocol.

¹²⁶ Leedy and Ormrod, 149-152.

The interview questions were organized into four sections. The “Section A” questions pertained to clarity of purpose. The “Section B” questions pertained to gifts and strengths. The “Section C” questions pertained to self-understanding. The “Section D” questions pertained to self-complexity.

Table 4. Interview Questions

Section A

1. What are your responsibilities as the senior pastor of the church?
2. What do you believe is your purpose as the pastoral leader?
3. Describe a time when you clarified your leadership purpose for yourself.
4. What would help you to continue to develop in your purpose?

Section B

1. What are your strengths? Of all the things you do well, what three things do you do best?
2. Have you intentionally invested in your strengths?
3. What do others say are your strengths? What comments do they make?
4. What would help you to continue to build your strengths in the future?

Section C

1. What shaped your self-concept of what you can accomplish in life and work?
2. What process did you go through to become highly effective in ordained ministry?
3. Describe a time you decided to make an important personal change.
4. What will you do to continue to build your self-confidence as a leader?

Section D

1. To what do you attribute your ability to navigate the complexities and subtleties of pastoral leadership?
2. Describe how you’ve developed resilience.
3. Describe your philosophy of leadership.
4. Name any specific programs/resources that helped you develop wisdom and maturity.

Wrap Up Questions:

1. What do you think *best* facilitated your development as a leader?
2. What should the leadership development process for clergywomen look like?
3. Is there anything else about your leadership development process that you would like for me to know?

Data Analysis

The researcher followed Yin's five-phased cycle (compiling, disassembling, assembling, interpreting, and concluding) for analyzing qualitative data.¹²⁷ First the researcher compiled the data from the Qualtrics Survey and the face-to-face interviews. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and transcribed by hand by the researcher. Next, the data was reassembled into groupings based on the four identity-focused areas of the study: clarity of purpose, gifts and strengths, self-understanding and self-complexity. The researcher then interpreted the data using codes that the researcher identified through the reading and multiple re-reading of the transcripts. The researcher then grouped the data in two columns of "expected" and "unexpected." This step clarified what the researcher thought before the interviews and what the researcher actually discovered from the interviews. Next, the researcher compiled a list of meaningful units of information (Table 6). Each unit was simply a word or phrase that represented an emotion, an insight or a story told by the participant. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on the entire study start to finish. The researcher revisited each of the five phases several times.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to gain insight into the leadership development process of effective United Methodist clergywomen. The approach was qualitative in nature, and focused on designing two tools of inquiry that allowed each participant to

¹²⁷ Robert K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011), 177.

share their unique leadership journey. The Qualtrics Survey and the Interview Protocol were organized around the four identity-focused areas. Though the interview questions were organized in this manner they were intentionally open-ended so that the participants felt free to share whatever they wished without too much direction from the researcher. The researcher sought to increase validity through the process of member checking as outlined by Creswell¹²⁸. In order to determine the accuracy of the findings, the researcher sent the findings report to Ginger, Rachel and Barbara for their review. This process of member checking, as outlined by Creswell, ensured that the findings accurately represented the participant.

¹²⁸ Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methodist Approaches*, 201-202.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Case Studies

The Reverend Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

The Reverend Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, age 46, is in her fifteenth year of full time pastoral ministry. Ginger graduated from Southwestern University and Yale Divinity School. Her appointments include Francis Asbury UMC in Rockville, Maryland, Capitol Hill UMC in Washington D.C., Christ Church UMC in New York City, Bethel and St. Mark's UMC in Staten Island, New York, St. Matthews Bowie, Maryland and Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C. where she is in her second year as the senior pastor, the first woman in this role. Foundry UMC has a membership of 1200 and worship attendance of 600.

According to Ginger, Foundry is a historic, diverse, progressive United Methodist Church that welcomes all, worships passionately, challenges the status quo, and seeks to transform the world through God's love. Drawing upon long-established rituals and spirituality, Foundry is innovative and pioneering in its efforts to be a place of positive change within Christianity, within the denomination, within each worshipper and in the world. Ginger explained that Foundry UMC is deeply engaged in mission and advocacy. One of their goals is to lead the movement to end chronic homelessness in Washington, D.C. They are working to change denominational policies that discriminate against LGBTQ people. They are working to engage faith for racial justice. They just celebrated

their Bicentennial Year. The congregation includes a strong young adult presence and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity.

Ginger described her philosophy of leadership as “grounded in an intimate relationship with Christ and a living and growing faith in God’s activity and promise. And it is communicated as much through the quality of the leader’s presence that is non-anxious, hopeful, brave, engaged as the quantity, content, or cleverness of the leader’s activities, programs or words. It’s about the quality of being.”

The Reverend Rachel Cornwell

The Reverend Rachel Cornwell, age 41, is in her thirteenth year of full time pastoral ministry. Her appointments include Bethesda UMC in Bethesda, Maryland, Woodside/Silver Spring Cooperative Parish in Silver Spring, Maryland and Silver Spring UMC in Silver Spring, Maryland where she is in her tenth year as the senior pastor, the youngest person and first woman in this role. Rachel graduated from Hendrix College and Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Silver Spring UMC has a membership of 800 and worship attendance of 300.

According to Rachel, Silver Spring is an urban-suburban city and is the largest unincorporated city in the U.S. Silver Spring is located in Montgomery County, Maryland, one of the wealthiest counties in the U.S. Montgomery County, however, has growing income and wealth disparity. Silver Spring UMC has been in existence for 150 years and is the result of a recent merger between Marvin Memorial UMC and Woodside UMC. The church is racially, ethnically, and generationally diverse which reflects the local community with a large immigrant community from Central America and Ethiopia.

The church is theologically progressive in that it is known as a Reconciling Congregation focusing on welcome all people into God's church.

Rachel's summarizes her philosophy of leadership with words spoken by Roslynn Carter: "Leaders take people where they want to go. Great leaders take people where they do not want to go but ought to go."

The Reverend Dr. Barbara Galloway

The Reverend Dr. Barbara Galloway, age 59, is in her thirty-second year of full time pastoral ministry. She graduated from Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, Perkins School of Theology and earned her Doctor of Ministry degree at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Her appointments include Trinity UMC in San Antonio, Texas, First UMC in New Braunfels, Texas, First UMC in Ganado/Cordele, Texas, First UMC in Pearsell, Texas, Jefferson UMC in San Antonio, Texas, District Superintendent of the San Angelo District, Southwest Texas Conference, First UMC in Boerne, Texas and Coker UMC in San Antonio, Texas, where she is ninth year as senior pastor and the first woman in this role. Barbara has been the first woman to serve as the pastor at every church throughout her career. Coker UMC has a membership of 2,700 and worship attendance of 725.

Barbara reports that Coker UMC has been in the same location for almost 135 years. The city of San Antonio has opened an east-west thoroughfare on the edge of the church property. Suddenly the church is visible and prominent as never before. According to Barbara, Coker has become a mission center due to the rapidly transitioning demographic from predominantly Caucasian to first language Spanish speakers. The church provides seven AA groups, a Health and Wellness ministry, a robust scouting

ministry, and a top tier Early Learning Center. The church recently received their first Spanish-speaking Associate Pastor.

In summarizing her leadership philosophy, Barbara recalls what her grandfather often told her: “Leave the woodpile higher than you found it.” Both philosophically and practically, Barbara believes she is to make sure that when she leaves somebody else can come in and do it better than she did it, can understand why she did it the way she did it and can benefit from what she did. For her, leadership is to know she did the best she could to leave the woodpile higher. She holds fast to the belief that everyone needs to feel successful.

Research Findings in the Four Identity-Focused Areas of Inquiry

Research Findings for Ginger Gaines-Cirelli

Clarity of Purpose.

Interview results and Likert scale survey responses (Appendix E) suggest that Ginger has a high level of clarity of leadership purpose, strengths awareness and investment, self-efficacy and sense of agency and self-complexity and metacognitive ability.

Ginger holds a crystal clear understanding of her role as the senior pastor at Foundry UMC since it was largely determined prior to her arrival. Aside from her job description and the expectations of the church leadership, she has personally given great thought to her role as the leader. Her role is to be a visionary leader, strong preacher, to provide financial guidance and to be the public face and voice of Foundry UMC in the

world. Her purpose is “to know, love and serve God and to help others do the same.” She is committed to helping people learn how to live in authentic Christian community.

Ginger’s Capitol Hill UMC appointment gave her a rich opportunity to learn the importance of clarifying purpose and role as the pastor. After some time at Capitol Hill UMC, she identified a primary narrative that the church could not grow because of its location. After some time, she discerned that the narrative was false. She helped the congregation see that their belief that Capitol Hill UMC could not grow was simply a falsehood and self-fulfilling prophecy. Other churches on Capitol Hill were growing numerically, and so there was no reason Capitol Hill UMC could not also grow. She discerned this truth for herself as the leader and then helped the congregation to take on a new narrative about itself. She focused on Jesus and made everything they did from that point on be about Christ. She said she decided “we are just going to circle around that because Christ is the One that gathers us across divides. As we worship together we begin to come together in unity. As we are attending to the things that matter most of all, people are going to be attracted to that, because that is what people want – a church that focuses on what matters most.”

Ginger has largely clarified her leadership purpose not only through challenges in the congregation, as described above, but through self-work. Ginger has done intense intentional work and continues to do so on a regular basis. She has an intentional commitment to engage in daily prayer and reflection time. This allows her to discover her purpose and stay very clear on her role. She meets weekly with a Jungian analyst, monthly with a group of four clergywomen for accountability and support and does an

annual eight-day silent retreat with Ignatian exercises. The monthly clergy group is critical for her.

To continue to develop her purpose, Ginger will focus on prayer. Through prayer she knows God and knows herself in God ever more deeply. This is of the utmost importance for Ginger. She affirms that “the more I can consistently dwell in that kind of space and live out of that space, I’ll be doing what I need to do.”

Gifts and Strengths

Ginger is very aware of her unique strengths, though she has not taken the StrengthsFinder. She understands her strengths to include being able to identify lay leadership, preaching, creating authentic Christian community, designing worship, leading worship and perhaps most importantly “quality of presence.” Ginger feels that she brings a quality of presence that invites others in. When she is present she is truly present. She is with people in the moment in authentic ways. One of Ginger’s strengths is to have high expectations of her church members. She vividly recalled a comment from a church member leader who said, “You have such high expectations of us, and you make us want to meet them.” Ginger reported that was one of the best compliments she has ever received.

Ginger confirmed that she has intentionally invested in her strengths. Because theology is very important to her, she participated in the Pastor-Theologian Program which was funded by the Lily Endowment through the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton Seminary. The three-year program strengthened her theological skill and afforded her the opportunity to engage with powerful and accomplished “power players” in the church world. She learned that she could hold her own around the table with these

“older, straight, white men.” Ginger observed that in terms of the life of the mind, nothing has been better for her developmentally than this program. She learned how to be present in a learning context with people different from herself, and to proactively wrestle with issues around gender and power dynamics. It was very focused work and extremely important for Ginger in terms of strengthening her own set of strengths and abilities.

Ginger primarily understands her strengths in terms of her spiritual life and spiritual growth. For Ginger, creating “holy habits” to sustain her spiritual life is paramount. Because her nature is to be present in the moment she needs the power that habits bring to sustain her. She needs these rhythms built into her life. She is absolutely committed to this.

Self-Understanding

Ginger has very high self-efficacy due to early message from her parents. She was raised in such a way that she could try anything in life. She never had any messages that might tell her she was not capable of being able to accomplish something if she wanted to do it. Her parents explicitly encouraged her to do her very best and they did not define what that should like for her. They simply asked her to do her very best. Interestingly, she has struggled with her own self-concept of what “my very best” looks like. She desires to have a healthy balance around her own expectations of her own capabilities. In some sense, she knew she had to perform at the absolute highest level in order to establish herself as credible and a person of authority in ministry.

Ginger is very clear that the process of becoming highly effective has been about two things for her. First, it is about relationships. She prefers the term “faithfulness” over the term “effectiveness” because faithfulness points more fully to the central task of

learning how to be in relationship with people. The production-oriented language of “effectiveness” has not been useful for her. Knowing how to be present in complex relational systems, including being present to people who might be difficult, has been key for her in terms of the process of becoming effective. She explained that ultimately the biggest factor has been that she lives life fully. She says “I’m a human being who is trying to know how to be in healthy relationships.” Second, understanding the reason for the church was key to the process. God gives us the church because “we forget how to be human, and so the church is the gift that God has given the world to try to draw us back to who we are really created to be, as individuals and as community.”

Ginger told a very moving story that demonstrates her self-efficacy and sense of agency. In middle school she very consciously made a decision to no longer participate in making fun of other people. She and her friends found this a fun form of entertainment, and she soon determined that this was not how God wanted her to behave. So she determined to change her behavior and to no longer associate with those who engaged in that form of entertainment. She then became a target of ridicule but this did not deter her from holding to her decision.

Self-Complexity

Ginger has a very high level of self-complexity and metacognitive ability. She has a strong natural intuitive sense and has learned over the years to trust it. She senses her intuition is a gift from God and that her part is to learn how to trust it and use it well and wisely. For Ginger, knowing herself and remaining committed to working on herself is critical. She is absolutely committed to self-awareness and self-knowledge. She is keenly aware when issues are connected to her own inner issues and her own inner awareness in

terms of shadow and light. She consciously steps back and asks herself what she is aware of and what she can choose to honor at any given moment. She is committed to “knowing myself well enough to know where I stop and where other people start.”

Her very high level of complexity and metacognitive ability has allowed her to develop resilience, and to be able to navigate the complexities and subtleties of pastoral leadership. She had a critical opportunity to develop resilience when she engaged proactively with a family in the church who opposed her on several strategic decisions that she had made over the years. She was unaware of their concerns until she was verbally attacked one morning at the conclusion of the worship service. It was very alarming, unsettling and upsetting to her. But in the midst of the embarrassing scene, and in the days that followed, she realized she was developing in the moment the capacity to be a non-anxious presence that allowed her to hold her head high after the incident was over. She developed resilience through this and other similar situations, because she realized she had to be faithful and strong and self-respecting. She learned that regulating her own emotions in the heat of the moment was critical.

Ginger developed wisdom and maturity over the years in part through the covenantal communities in which she has chosen to participate. In addition to the Lily funded Pastor-Theologian program, she also participated in a Lily program through Austin Theological Seminary in which she and four other local clergywomen received funding to explore how to live integrated lives. Their goal was a deeper integration of their full selves as disciples of Jesus Christ. Upon completion of the project, the five women remained in committed covenant community and continue to be a source of wisdom and maturity for Ginger. The five women meet monthly.

Relationship with God and relationship with others has best facilitated Ginger's development as a leader. Relationship with God is the grounding place. Next, her marriage has been a "laboratory for becoming human." Third, being invited into people's lives and being given the opportunity to journey with people in covenantal relationship have been central. Ginger gives thanks that she has become who she is, ultimately because she has been "down in the creative mix with people who love God are trying to be faithful, and people that encourage and entrust me with the lives."

Research Findings for Rachel Cornwell

Clarity of Purpose

Interview results and Likert scale survey responses (Appendix E) suggest that Rachel has a high level of clarity of leadership purpose, strengths awareness and investment, self-efficacy and sense of agency and self-complexity and metacognitive ability.

Rachel clearly understands her role as the senior pastor to include supervision of the senior staff, leader of stewardship campaigns, leader of some small groups, primary preacher and vision caster. Her purpose is "to help people fall in love with Jesus, help people live out their call in the world and to create an intentional community that supports people in their discipleship." She knows herself to be the encourager, inspirer and corrector, as the need arises.

When Rachel was appointed to the church it was 140 years old, and she was the first woman and the youngest pastor to assume the role. In her fourth year, she skillfully managed the yoking together and eventual merger of Woodside UMC and the nearby Marvin Memorial UMC. This formed Silver Spring UMC. The yoking and subsequent

merger gave Rachel a rich opportunity to learn the importance of clarifying purpose and role as the pastor. She discerned that she was to be the head change agent, and that much pastoral care, patience and compassion would be needed to oversee what eventually became a complex church merger situation. It was a thrilling and mysterious season of being able at each point to see where to step next. She remembers it as a full and exciting time of casting vision, discerning next steps and realigning staff. She knew she needed to be head cheerleader, theologian and vision caster. She engaged in serious prayer, discernment and conversation as she clarified both the direction of the church and her role as the leader. She described discovering that her purpose “consistently has been to point out what God is doing, and what is possible with God, and help the congregation discern their willingness to move into that change.”

Gifts and Strengths

Rachel is very aware of her unique strengths. She has taken the StrengthsFinder and her signature themes are Input, Woo, Communication, Strategic and Activator. Though she agrees with the results of the StrengthsFinder, these results have not been significant for her and she has not done work with these themes. She is nonetheless clear on her strengths. She understands her strengths as a natural giftedness “to disrupt and realign.” She reports that “I’m good at it without even knowing how.” She describes herself as a relational leader and an intuitive leader. She is confident in her ability to speak passionately about things that matter to her and matter to the kingdom of God. She is not afraid of change, and truly thrives on trying things that are new and difficult. Though she personally does not fear change she has the ability to respect the fear and anxiety of those in the congregation who do not share her willingness to embrace change.

Though she has not consciously sought to invest in her strengths to make them stronger, she did describe intentional effort on her part to strengthen her leadership skill and impact. Knowing that her strengths of disrupting and realigning served her and the congregation well during the merger season, she has been keenly aware that further growth and development is needed to effectively lead the church into the next season. She took the initiative to obtain funding to meet with a professional coach who specializes in coaching clergy. Similarly, because she knows her weaknesses to be in the administrative planning and care of details she worked with her leadership to create a position for an executive person to oversee all aspects of finance and trustees. Rachel has maximized her strengths through this because this person generates the data and Rachel tells the inspiring story of how the church's money makes a difference in the world.

Self-Understanding

Rachel has high self-efficacy and sense of agency resulting from very positive and encouraging church leaders during her teenage years. She was an active participant in the youth ministry at her church, and was given many opportunities to lead. This experience, combined with several encouraging voices as an adult in ministry, served to build her clear belief that she can accomplish what she wants to accomplish in life and work. She credits a supportive senior pastor in her first appointment, multiple supportive District Superintendents, a variety of mentors and coaches and strong church members who were willing to provide honest feedback. Rachel's sense of agency grew over the years by hearing "about how a sermon or a small group changed someone's life or helped them become a more faithful disciple."

As much as Rachel appreciates affirmation from those around her, she believes that, in terms of the process of becoming effective, “there might be a difference between loving it, feeling affirmed doing it and knowing that you are really are effective.” Being effective is when individuals’ lives can change and be impacted because of the pastor’s ministry. It is also when the system of the church can be led to a deeper place of growth. For Rachel, being able to love people when you don’t see eye to eye is a significant measure of effective leadership.

Rachel’s process of becoming highly effective is grounded primarily in her commitment to spiritual growth, her relationships with great mentor and coaches, and enriching programs such as the Lewis Fellows program and the Young Pastors Network, led by Adam Hamilton and Mike Slaughter. Overall, two pieces have contributed to her success. First, she has been given opportunities by those in authority. Second, she has taken full advantage of those opportunities and learned from them everything that could be learned. Since she values honest feedback and seeks it regularly, she is continually gathering her own data on her leadership and incorporating it into her self-concept. She actively seeks new challenges and new skills.

Self-Complexity

Rachel’s high level of self-complexity and metacognitive ability is reflected by a time she chose to make a personal change. Several years ago Rachel attended a retreat for clergy at Washington Island in Wisconsin. At the retreat she realized that in her life she had felt most connected to God and to her faith and to her calling when she was actively serving in social justice ministries. Opportunities for hands-on serving with the poor and the marginalized strengthened her connection to God. She reached the conclusion, then,

that unfortunately she had become a “professional Christian.” She prayed only when called upon as the pastor, and she engaged only in Scripture study for sermon preparation and teaching preparation. She was involved in ministries only as the pastor and not as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Upon reaching this conclusion, she resolved to change her behavior and her expectations of herself. She committed to small group accountability with a few other clergywomen, regular periods of Scripture study and regular prayer practices. She realized she needed to make commitment to these actions a priority.

Rachel reported that navigating the complexities and subtleties of pastoral leadership centers on her personal faith in God, and trusting that she has been called by God to serve God’s church. In addition, being relational on every level is critical to continuing to develop and grow. Rachel spoke with a very strong and calm voice when she said “It is about being relational and caring about people. That is really the medium in which we work – the incarnation.” She has developed resilience through owning her mistakes by humanizing people and being able to hear truth coming from them even when it does not feel true to her. She described a conversation with a church member who was displeased with the amount of change that had taken place in the church. For him, too much reorganizing had resulted in chaos in certain areas. She learned through the interaction that she could cultivate the ability to hear truth from a person who critiques her. She developed the wisdom to hear the kernel of truth or the prophetic message from God. She learned to discern when it is personal, and when it is based on the decisions and processes that have taken place.

Additionally, Rachel has developed the ability to step back and find perspective. In difficult or confusing circumstances, she has cultivated a posture of stepping back and

waiting to see what relevant issues and patterns emerge. This allows her to step back in and lead with a good strategy. Being given opportunities by mentors, supervisors and coaches has best facilitated Rachel's development as a leader. These individuals have helped push her out of her own comfort zone.

Research Findings for Barbara Galloway

Clarity of Purpose

Interview results and Likert scale survey responses (see Appendix E) suggest that Barbara has a high level of clarity of leadership purpose, strengths awareness and investment, self-efficacy and sense of agency and self-complexity and metacognitive ability.

Barbara clearly understands her role as the senior pastor to include supervision of the staff, recruitment of quality staff, helping to set a theological standard and providing pastoral care, especially in times of death and crisis. Barbara grounds her role and purpose in her "Yes" theology: "My theology can be summed up in one word – yes. Feeling like God has been saying yes for a long time and then when we have messed it up, God helps us to fix it, and then says yes again." As the leader, Barbara invites people to dream and then she supports them with the "yes". She helps to provide vision and strategy to someone when they have a new ministry idea or dream. She sees her role as the one who hears the potential and then empowers the potential. The people that serve with Barbara know themselves to be "permissioned" by her to follow what God is calling them to do as a part of their ministry at the church.

Barbara shared that, throughout her ministerial life, this has been her purpose. The years have caused her to have greater clarity that this is her vision as the leader. She is

extremely clear that she does not need to take on the work of the church. Each person must choose to get behind their own sense of what God is calling them to do. She does not feel a need to “over function” and take on what is really their work to do. She focuses on infusing enthusiasm and encouragement. She is also especially clear that her purpose is “to engender a willingness to go deeper with one’s faith and one’s response in terms of the walk that people make, the testing of their faith, and the levels of their faith and then to move them out further and give them responsibility.”

Gifts and Strengths

Barbara has not taken the StrengthsFinder, but has taken various assessments over the years. She has identified her strengths by pay attention to her pastoral leadership. Barbara sees her strengths in terms of her purpose in that she can help people see the potential and possibilities. An SPRC member once remarked “Barbara has an uncanny way of seeing what can be.” This comment remained with Barbara and captures for her what she brings to a church. She knows she has visionary strengths. She also is gifted at recruiting competent staff and building a loyal team by investing in those relationships. Barbara earned her Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. It was a self-directed study following two years of coursework. Her focus was spiritual leadership and her project aimed to strengthen how District Superintendents carry out their work.

Self-Understanding

Barbara has high self-efficacy and sense of agency. She first learned to believe in herself through the impact of her youth director when she was in middle school and high school. He was a creative and charismatic individual and he issued a challenge to Barbara

and two others. He asked them to help raise the level of participation of the youth in the Annual Conference. He expressed his absolute confidence in these three young people. He assured them “you can do it.” This experience “levitated” Barbara’s self-image, and she began to learn that she could make a difference and bring about change. As an adult in ministry, she once heard a speaker assert that every person has a fairy tale character with which they resonate. She immediately discovered that hers was “The Emperor Has No Clothes.” Over time, Barbara realized she had the courage to speak the truth when others refused to do so.

Barbara is comfortable with the language of effectiveness and describes the process of becoming highly effective as the simple action of “going and listening”. This has allowed her to experience success which has allowed her to come to know herself as successful and effective. She also has chosen to be a person who is content with the moment. She chooses “to not look over the fence.” She has chosen contentment with her appointments and focused on serving at that appointment. Barbara is not part of an ongoing clergy accountability group. Though she has numerous colleagues that she connects with from time to time she does not have a regular group meeting with other female clergy.

Self-Complexity

Barbara has navigated the complexities and subtleties of pastoral leadership primarily because she has learned to respect herself and to respect others. This has proven to be important for her. She has developed resilience through two means. First, she has allowed herself to receive the encouragement of others. She has maintained people in her life who speak encouragement to her. Of these individuals, several clergywomen spread

throughout the nation have been a direct source of encouragement and truth for her. Second, she determined to reflect upon several physical challenges she has experience throughout her life, including a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis. She once read a book entitled *Walking with a Limp*. This book gave her a framework to think about her physical health. Barbara says “to live celebrating the limp has made me resilient.”

Barbara has been able to develop wisdom and maturity, in part, through conflict management workshops. Her training when she became a District Superintendent was very helpful to her. Additionally, since she was one of the youngest District Superintendents in the nation and the denomination chose to “follow” her career and that of ten other District Superintendents. They were called “The Network of Eleven” and were a diverse group by gender, jurisdiction and ethnicity. This process was very meaningful for her. Additionally, she developed resilience and wisdom after the theft of her doctoral thesis. All of her materials were stolen one night when the District office was burglarized. She eventually chose to start over from the beginning.

Barbara reports that what has best facilitated her leadership development is that she is always standing at the door. She has always felt “chosen” for opportunities because she was ready and willing. She was always surprised and humbled but always had a clear sense that she was being chosen for the various opportunities in her life: “ I really do think of myself as a door holder. I’ll open the door when somebody knocks on it, and I’ll be the one who puts the kickstand down and leaves the door open, or I’ll close it. I really have always had my hand on the door, and it has been an opportunity to look in and look out.”

Qualtrics Likert Scale Findings

The Likert Scale (Appendix D) results showed high agreement by all three participants in most areas. Overall, the women selected answers that represent a very high level of clarity of leadership purpose, a high level of strengths awareness and investment, a high level of self-efficacy and sense of agency and a very high level of self-complexity and metacognitive ability. Each participant was asked to indicate her level of agreement with twenty-eight statements. The three women answered similarly on twenty-three out of twenty-eight items. The researcher defines variance as two or more levels difference in the answer. The items that show variance are:

Q15. Leadership is more about who I am and less about what I do.

Q17. It takes years to become an excellent leader.

Q25. I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.

Q29. I worry that some things in life are simply beyond my reach.

Q38. I regularly take time to reflect upon my leadership.

On question 15, Rachel selected “Disagree” while both Ginger and Barbara selected “Strongly Agree.” On question 17, Barbara selected “Disagree” while both Ginger and Rachel selected “Agree”. On question 25, Rachel selected “Disagree” while both Ginger and Barbara selected “Agree.” On question 29, Barbara selected “Strongly Agree” while both Rachel and Ginger selected “Undecided.” On question 38, Barbara selected “Strongly Disagree” while Ginger selected “Disagree” and Rachel selected “Agree” (Appendix D).

What the Leadership Development Process Should Look Like

Ginger named five items she believes could be incorporated into a process designed to facilitate the leadership development process for clergywomen: (1) recognize

the process that is good for women should be the same for men, (2) pay attention to the narrative or refrain that is repeated in one's mind about one's capabilities, (3) cultivate ways to provide intentional support such as quality therapy and covenant support groups, (4) learn how to be present, self-aware, regulate emotions and (5) learn the ways in which theology informs the practice of ministry.

Rachel named six items: (1) recognize the process should be the same for men, (2) make sure that women are given opportunities and seize those opportunities, (3) make sure that women are given a good senior pastor if they are appointed as an Associate pastor, (4) make sure that women are given excellent mentors and coaches, (5) make sure that women feel permission to try new things and (6) make sure that women seek honest feedback and a safe place to process this feedback in positive and helpful ways.

Barbara named six items: (1) self-awareness, (2) use personal evaluative tools including feedback and idea gathering, (3) learn how to work well with people, (4) learn to do what you say you will do, and to be where you say you will be, (5) learn how to network and (6) learn the difference between being confident and cocky.

Meaningful Units of Information

In order to organize and analyze the interview data, the researcher utilized Creswell's concept, as described in Leedy's *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, of the data analysis spiral in which the researcher records the data, peruses the data several times, identifies general categories and themes, and integrates and summarizes the data.¹ The researcher secured informed written consent from each participant indicating "that

¹ Leedy and Ormrod, 153.

participants' rights will be protected during data collection."² The researcher recorded the interviews with Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Rachel Cornwell and Barbara Galloway utilizing a digital voice recorder. Following the interviews the researcher transcribed the interviews and by hand used an open coding process to organize the data into categories. Then the researcher employed axial coding to compare and contrast themes and issues across categories.³ Open and axial coding were both very helpful because the purpose of the research was to learn about the factors involved in the leadership development process. The researcher employed Creswell's thinking that the coding process should generate categories or themes for analysis.⁴ The researcher read and coded sixty-four pages of interview transcription and noted important issues and themes (Table 5).

² Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 243.

³ Leedy and Ormrod, 143.

⁴ Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 199.

Table 5. Meaningful Units of Information

Community
 Be present
 Hear truth
 Understand conflict
 Mentors
 Coaches
 Relational
 Silence
 Prayer
 Knowing strengths
 Articulate strengths
 Philosophy of leadership
 Vision
 Knowing myself
 Expecting the best
 Seeing what can be
 Clear purpose
 Covenantal relationships
 What's possible
 Non-anxious presence
 Theology
 Resilience
 Self-regulation
 Feedback

The open-ended approach and the subsequent sixty-four page transcription ensured that each participant had the opportunity to use her own words to describe her work and life experience. Letting each participant speak for themselves is of primary importance in conducting a productive qualitative interview. Each meaningful unit represents developmental lessons and experiences that were identified in the interviews. These units reflect experiences of learning and growth for the participants that they identified as important in their own leadership development process.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

The Nature of the Research

This project was designed to discover factors associated with the leadership development process of three highly effective United Methodist clergywomen. The researcher chose a collective case study approach incorporating principles from grounded theory in the data analysis. After clarifying the research problem, the researcher conducted a biblical review and literature review. From the literature review, the researcher identified four identity-focused areas that framed the inquiry. The four areas were not named as areas to focus on in developing one's leadership skills. Rather, the four areas framed the inquiry itself. The four areas were positive in nature, which helped to focus the research on what has worked well for the women.

Two research instruments were developed based upon the framing of the research problem, the biblical review and the literature review. The Qualtrics survey gave the participants an opportunity to provide important personal background information and measured the degree to which each item in the four identity-focused areas was critical for her development as a leader (Appendices B, C and D). The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with each participant in their own offices in Washington D.C., Silver Spring, Maryland and San Antonio, Texas.

Overall Findings of the Study

Major Themes

From the biblical review, the literature review and the field research five major themes emerged as significant factors in the leadership development process. As illustrated in the Clergy Development Framework, the five major themes can be understood within three broad dimensions of clergy leadership development: (1) knowing God, (2) knowing self and (3) knowing others (Figure 1). The five themes center on “identity” in that they involve a high degree of self-awareness, self-efficacy and metacognitive ability. Self-awareness, self-efficacy and metacognitive ability are deep cognitive structures that are associated with leadership expertise.¹ These three abilities foster the development of the leader.

The five major themes include:

1. Vision: cultivating the capacity to see what is possible.
2. Strengths: knowing and expecting the best.
3. Prayer Practice: making time with God a priority.
4. Mentors and Coaches: building in sources of wisdom and encouragement.
5. Intentional Community: investing in ongoing covenant relationships.

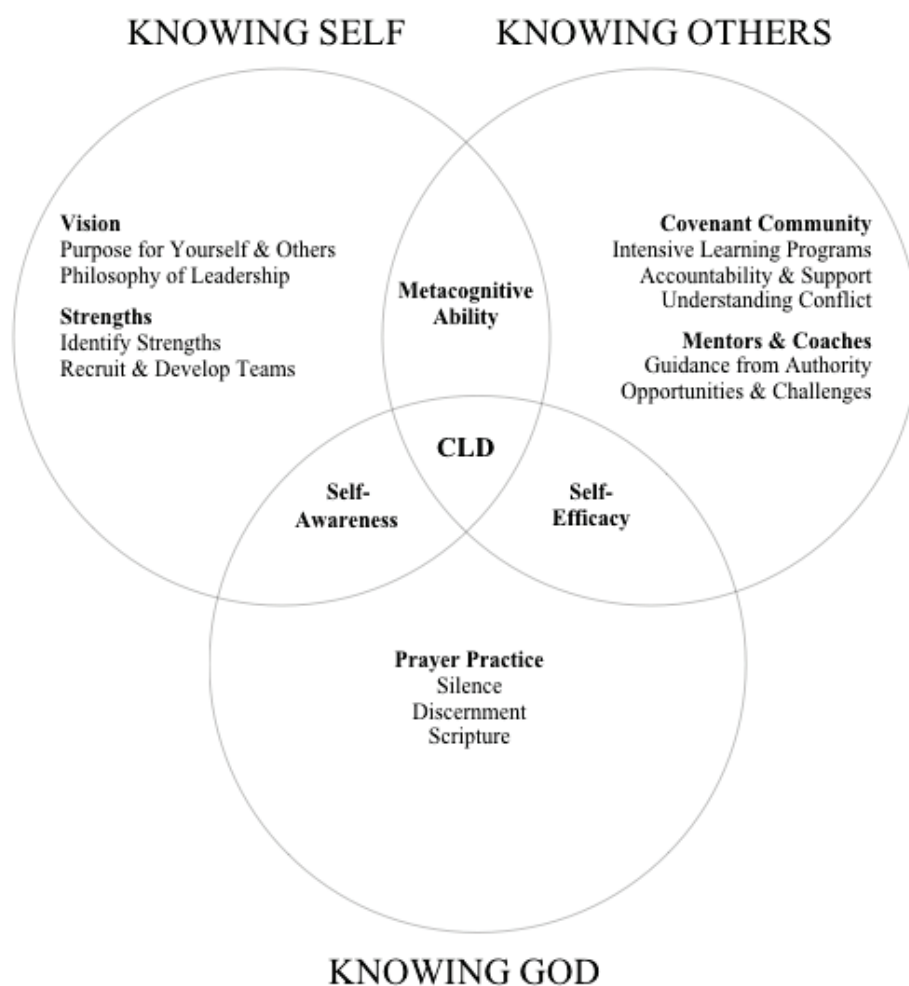
This project utilized a case study and grounded theory approach to inquiry. In grounded theory “the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants in a study.”² A basic Venn diagram illustrates this general theory or framework for conceptualizing the leadership

¹ Robert G. Lord and Rosalie J. Hall, “Identity, Deep Structure and the Development of Leadership Skill,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005), 591.

² Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 243.

development process for clergywomen (Figure 1). This project suggests that moving beyond education/training and acquisition of techniques to understanding and engaging the deeper developmental aspects of growing as a pastoral leader can foster a level of sustainable clergy leadership that positively impacts the church, community and world.

Figure 1. Clergy Development Framework



CLD=Core of Leadership Development

Vision: Cultivating the Capacity to See What is Possible

First, vision emerged as a theme of significance. Throughout the process of becoming the leaders they are today the participants shared the critical nature of vision. Vision is being able to cultivate the capacity to see what is possible with God. Vision, in this sense, is tied closely with faith and the notion that faith is conviction of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Participants outlined that vision is being able to see what cannot yet be seen. Their role as pastors is to cultivate the vision to see the potential in the church and the potential for the church. Their role is to be able to see the potential in people and the potential for their discipleship. These clergywomen have continually sharpened their vision over the years. Through several years of leading churches they have developed the practice of looking and seeing. Vision in this sense is not just being able to cast a public vision or long-term plan for the church. It encompasses interactions with the people of the church in which the potential and possibility is spoken by the pastor.

Part of being able to cultivate the capacity for vision is the development of a philosophy of leadership. Each of the clergywomen articulated with ease their own philosophy of leadership. Though each of the three had their own style in articulating, they each demonstrated an ability to share with a sense of humility and clarity what they believe they are to be doing as the pastoral leader of the congregation. Forming a philosophy over time allowed each clergywoman to set a roadmap for herself in terms of the content of faithful pastoral leadership.

Closely tied to being able to articulate philosophy of leadership is the ability to clarify purpose as the pastor. The researcher anticipated that being clear on purpose would be a significant factor in the developmental process. The researcher was not

surprised that the research conducted by this project confirms that being clear on your purpose is essential to developing as a leader. The interviews revealed a difference in role and purpose. The clergywomen see “role” as the functions of the position as outlined by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee of the church. In contrast, “purpose” is an internal definition of the way the participants believe they should carry out their servant leadership in their congregation. A key benefit of clarifying purpose was being able to persevere when the path was challenging and difficult. Perseverance comes from knowing purpose.

Considerations for the Practice of Ministry. Being able to cast vision is widely known as a primary function of the pastoral leader of the congregation. It is clear that being able to articulate the church’s vision, mission and values is essential. Pastors must be the chief storyteller in this way. In addition to casting formal vision, the pastor can develop their capacity to point out the positive movement of the Holy Spirit in a variety of situations and circumstances. Important questions may include:

What is the vision of my church?

How does my philosophy of leadership help direct the congregation to achieve its mission and vision?

Where do I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in my congregation?

How regularly do I look for evidence of the Holy Spirit?

How do I help people see the potential for grace and mercy to transform their lives?

Strengths: Knowing and Expecting the Best

The researcher expected to find that gifts and strengths awareness and investment was critical to the development of these leaders and to their effectiveness in leading the local church. The research confirmed that gifts and strengths awareness is critical.

However, there was no specific assessment, instrument or tool that the women credited for gaining great awareness of their strengths. Though they had taken various assessments over the years, these women found the most insight into their own strengths through their own metacognitive ability. They could observe themselves in action as a leader and integrate their observations into their sense of identity in healthy ways. Covenant community, the regular practice of prayer, relationships, and guidance and feedback from mentors were the main laboratories for identifying and utilizing gifts and strengths. It was in these settings that these women identified and embraced their natural giftedness.

These women have been very proactive in setting up situations where their own gifts and strengths can be maximized. Interviews showed that they had taken initiative to build staff teams and ministry teams based on what would best complement their strengths as the pastor. The most effective and successful team possess a variety of strengths.³ Knowing their strengths and how that impacts their leadership of their congregation was significant. These women expect to deploy the best of themselves in the service of God. They want to bring their best abilities to the kingdom work that the world needs. They expect the best from themselves and they help others to live out of their best selves.

Considerations for the Practice of Ministry. Strengths development should be a primary focus for the church. For the church to function properly as the body of Christ it must have its members serving according to their greatest God-given strengths and talents. Throughout Scripture it can be observed that God always supplies the people of

³ Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *Strengths-Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Team and Why People Follow* (New York: Gallup Press, 2008), 22.

God with the talents and strengths needed to accomplish their task. It is important for clergywomen to identify their strengths and how those strengths can best serve the church. Awareness is critical. This helps to direct the way teams are recruited and developed.

We found that it serves a team well to have a representation of strengths in each of these four domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or individuals who all have similar strengths, contributions from all four domains lead to a strong and cohesive team. Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be.⁴

Gallup's work in the area of domains and strengths-based leadership is especially useful in light of this need. Gallup organizes the thirty-four StrengthsFinder themes into four domains of leadership strength (Table 6). Utilizing the StrengthsFinder allows the clergywoman to identify her unique set of strengths, or signature themes (Appendix A). The framework of the four domains is then very helpful to conceptualize how her strengths shape the way she leads on a team.

Table 6. Four Domains of Leadership Strength

Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
Achiever Arranger Belief Consistency Deliberative Focus Responsibility Restorative	Activator Command Communication Competition Maximizer Self-Assurance Significance Woo	Adaptability Developer Connectedness Empathy Harmony Includer Individualization Positivity Relator	Analytical Context Futuristic Ideation Input Intellection Learner Strategic

Source: Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, *Strengths-Based Leadership*, 24.

Each domain reflects the area in which a leader will make her best contribution to the team. If a leader's strengths are primarily in the executing domain then she is able to easily see the steps to make something happen. If a leader's strengths are primarily in the

⁴ Rath and Conchie, 24.

influencing domain she is able to easily share a vision which brings other people on board. If a leader's strengths are primarily in the relationship building domain then she is easily able to hold a team together and help it to become strong. Finally, if a leader's strengths are primarily in the strategic thinking domain then she is easily able to absorb and analyze information in ways that help her to envision the future.⁵ This is vital information for clergywomen as they seek to develop their own strengths for leading. Leaders become strong by "using those unique talents as the foundation for developing strengths."⁶ The uniqueness factor is critical. Pastors can become overwhelmed by the wide variety of tasks and demands and often overlook their own God-given uniqueness. They focus on the pressing tasks at hand and fail to examine what special strengths they bring to the table. It is important to discover if leadership development for United Methodist clergywomen has included an emphasis on unique strengths. A pastor's greatest strengths should be the area of her greatest investment and focus. Important questions may include:

What are my strengths?

How do my strengths shape how I lead?

Where do I see my strengths in play on a regular basis?

Who do I need to build into my team so that we reach our goals?

How can be a good steward of what God has given to me?

⁵ Rath and Conchie, 24-26.

⁶ Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld, *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community* (New York: Free Press), 21.

Prayer Practice: Making Time with God a Priority

The interviews reflected a deep devotion to God. This devotion is lived out through commitment to prayer, especially silence. The participants found that everything was grounded in their relationship with God. Within the practice of prayer over all silence was found to be a critical element for these leaders. As they encountered leadership challenges they discussed the critical nature of devoting time to silent prayer before God. The silence allowed the various expectations and voices to fade away so that the voice of God could be heard. Though the leaders all sought times for extended silence such as prayer retreats the commitment was to regular periods of silence with God. The regularity of the silence was grounding and fortifying for the leaders. The regular study of scripture was important. The interviews revealed the importance of choosing to engage in ministries as a follower of Jesus Christ not just as the pastor. The threat of becoming a “professional Christian” is never far away. Choosing to engage in following Jesus grounds these leaders in their identity first and foremost as a child of God.

Prayer practices also afforded the opportunity to listen and discern direction for their leadership in the congregation. Spending time in prayer provided space to discern strategies, decisions and plans. Through prayer practices these leaders were able to stay close to God, trust their calling in God and be reminded that the church belongs to God. Focusing on their relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, was a source of courage. The priority of silence was very strong for these leaders.

Considerations for the Practice of Ministry. The insight into regular periods of silence before God should be given serious consideration by clergywomen. Regular spiritual practices can provide direction, truth, comfort, healing and hope. Because

pastors serve as spiritual leaders it is important to nurture the relationship with God. Silence affords time where the Holy Spirit can minister to the heart and mind of the pastor. The demands of ordained ministry are great. The demands can only be met by a pastor who is in close relationship with God. The time spent in silence with God can serve to bolster identity, foster self-awareness, promote humility, give vision and build hope. Important questions may include:

What is my prayer practice?

How often do I engage in spiritual practices beyond what is required for my ministry?

What resources might help me develop a sustainable and enriching prayer practice?

How can my sense of identity be strengthened and clarified by time in prayer?

How willing am I to be still and know that God will provide the truth and hope that I personally need?

Mentors and Coaches: Building in Sources of Wisdom and Encouragement

Building in consistent sources of wisdom and encouragement was significant to the developmental process of these leaders. Parents, youth directors, pastors, and supervisors provided a baseline sense of worth and identity for these leaders. This helped these women to develop a sense of self-efficacy early in life. Various mentors and coaches have given opportunities to these leaders. The mentors were pastors, supervisors, former supervisors and seasoned colleagues. These leaders seized the opportunities and learned the most that they could from these opportunities. Mentors and coaches served two roles. One was giving opportunities to these women. The other was providing wisdom, feedback and guidance in any number of situations or circumstances. The clergywomen interviewed have male and female mentors and coaches who provide

guidance in a variety of forms. Having this source of stability and guidance built in as a regular feature shaped their leadership development. These mentors and coaches continue to serve this highly valuable role for the participants and will continue to help these leaders in the years to come. Two of the three women very specifically utilize mentors and coaches in an ongoing way. Choosing to intentionally work with mentors and coaches results in there being automatic sources of support in life and ministry.

Considerations for the Practice of Ministry. Each Annual Conference in the United Methodist Church has a Board of Ordained Ministry that oversees the level of readiness and effectiveness of the clergy. The Board of Ordained Ministry is the gatekeeper for ordination and oversees the process to apply for provisional membership and full connection membership. The Board of Ordained Ministry might consider establishing mentoring as a priority early in the process. Mentors can serve a variety of functions. The Board might consider encouraging candidates for ministry to seek mentors. Clergywomen can be encouraged throughout their ministry career to foster mentoring relationships so that they have a seasoned colleague to whom they can turn. Clergywomen at any point in their career can seek one mentor or several mentors. Important questions may include:

Who are my mentors and coaches?

Who holds a level of expertise that I respect?

How can I foster a mentoring relationship?

What benefit might a mentor bring to my life and ministry?

What are new areas of learning where a mentor could provide assistance and guidance to me?

Intentional Community: Investing in Ongoing Covenant Relationships

A third major theme that emerged is investing in intentional community. There are several components to intentional community. First, participating in intensive learning programs was extremely significant to these women. Much of their leadership capacity was shaped through long-term covenant group experiences lasting at least one year. Some of these experiences included the Young Pastors Network, the Lewis Fellows program and various Lily Endowment programs. These learning programs dramatically shaped the leadership development of these women by ensuring a safe place to share and grow. Learning together in a covenant setting provided depth of mutual respect and mutual growth. Second, accountability groups with other clergywomen were significant. Being part of an on-going confidential group of colleagues was a critical element. These are rich settings that these women have experience as very important to their development.

A third area involves understanding the nature of conflict in the local congregation. The researcher did not expect to learn that conflict resolution was as significant as it was for these women. The interviews showed that these leaders were educated in the area of family systems theory and the basic principles of conflict resolution. It was clear that these clergywomen were steeped in systems theory pertaining to conflict. Consequently, they learned to address situations of conflict and disagreement rather than backing away from them. They learned to not take conflict personally and instead view it through the lens of systems theory and organizational behavior.

Fourthly, the interviews showed that relationships are primary to these leaders. Being present for people, showing compassion, and listening were essential ways to live

out Christian community for these leaders. In the midst of needing to attend to the daily tasks these leaders have stayed focus on relationship with family, colleagues and congregation. The relationship is primary and that is where the leadership gets lived out. The researcher anticipated that the concept of resilience might be an area of insight in terms of leader development. The leaders' stories of church conflict, challenge and pain revealed a willingness to stay in the relationship to the best of their ability. This willingness to stay engaged in the midst of adversity and animosity created resilience, which is the ability to demonstrate "good adaptation under extenuating circumstances."⁷ Their confidential and on-going accountability groups gave these leaders the opportunity to develop resilience because they had a supportive space to process emotions. This enabled them to develop a resilient mindset in terms of their leadership.

Considerations for the Practice of Ministry. Clergywomen who seek to develop their leadership capacities may give serious consideration to their understanding of community. This includes training and education in conflict resolution and family systems theory. It also can include considering a personal accountability group. This gives an opportunity for a clergywoman to meet with colleagues in ways that are mutually beneficial for the group members. Ongoing support and accountability groups help to counter the tendency for isolation, loneliness and depression. Staying engaged in meaningful and helpful community fosters the development of resilience and continues to create positive self-perceptions and a sense of agency about one's life.

⁷ Ann S. Masten and Marie-Gabrielle J. Reed, "Resilience in Development," *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds., C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 76.

Some questions may include:

Who are my sources of support and hope?

What relationships help me to find perspective in difficult situations?

What group of people helps me remember my identity?

What programs are available for intensive enriching and learning?

What resources would help me become more self-aware and more grounded?

Summary

Overall, the researcher anticipated learning that purpose and strengths would be important in the process for the women. The researcher did not anticipate the importance of being able to point out what is possible with God. Secondly, the researcher was surprised to learn that though knowing your gifts and strengths featured prominently, a tool to identify strengths did not. No single assessment was critical for these women. The researcher anticipated learning about critical thinking skills and how to build resilience. The researcher, however, was surprised to learn the significance of these abilities as they related to relationships and community. Important insight has been gained.

In a qualitative study such as this one it is important that the researcher not make generalizations about the demographic that was studied. Certainly, there is reticence in making assumptions about all clergywomen based on findings from this study. However, Stake's approach is helpful when he explains that instrumental case study, as opposed to intrinsic case study, focuses on the opportunity to learn about a unique case in order to gain insight into a larger issue or problem. When there is a need for general understanding about a larger issue then the case study approach can provide meaningful

information.⁸ This project studied three exceptionally effective United Methodist clergy. Through the interviews these women shared about their lessons learned, victories and heartaches. Though one would use caution in attempting to generalize to all clergywomen, which would be counterproductive, the researcher submits that from these three women we can begin to conceptualize the identity work required process to become an exceptional pastoral leader.

Conceptualizing leadership as identity work means that as the individual grows there is an identity transformation that takes place. The findings from this project suggest that leadership development experiences can be designed in ways that help foster these important identity transformations.⁹ Scripture states that if anyone is in Christ they are being formed or shaped into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:18). Something new is coming into reality when a clergywoman engages purposefully in the process of leader development. This is core to the Christian faith and especially the United Methodist approach – that people can become more than what they are today.

The Clergy Development Framework illustrates the major components of deep developmental growth (Figure 1). It also emphasizes the importance of paying attention to all three broad dimensions of knowing God, self and others. Emphasis in one area to the neglect of another can limit growth. For example, if a clergywoman excels in the area of “knowing self” and “knowing others” but not “knowing God” then then she may experience limited leadership capacity in the form of burnout, lack of inspiration, lack of perseverance, and depression or anxiety. If she excels in the area of “knowing others” and

⁸ Stake, 3.

⁹ Herminia Ibarra, Scott Snook and Laura Guillen Rama, “Identity-Based Leader Development,” *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice*, eds. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010), 673.

“knowing God” but not “knowing self” then she may be limited in her capacity to make a unique and meaningful impact in various realms of life and ministry, missing the opportunity to clarify her own purpose and refine her signature strengths. Similarly, if she excels in “knowing self” and “knowing God” but not in “knowing others” than she may be limiting herself by missing opportunities for unique learning experiences, including mentoring and coaching relationships as well as understanding the nature of conflict in the local congregation. Clergywomen could engage in a process of leader development utilizing the Clergy Development Framework as a theoretical way to direct their efforts.

Strengths of the Project

A strength of this project was the mixed methods strategy involving a case study approach while utilizing principles from grounded theory. This allowed the researcher to understand a particular process that had taken place over time which provided insight into the leadership development process of these three highly effective clergywomen. These three women are a rare phenomenon indeed. Few women stay in ordained ministry full time and ever fewer are senior pastors of large churches. Due to the rarity of these women the case study approach provided an appropriate strategy for listening, learning and appreciating these exceptional women. Due to the lack of information presently available in the scholarly world on this topic the grounded theory approach was also appropriate. Creswell’s guidance was key:

Grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain a process. The literature may have models available, but they were developed and tested on samples and populations other than those of interest to the qualitative researcher. Also, theories may be present, but they are incomplete because they do not address potentially valuable variables of interest to the researcher.¹⁰

¹⁰ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 66.

Though there are numerous leadership theories available there have been little to no theories that are based on positive psychology that can propel women forward in terms of their own development as leaders.

A second strength of the project was that the researcher conducted lengthy face-to-face interviews utilizing open-ended questions that were created based on the overall aim of the project, the biblical review and the literature review. The open-ended nature of the interviews gave the researcher flexibility to ask follow up questions and to seek clarification during the actual interview. Though the interviews could have been conducted electronically, the researcher chose to conduct them in person. This allowed the women to know the level of respect and honor that the researcher had for them. It helped the researcher to build rapport with the participants, which is important in conducting a productive qualitative interview. Being face-to-face also allowed the researcher to observe body language, tone, facial expression and other expressions of emotion such as concern, joy, laughter, pain and hopefulness.

A third strength of the project was the Likert scale on Qualtrics. Qualitative research differs in many ways from quantitative research including the purpose and aim. The purpose and aim of this Likert scale was to give participants an opportunity to rank themselves in these areas. Rather than seeking objective truth or fact, the tool gave them an opportunity to indicate for themselves their own level of identification and agreement with the item. It reflects what is real and true for them. It indicates their own self-concept. In this sense the Likert scale tool was a strength of the project. The Likert scale was also a strength because it included a section on personal background information which gave

the participant a simple and clear way to relay this important factual information. It gave the researcher an organized and dependable way to acquire this information.

A fourth strength of the project was that the researcher is in the demographic that was studied. This brings strength to the project because the researcher knew the immense need for meaningful information in this arena. Sixteen years of ministry experience informed the study. Stake comments on the role of the case researcher as an interpreter are illuminating:

Whoever is a researcher has recognized a problem, a puzzlement, and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things. Finding new connections, the researcher finds ways to make them comprehensible to others. Research is not just the domain of scientists, it is the domain of craftspersons and artists as well, all who would study and interpret.¹¹

The researcher's desire was to make known that which was unknown. Moving forward, the desire is for the findings from this project to be implemented in ways that are respectful and helpful to all involved.

Weaknesses of the Project

A weakness of the project was the number of cases. It was appropriate for case study analysis but not as appropriate for grounded theory analysis. Though each case was well represented and thoroughly analyzed, the researcher can see great value in conducting similar studies with a large number of clergywomen who fit the criteria. As previously discussed, unfortunately the names of these pastors and their churches are not presently available. Having access to this information could have allowed the researcher great breadth in selecting cases and in being able to gather data for further cross-case analysis.

¹¹ Stake, 97.

A weakness of the project was that the researcher is in the same demographic as the cases. The researcher brings a bias that leadership development is something that clergywomen should value and that leaders should be able to articulate their own sense of themselves as leaders. The researcher brought a predetermined view that leadership development is a worthy endeavor. Similarly, it may have been more advantageous if the researcher's background, gender, personality, education and experiences differed dramatically from the cases' background, gender, personality, education and experiences.

Suggested Modifications for Improvement

This project could be strengthened by interviewing more women or interviewing women that have more in common with each other in order to compare cases. This would be time intensive and labor intensive but could generate a large amount of data that could be analyzed over time. This project could be strengthened by also interviewing the mentors of these three clergywomen about the growth that they have witnessed in these women. This could potentially give more perspective into the developmental process because these mentors have the vantage point of seeing the growth and change over time.

The project could be strengthened by collecting data about the lessons learned in each of the various programs that helped develop these women. This would require the women revisiting the programs and identifying the lessons learned and the moments that created those lessons. This could be added to the body of data. It is unknown if this kind of intellectual recall would be feasible.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION

Personal Growth

Very early on the people of God needed to learn what it meant to belong to God. They sought to teach one another to love God with all their heart, soul and might (Deut. 6:4-9). Jesus completed the teaching when he helped the people to see that they were also called to love their neighbor as themselves (Luke 10:25-28). Loving God, serving others and working on self are all essential aspects of becoming the leader we are called to be.

This project has personally challenged the researcher to think about leadership development in three realms: (1) knowing and loving God, (2) knowing and loving self and (3) knowing and loving neighbor (Figure 1). This concept is comforting and challenging. It is comforting to the researcher because she believes that God's power can equip and enliven a person's leadership capacities. It is challenging because remarkable leadership comes from more than learning new skills to better influence people. Becoming an exceptional leader involves far more than attending educational events and training events. It comes from deep identity work over the course of many years. It is the view of the researcher that this project points clearly toward two contrasting options: to develop or to not.

Is Leader Development Worth the Effort?

This project suggests that the deeper structures, included in the Clergy Development Framework, of self-efficacy, self-awareness and metacognitive ability are

essential to becoming the kind of leader the researcher envisions (Figure 1). This project has challenged the researcher to consider whether the process of deeper growth is worth the personal energy and effort. To the researcher's dismay, cultivating these kinds of deeper cognitive capacities is personally very challenging and quite uncomfortable. Though the researcher has already engaged in much of this kind of work over the years, this project has thoroughly revealed the unceasingly uncomfortable nature of this work.

Leadership development, as it can be understood through this project, is better termed "leader development" due to the intensely personal nature of this kind of growth. Leader development is uncomfortable because it requires humility, intentionality and the wherewithal to stick with the process of working on the self. The researcher has wondered whether this kind of intense personal work is worth the discomfort and investment. According to this project, it requires honest self-assessment and a willingness to receive feedback from others. This kind of leader development requires daily prayer and silence before God. It requires making relationship with God the priority in life. Making God a priority in life is a positive thing, of course. Yet, it is more challenging when one has the constant temptation to become a professional Christian. Without intentionality, a pastor's personal spiritual life can unfortunately become stagnant in the face of endless ministry demands. When being Christian becomes exhausting one has to wonder.

Furthermore, this concept of leader development requires commitment to learning with others and to making oneself accountable to others, which requires vulnerability and transparency. In an appointive system, such as the Methodist system, it is difficult to find trusted confidants. Plus, participating in intentional community (accountability groups,

learning programs, mentors, coaches, therapists) requires dedication of time and financial resources, not to mention the risk it takes to develop trust with colleagues at this level. In most, if not all cases, this means time away from spouse and children. This kind of deep identity work is difficult, takes a lot of personal time and is expensive. Who has time for this level of self-reflection? How can something that takes this much continual mental fortitude be worth it? It appears that this kind of leadership development takes every bit of what can be observed in the biblical women – courage, perseverance, resourcefulness and a deep devotion to God.

Asking a Different Question about Development

Their names are Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Ginger, Rachel and Barbara. Together they bracket ancient and modern times. These six names represent thousands more who names shall never be known. Their lives are punctuated by courage, perseverance, resourcefulness and a deep devotion to God. They have heard God's call. They have responded. They have triumphed and erred, risen and fallen. They have listened and followed and learned and studied. They have made mistakes and gotten it right. They have missed the mark and aimed again and again. They have walked straight into the fire, trusting God with all of their being. They have lost and they have gained. They have chosen courage in the midst of fear. They have persevered regardless of the effort required. They have stared down the enemy with the holy resolve that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. They have found God to provide every resource they ever needed. Their devotion to God was and is not unwavering - it was better than unwavering, it was and is real. For thousands of years women of faith have stood, spoken, knelt, served, prayed, preached and led.

Through this project, the researcher has come to a personal deeper clarity that, just as the design of this project itself revealed, the questions she asks shapes the responses she finds. Therefore, the question is not whether the work of leader development is worth the time and effort. The question is about quality of life. To be called to lead the people of God brings an exhausting and exhilarating quality to one's life. Indeed, the life of faith is indeed distinct. Even more so, the life of a called leader brings unique opportunities of blessing, adventure and richness. The life of the ordained clergy is unpredictable, exciting and exhausting. The researcher, like all other clergy, must choose to continue to respond to God's call to this distinct life. The question of whether the work is worth doing is best replaced by the notion that excellent, faithful, courageous leaders expect the best from God, from themselves and from others. Expecting the best is an act of faith. This act of faith removes the question of effort.

Doing the Work of Development

At an outdoor concert the researcher attended several years ago in Tuscaloosa, Alabama Garrison Keelor told a story about potato salad. He advised that when one is invited to a summertime get-together with friends or family and one is asked to bring the potato salad one ought not go to the store and buy a plastic container of "pre-made yellow potato salad slop". Instead, one ought to purchase potatoes, take them home and proceed to *make* potato salad. Homemade is most appropriate, and is what you should do if asked to bring the potato salad. With an unsettling dramatic pause, Garrison Keelor looked at the audience that muggy June evening and in a lowered voice simply said, "You make the potato salad. You do the work for the people that you love."

In ordained ministry, every pastor has the choice to let ministry become too exhausting and overwhelming, or, worse, to let it become just a job. This researcher believes neither is acceptable because neither is faithful. Instead, the invitation is to do the work for the people that you love, even when the work requires intense, sustained identity work over the course of a ministry lifetime. When a pastor does the work for the people and for God she is able to share the gospel in creative and compelling ways. People find hope in Jesus Christ and their lives become purposeful. Leaders who do their share of identity work are people that are humble and wise, courageous and genuine. Their joy and peace are evident and they share the light of Christ everywhere they go. The Clergy Development Framework provides a way to conceptualize the important factors in leader development. The researcher now has the opportunity to focus her personal development in the five areas of vision, strengths, prayer practice, intentional community and mentors and coaches. The researcher's prayer is to persevere in this holy and task of leading the people of God while also developing as a leader.

Areas for Future Research

This project provides groundwork for several possible areas of research. Elements of this project could be expanded to more fully understand the leadership development of clergywomen. Each of the five areas identified in the Clergy Development Framework invite further study. Topics may include emotional intelligence, conflict resolution and shame resilience. Less than 100 women currently serve as senior pastors of churches with 1000 or more in membership. Research with this group would be of great value. Studying this group could provide valuable insight in terms of understanding faithful

pastoral leadership, clergy effectiveness and clergy leader development. In addition, this group of pastors could benefit from the findings of this project. Future research with this group of women should include engaging the concepts of clergy leader development with clergywomen of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Another possibility would be to work with the clergywomen who will most likely serve larger congregations. The framework identified in this project could be share with a select group of women who might choose to engage its concepts over a defined length of time. These women could identify their own areas of needed growth and work within the realms of knowing God, knowing self and knowing others. They could come together and form a collegial group focusing on vision, prayer practice, strengths, mentors and coaches, and covenant community. The group could establish baseline measures using the Likert Scale from this project. At the conclusion of three years they could do a second assessment in an attempt to gauge growth. There are few limits to the enrichment, education, and growth that faithful clergywomen can experience.

Among other researchers and practitioners, Clifton and Hodges, in their work on strengths-based development, recommend that future research in the area of strengths include constructs such as resiliency.¹ Researcher, writer and speaker Brene Brown has brought to the public forum a passion for discussing shame and vulnerability.² Her research in shame describes how she has witnessed people developing helpful strategies against shame, or in her words, strategies for shame resilience.³ Her development of

¹ Clifton and Hodges, 20.

² Brene Brown's popular TED talk on shame and vulnerability demonstrates the appeal of this topic in America today.

³ Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York: Gotham Books), 2012.

shame resilience theory provides a new perspective on the leadership development process. Shame resilience theory “offers a working definition of shame and a conceptual identity for shame.”⁴ According to Brown, “shame is an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging.”⁵ The goal is not for a pastor to ignore shame but to recognize the way God can heal it and lessen its destructive impact. In order to develop effective shame resilience an individual must be able to gauge her own sense of vulnerability in personal and work life, be able to assess cultural and social forces at work in her life, reach out to others who can provide empathy, and speak shame out loud, which diminishes its power.⁶ Leading a church is an extremely vulnerable act. The researcher suspects that women who have found a way to lead well throughout their careers have developed healthy ways to engage their vulnerability.

The biblical basis for shame comes from the third chapter of Genesis in which Adam and Eve disobey God and the consequence is shame. Clergy spend countless hours preaching, teaching and leading in ways that help their congregations overcome the shame and brokenness that is the human condition. They provide heartfelt pastoral care, offer wisdom and are present in the most difficult and important moments of their church members’ lives. The pastor teaches about the redemption made possible by God through grace. This is the work of the pastor. An endeavor such as “leadership development” may mean very little to the pastor who is overwhelmed by her own vulnerability. If the

⁴ Brene Brown, “Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame,” *Families in Society: Jan-Mar 2006*, 87, 1, 45.

⁵ Brown, “Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame,” 45.

⁶ Brown, “Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame,” 49.

demands of the local church are constantly triggering shame within her, then ministry is simply about surviving. The goal of this project is for clergywomen to flourish as they expertly lead the people of God.

Research in the area of resilience suggests that both men and women experience shame and guilt. Shame, which is about who you are, is a force that can significantly impact a clergywoman's leadership. Becoming a truly excellent leader of God's church means working through one's own journey with shame and worth. Basic Christian doctrine asserts that the grace of God is the answer to humanity's struggles in the area of shame. Since grace is a core tenet of United Methodist theology and practice, it is imperative that clergywomen engage in the ongoing identity work needed to develop resilience. Being naïve to the effects of shame can keep clergywomen from becoming the outstanding leaders God wants them to be.

Conclusion

From the beginning there have been women who have chosen devotion to God. To engage in intentional clergy leader development requires tenacity, creativity and compassion. It requires listening to God, loving others and seeking to be who God created them to be. Through the leadership of many excellent clergywomen people have become more richly connected to themselves, to one another and to a God who adores them.

This project has grounded the researcher once again in the simplicity and power of the gospel as well as the sacredness of the call to ordained ministry. A privilege not to be taken lightly, the ordained minister is set apart by God for a life that is distinct. The three clergywomen involved in this study are living lives of distinction, and they are doing the work for the people that they love and the God that they love. They demonstrate courage, determination, compassion and wisdom. They expect the best of themselves, the church and God. The researcher feels deep gratitude for these women and for the doctor of ministry degree process. The core hope of the researcher is to live a life that is grounded in the grace that only God can provide. It is her prayer that her leadership be grounded in love and guided by the Spirit, and that she will be given the strength and mercy to persevere in such important identity work. Completion of this project serves as an invitation to continue to do the work of faithful leadership.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF CLIFTON STRENGTHSFINDER THEMES

List of Clifton StrengthsFinder Themes

Achiever
Activator
Adaptability
Analytical
Arranger
Belief
Command
Communication
Competition
Connectedness
Consistency
Context
Deliberative
Developer
Discipline
Empathy
Focus
Futuristic
Harmony
Ideation
Includer
Individualization
Input
Intellection
Learner
Maximizer
Positivity
Relator
Responsibility
Restorative
Self-Assurance
Significance
Strategic
Woo

APPENDIX B

QUALTRICS SURVEY BACKGROUND ITEMS

Qualtrics Survey Background Items

1. Name
2. Age
3. Education
4. Appointment history
5. How many years have you been in full time pastoral ministry?
6. What year are you in at your current appointment?
7. What is the membership of your current appointment?
8. What is the average worship attendance of your current appointment?
9. Please describe your current ministry context.
10. Continuing education events, resources or programs that have significantly shaped your leadership development process.

APPENDIX C

QUALTRICS SURVEY - LIST OF LIKERT SCALE ITEMS

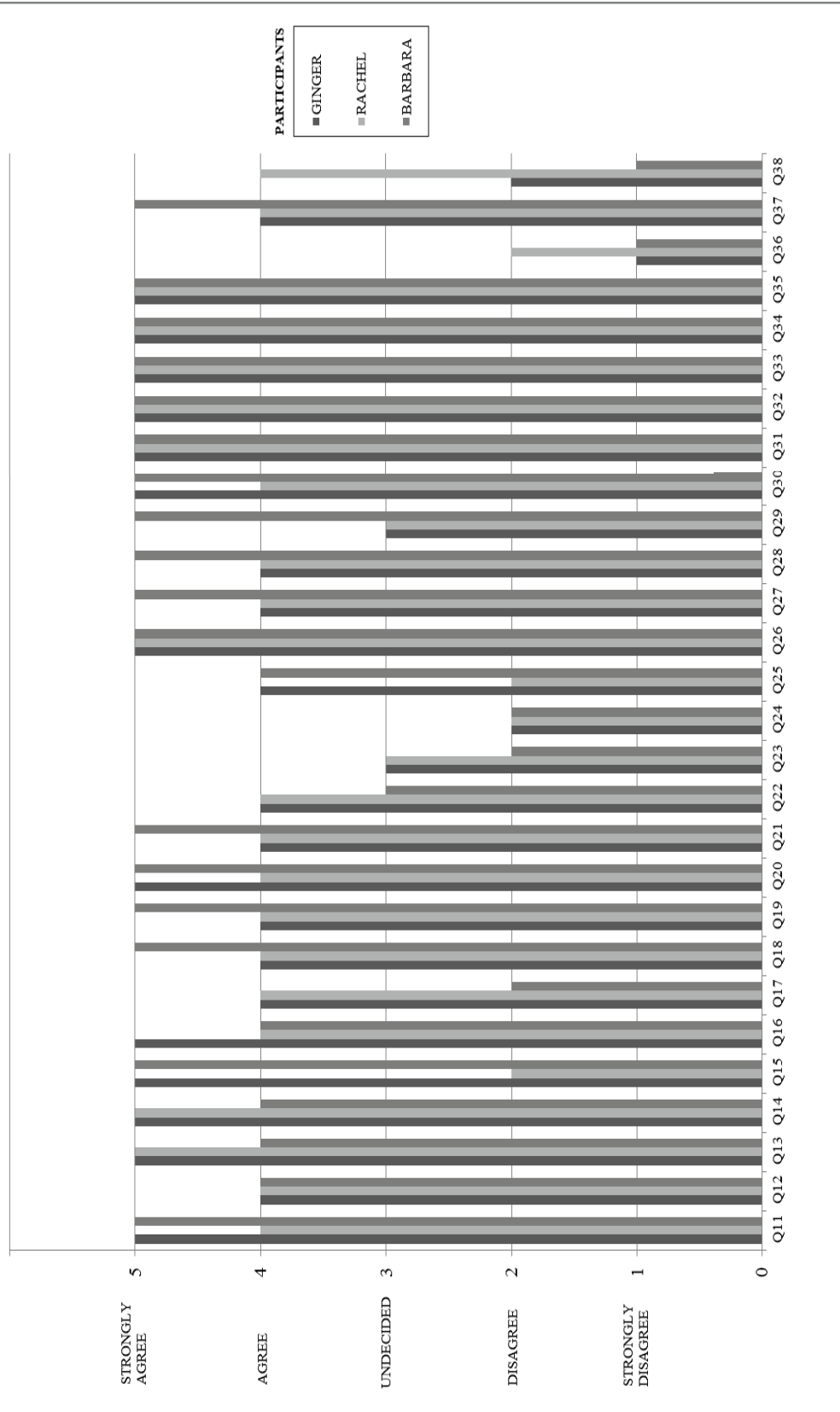
List of Likert Scale Items

1. I know my purpose as a leader.
2. My understanding of purpose has evolved over the course of my ministry career.
3. I still feel called by God.
4. I regularly sense God's presence in my life.
5. Leadership is more about who I am and less about what I do.
6. I intentionally nurture my relationship with God.
7. It takes years to become an excellent leader.
8. I am aware of my strengths.
9. Over the years I've intentionally embraced and developed my strengths.
10. I am aware of others strengths.
11. I see how my strengths help me lead with excellence.
12. In my congregation, I regularly have the opportunity to do what I do best.
13. My focus has been on making my strengths even stronger.
14. My focus has been on fixing my weaknesses.
15. I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.
16. Over the years I have developed wisdom as a leader.
17. My experience leading churches has been a positive and affirming one.
18. When faced with complex situations at the church I find the courage I need.
19. I worry that some things in life are simply beyond my reach.
20. I believe my leadership helps make things happen.
21. I believe I have what it takes as an ordained leader in the United Methodist Church.
22. I have found resilience from life's difficulties.
23. I have many personal resources at my disposal.
24. I am self-aware.
25. What works in one situation may not work in another.
26. Leadership is foremost about being right.
27. I possess strong critical thinking skills.
28. I regularly take time to reflect upon my leadership.

APPENDIX D

LIKERT SCALE SURVEY RESPONSES

LIKERT SCALE SURVEY RESPONSES (1-5) FOR THREE PARTICIPANTS BY QUESTION NUMBER (Q#)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achtelstetter, Karen. "Huldah at the Table: Reflections on Leadership and Leadership of Women." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37:3, 2010.
- Achtemeier, Paul, ed. *The Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.
- Ackerman, Susan. "Why Is Miriam Also Among The Prophets? (And is Zipporah among the Priests?)." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121/1, 2002.
- Avolio, Bruce J. "Promoting More Integrative Strategies for Leadership Theory-Building." *American Psychologist*, 62 (1), 2007.
- _____ and Sean T. Hannah. "Developmental Readiness: Accelerating Leader Development." *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, Volume 60, Number 4*, 2008.
- Bal, Mieke. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Bassler, Jouette M. "Phoebe." *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Bellis, Alice Ogden. *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Bilimoria, Diana. Email correspondence. September 14, 2015.
- Bohmbach, Karla. "Names and Naming in the Biblical World." *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Meyers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Brown, Brene. "Shame resilience theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame." *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Services Jan-Mar 2006*: 87,1.
- _____. *Daring Greatly*. New York: Gotham Books. 2012.

- Brueggemann, Walter. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.
- _____. "The Book of Exodus." *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1*, Leander E. Keck, ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Bryant, Robert A. "Romans 12:1-8." *Interpretation* 58 no 3, July 2004.
- _____. "Numbers." *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Carmody, Denise Lardner. *Biblical Woman: Contemporary Reflections on Scriptural Texts*. New York: Crossroad, 1988.
- Chaney, Emily. "Deborah." *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 2*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Choi, Hee An and Jacqueline Blue. *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II in the U.S. Context* (2012). <http://www.bu.edu/shaw/publications/united-methodist-clergywomen-retention-study-ii-2/> (accessed May 6, 2016).
- Claassen, Julianna. "Miriam 2." *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 4*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Clements, Ronald. "The Book of Deuteronomy". *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes, Volume 2*, ed. Leander E. Keck. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Clifton, Donald O. and Timothy Hodges, "Strengths-Based Development in Practice," *Positive Psychology in Practice*. Ed. P. Alex Linley and Stephen Joseph. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2004.
- Clifton, Donald O. and Marcus Buckingham. *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. New York: The Free Press, 2001.
- Clifton, Donald O. and Paula Nelson. *Soar With Your Strengths: A Simple Yet Revolutionary Philosophy of Business and Management*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2010.
- Covey, Stephen R. *Principle-Centered Leadership*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
- Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- _____. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014.

- Daft, Richard L. *The Leadership Experience. Fifth edition.* Australia: South-Western Cengage Learning, 2011.
- DeShon, Richard P. *Clergy Effectiveness: National Survey Results Summary, The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church* (2012). http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/bom/BOM_ClergyEffectivenessSummary2012.pdf (accessed May 6, 2016)
- DeShon, Richard P. *Clergy Effectiveness: National Survey Results, The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church* (2012). http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/bom_clergyeffectivenessdeshon_0.pdf (accessed May 6, 2016).
- Dozeman, Thomas B. "The Book of Numbers". *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes.* Ed. Leander E. Keck. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Ely, Robin J., Herminia Ibarra and Deborah M. Kolb. "Taking Gender into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs." *Academy of Management Learning and Education, Volume 10, No. 3, 2011.*
- Exum, Cheryl. "Deborah." *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James Mays. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Frick, Frank. *A Journey through the Hebrew Scriptures.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Deborah 2." *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. "Romans." *Women's Bible Commentary, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Revised and Updated.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Hackman, J. Richard. "What Is This Thing Called Leadership?" *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: A Harvard Business School Centennial Colloquium.* Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, eds. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010.
- Hackman, J. Richard and Ruth Wegeman. "Asking the Right Questions about Leadership." *American Psychologist, 62 (1), 2007, 46.*
- Harrelson, Walter, ed. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

- Howard, Cameron R. "1 and 2 Kings". *Women's Bible Commentary, Twentieth Anniversary Edition, Revised and Updated*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Ibarra, Herminia, Scott Snook and Laura Guillen Ramo. "Identity-Based Leader Development." *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice: A Harvard Business School Centennial Colloquium*. Nitin Nohria and Rakesh Khurana, eds. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2010.
- James, Elaine. "Miriam and Her Interpreters". *Women's Bible Commentary: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringer and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Linley, P. Alex, Reena Govindji and Michael A. West. "Positive Psychology Approaches to Public Services Leadership: An Introduction to Strengths-Based Leadership." *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services, Volume 3, Issue 4*, December 2007.
- Leedy, Paul D. and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod. *Practical Research: Planning and Design, 9th edition*. Boston: Pearson Education, 2010.
- Lord, Robert G. and Rosalie Hall. "Identity, Deep Structure and the Development of Leadership Skill." *The Leadership Quarterly 16*, 2005.
- Maddux, James E. "Self-Efficacy: The Power of Believing You Can." *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, eds. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- March, W. Eugene, "Micah." *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James Mays. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.
- Masten, Ann S. and Marie-Gabrielle J. Reed. "Resilience in Development." *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, eds. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- Mays, James, ed. *Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.
- McCauley, Cynthia D., Russ S. Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor, eds. *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.
- McKenna, Robert B., Paul R. Yost and Tanya N. Boyd. "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons that Shape Pastoral Leaders." *Journal of Psychology and Theology, Volume 35, Number 3*, 2007.

- McNutt, Paula. "Deborah", *The New Interpreter's Study Bible, Volume 2*, Walter Harrelson, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 352.
- Meeks, Wayne, ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Meyers, Carol L. *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- _____. "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible." *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe, ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- Moxley, Russ. Center for Creative Leadership. Email correspondence September 30, 2015.
- _____. Center for Creative Leadership. <http://www.umfwnc.org/pdf/Reynolds> (accessed September 30, 2015).
- _____. Center for Creative Leadership. *Virginia Clergy Leadership Program*. <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/AC2014/ClergyLeadershipProgram.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2015).
- Northouse, Peter G. *Leadership Theory and Practice, Seventh Edition*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2016.
- O'Bannon, Deborah, Linda Garavalia, David O. Renz and S. Marie McCarther. "Successful Leadership Development for Women STEM Faculty." *Leadership and Management in Engineering, October 2010*.
- Olson, Dennis. "The Book of Judges". *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Leander Keck, ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- _____. "The Book of Numbers". *Harper's Bible Commentary*. James Mays, ed. San Francisco: Harper, 1988.
- Park, HiRho and Susan Willhauck. *Lead Women Pastors Project Survey Summary* (2009). http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/clergywomen/CW_LWPP2009essay.pdf (accessed September 15, 2015).
- Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons. 1996.
- Rath, Tom and Barry Conchie. *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams and Why People Follow*. New York: Gallup Press, 2008.

- Runyon, Theodore. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob, ed. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- _____. "Numbers". *Women's Bible Commentary: Twentieth Anniversary Edition*. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringer and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Schein, Edgar H. "Career Anchors Revisited: Implications for Career Development in the 21st Century." *Academy of Management Executive*, 1996.
- Seligman, Martin E. P. "Positive Psychology, Positive Prevention, and Positive Therapy." *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez, eds. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- Setel, Drorah O'Donnell. "Exodus." *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Spreitzer, Gretchen M. "Leading to Grow and Growing to Lead: Leadership Development Lessons from Positive Organizational Studies." *Organizational Dynamics*, Volume 35, Number 4, 2006.
- Stake, Robert E. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1995.
- The United Methodist Church. Homepage. <http://www.umc.org> (accessed May 6, 2016).
- The United Methodist Church. "What We Believe." <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/developments-and-changes-since1968> (accessed September 18, 2015).
- Trible, Phyllis. "Miriam." *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Tull, Patricia. "Deborah." *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 2*, ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Turner, Nick, Julian Barling and Anthea Zacharatos. "Positive Psychology at Work." *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds., C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez. Oxford: University Press, 2002.
- Walvoord, John F. "The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts," *Bibliotheca sacra* 143, No. 573 (April-June 1986).

Weems, Lovett. *Lewis Fellows*.

<http://www.churchleadership.com/lewisfellows/default.asp> (accessed May 6, 2016).

_____. *Report Responses*. Report Provided to the Researcher by Lovett Weems. (2008).

Wiborg, Margaret S. *United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study*, Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology (2001).

<http://www.bu.edu/shaw/publications/the-clergy-womens-retention-study/> (accessed May 6, 2016).

Wilson, Robert R. "1 Kings". *The Harper Collins Study Bible*.

Winseman, Albert L., Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld. *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your God-Given Talents and Inspire Your Community*. New York: Free Press, 2008.

Yin, Robert K. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. New York: The Guildford Press, 2011.